

Living in God



SAI SARATHI 2020



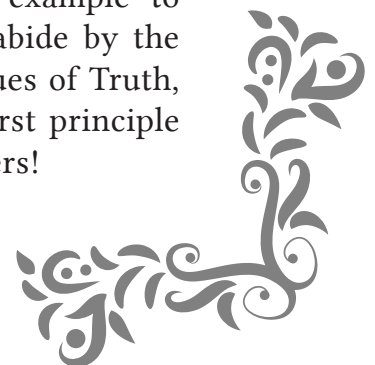
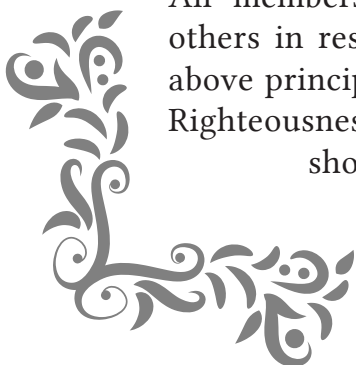
THE TEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(For members of the Sathya Sai International Organisation)

1. Love and serve your country. Do not be critical of others' countries.
2. Honor all religions for each is a pathway to God.
3. Love all people without distinction; know that humanity is a single community.
4. Keep home and surroundings clean.
5. Help people to become self-reliant. Provide food and shelter, love and care, for the sick and the aged.
6. Be examples of honesty. Do not participate in any corruption such as bribery.
7. Do not develop jealousy, hatred, or envy on any account.
8. Develop self-reliance; become your own servant before proceeding to serve others.
9. Adore God, abhor sin.
10. Observe your country's laws and be an exemplary citizen.

All members of SAI BABA Centres should be an example to others in respect of the above. All members should abide by the above principles and adhere to the 5 basic human values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence. Your first principle should be Love! Do not look for faults in others!

- Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Living in God

SAI SARATHI

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TO OUR BELOVED BHAGAWAN

You make us the best we can be

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are those of the authors and not of the Organisation.





Swami once asked His students, “*What is Spirituality?*” Amidst the surge of answers that came, Swami’s probing gaze meant their answers were off the mark! Then Swami offered the following insight, “*Living in God is True Spirituality.*”

What a beautiful reminder, especially in these challenging times when Covid-19 is disrupting every aspect of our lives. With the unprecedented closure of our Sathya Sai Centre in Hong Kong, many devotees have expressed how much their weeks are incomplete without the *bhajans* and *satsang*. Yet, “Living in God” requires that we put our faith in Bhagawan’s omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience to carry us through these times of uncertainty and hardship.

The fact that brakes have been put on the hustle and bustle of our daily lives actually provides us an opportunity to reflect upon what we have gained from our many years of attending *bhajans*, listening to discourses, doing our *namasmarana*, etc. Has the virus increased our fears and anxieties or do we find ourselves able to accept the disruption with equanimity and firm faith? Are we wise enough to understand there are lessons we must learn at this time?

Such challenging times call for innovative ways and, fortunately, faith and technology have opened new opportunities to continue our devotional and educational Sai activities. Yes, from their homes, devotees can continue their *satsang*, keeping no distance from Bhagawan. The weekly *bhajans* sent via WhatsApp, the study classes on Skype, and online *satsang* on Zoom are providing much solace!

Our older devotees are to be commended for embracing these changes and our tech-savvy

Young Adults for their loving service in enabling the seamless transition to the many online platforms. Our gratitude to each and every one.

Many have shown resolute courage and confidence in Bhagawan’s protective hand in carrying on without break the SSIO’s food distributions that so many street sleepers depend upon.

Covid-19 has silently reminded us that we must turn inward to connect to our beloved, Formless Bhagawan, the resident of our hearts – *sadhana* is truly an inward path! It has taught that whatever our situation, the spiritual disciplines of constant contemplation, mental *namasmaranam*, prayer and meditation take priority. Covid-19 has demonstrated in very stark terms that our external ‘company’ with the world around us is truly temporary.

Let us bask in Bhagawan’s message to each of us, “*Bangaru, there is nothing that is not spiritual. Spirituality is in everything. It is everything. Anything or anyone treated with pure love is the genuine acknowledgement of that individual’s true spirituality.*”

When we turn inwards, we realise that all along our lives have actually been “Living only in God.” It is our sincere hope that our articles will remind readers that “Living in God” means that everything is Bhagawan Himself. Indeed, Bhagawan lovingly reminds us, “*God is neither distant nor distinct from you.*”

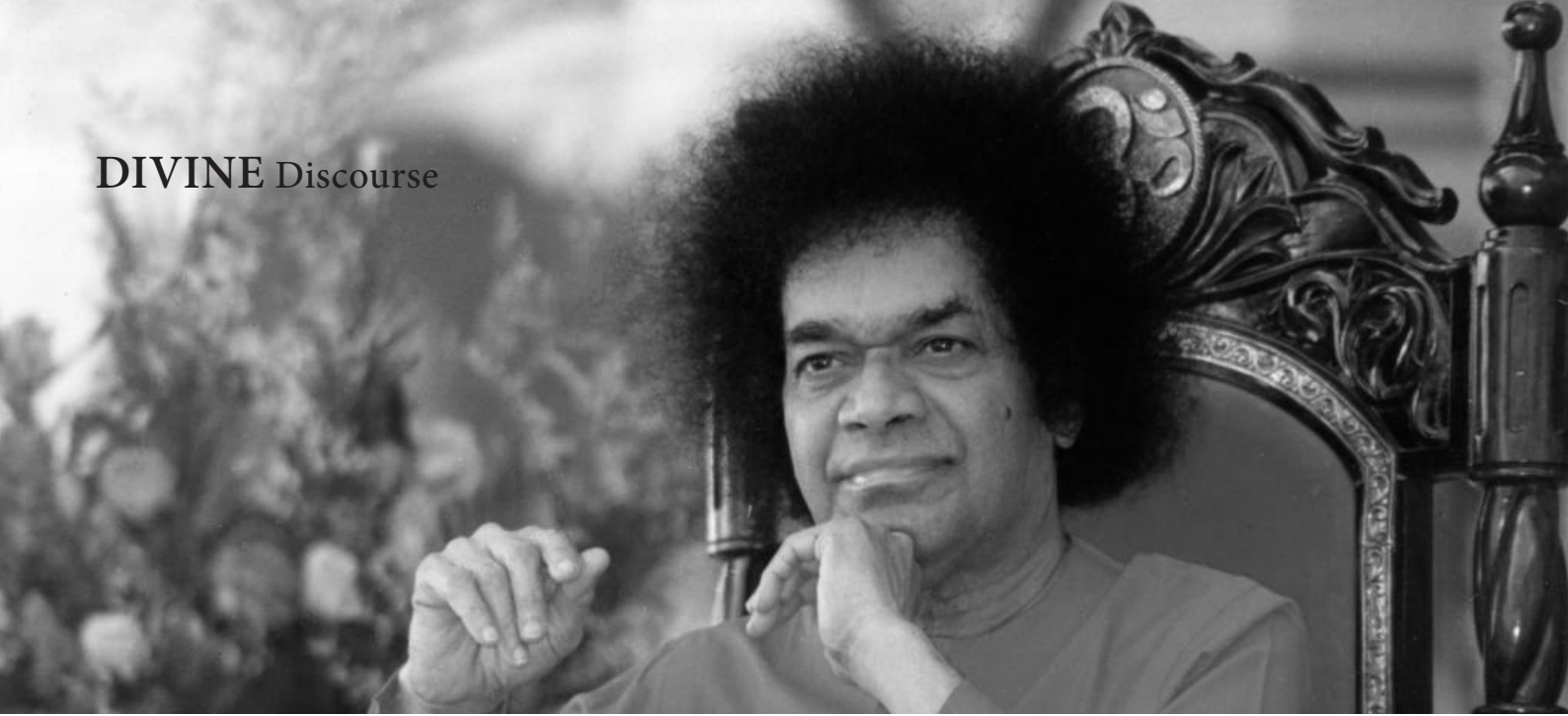
Live in love; Live in God.

Jai Sai Ram
Naina Shamdasani
National Council President

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Love is God; Live in Love

People think there are many troubles, difficulties, and sorrows in this world, and thereby they are filled with anxiety and worries. But, in fact, there is nothing like this; it is bliss everywhere.

Brahmanandam, Parama Sukhadam,
Kevalam Jnanamurtim, Dwandwateetam,
Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam,
Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam,
Bhavateetam, Trigunarahitam

(Man is the embodiment of divine bliss, absolute wisdom, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, his goal is indicated by the aphorism [*mahavakya*]: “*Tat Twam Asi*” [Thou art That], one without a second, eternal, pure, unchanging, witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three attributes of purity [*sathwa*], restlessness [*rajas*], and dullness [*thamas*].)

YOU ARE THAT

The world is the creation of God. Right from man, all living beings, including animals, birds, and even the insects, are creations of God. Since they are creations of God, all of them have their origin in bliss. All these difficulties and troubles are only the imagination of man.

Pleasure is an interval between two pains. There cannot be happiness without difficulties. These difficulties are meant to give you happiness and not to make you miserable with more

sorrows. Hence, whatever comes to us, we should consider it as God's gift and be happy. We should not consider that it has been given to us to make us suffer.

Suppose you have pain in the stomach. What will the doctor do? If he performs an operation, it is not to cause you pain. The pain that the doctor causes is to remove your suffering. Hence, one should bear difficulties and overcome one's sorrows.

There are millions of living beings in this world. All of them have

originated from God. Therefore, the same God is present in all of them. People give many names to God, such as Rama, Allah, Jesus, etc., but God is only one. *Atma* is another name of God; it is the same in everyone. The real name of *Atma* is love. Love is only one but is present everywhere and can alleviate all sufferings. One who is endowed with love is free from all sufferings.

All of you have come from such a distant place, like America. What for? You have come because you have love for Me. You can attain anything if you have love.

God has no specific name, He is present in man in the form of *Atma*.

What does *Atma* mean? It means love only. It is love that unites all. If you imbibe this principle of unity, then all will become one. When you attain this unity, you will have purity. When you have purity, then *Atma Tattwa* (principle of the Self) will manifest in you. Therefore, you must have unity to attain divinity.

I and you are one; God and you are one. God is not anywhere separate from you. You should develop the feeling that you yourself are God. When you say, “I”, it represents unity. You cannot estimate the bliss that is derived from unity. All are one. It is the fickle mind that is unsteady and wanders arbitrarily.

Only one thing is steady. That is love, love, love. Love is God; live in love. This is what we have to learn today. The same love is present in everyone.

Mother loves her children due to this feeling of love. All are children of God. Therefore, God loves all; God has no hatred. God is not the cause for your pain and suffering. God is not separate from you – wherever you may be, God is present there. God does not forsake you. There is no place where God is not there. Wherever you see, God is present there.

You are all embodiments of God. You have two eyes but you can see a large number of people with them. Similarly, God is one, but He can see all. Where is God? He is in you, with you, above you and below you. There is no need to search for Him.

Because our vision is limited to the physical level, we see differences. Do not rely on the physical body. The body is like a water bubble; the mind is like a mad monkey. In one moment the mind is here and in the next moment it flies away to another place. *Manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara* (mind, intellect, mind stuff, ego) — all these are temporary, like passing clouds. Only one thing is permanent – that is you.

Where is God? You should develop the feeling that you are God. This is the correct answer to the question, “Where is God?” You may perform any number of spiritual practices, like *bhajan* (devotional songs), *japa* (soft prayer), and *tapa* (penance, austerities), but love should form the undercurrent of all these practices. In fact, if you have love, there is no need to perform any spiritual practices. There is no use performing all spiritual practices if you do not have love.

Fill your mind with love. *Prema Mudita Manase Kaho, Ram Ram Ram* (recite the Name of Rama with your heart full of love). Hence, give highest importance to love. Love is important. Love is God. Live in love. This is the spiritual practice that we have to undertake.

Worldly relations are temporary. They are impermanent like passing clouds that come and go. They are your mental reaction, reflection, and resound. (Swami shows His handkerchief) What is this? This is a cloth. It is not merely a cloth, it is a combination of threads; it is not thread even, it is cotton, which is the creation of God. Everything has emerged

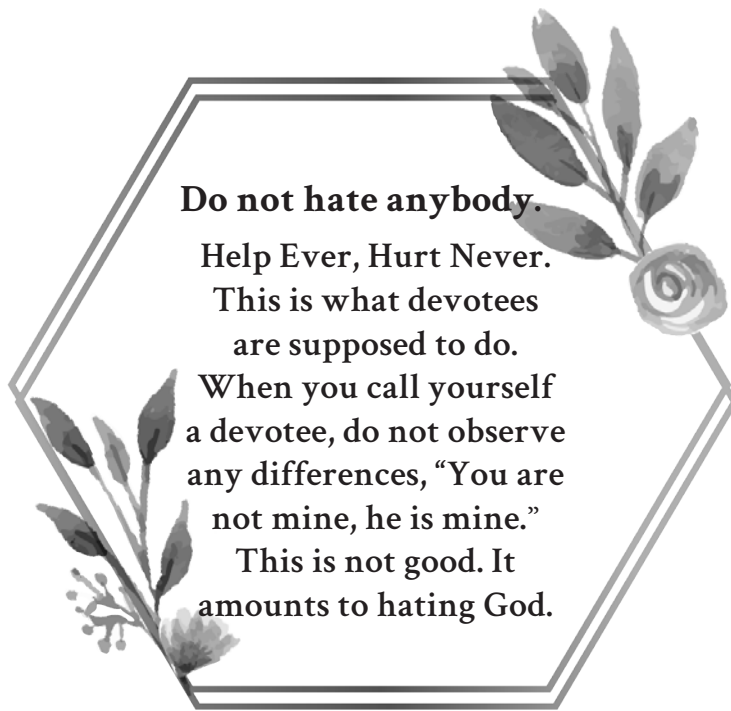
from God like threads. You weave the threads as per your liking. But it is not your liking that is important – what is important is what God likes.

There can be changes in the body and the mind, but love is changeless. It is permanent. Everything has birth and death, but there is no birth or death for love. The birthless and deathless love is only one. It comes from truth. Truth is one; Truth is God. This God, in the form of love, is present everywhere, wherever you see.

God is present in man in his breath. When you breathe, where does the breath come from? It comes from within. The breath itself is your God. What is its form? It is present in man in the form of *Soham*, which reveals your divine identity. “So” means “that”, “Ham” means “I”. Therefore, “*Soham*” means “That I am.” “That” refers to God, who is present in man in the form of love. Therefore, man should treasure love in his heart safely.

Other thoughts come and go like passing clouds. Only love is permanent and eternal. You should perform every task with love. Even if you come across your enemy, you should love and greet him, saying “Hello, Hello.” Then he will also respond, saying “Hello, Hello” to you. This is the reaction, reflection, resound of your feelings.

Whatever good or bad you experience is the result of your own actions. Everything comes from within you. Hence, always remain immersed in love. If you have love, you can achieve anything and perform any task.



Do not hate anybody.

Help Ever, Hurt Never.

**This is what devotees
are supposed to do.**

**When you call yourself
a devotee, do not observe
any differences, "You are
not mine, he is mine."**

**This is not good. It
amounts to hating God.**

It is love that is responsible for the entire creation and its functioning in this world. There is no greater God than love. Love is God. Whatever you do without love is a futile exercise. Hence, treasure love in your heart. Everybody will be attracted towards this love. It bestows everything on you. It is love that creates, sustains, and destroys.

When you look at the world with your physical eyes, you see diversity in creation. But, in fact, everything is love. It does not change. You should be filled with such love. If you follow this principle of love, it will give you the fruit of all the spiritual practices.

People call God by many names, such as Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Allah, etc. But all Names refer to the same God. If you call Him Allah, He responds. Similarly, if you call Him Jesus, or Zoroastra, or Rama, He will respond. All these names were given by man. God is not born with these names. The original name of God

is only Love. You may refer to any dictionary; love is only one and not two.

Man may have many physical relationships. You may consider someone as your husband, someone as your son and someone as your daughter. They are all physical and worldly relations. Who has established these relationships? It is you only. Since these are relationships acquired by you, they are subject to change.

But love remains the same. With such love you may chant any name, such as Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Narayana, Jesus and Allah. All these names refer to the same divinity.

You may grind rice and prepare various dishes, such as dosa, idli, etc. You may mix rice with sugar and prepare payasam (sweet pudding). But rice is the same in all these dishes. In the same way, only one God is present in the entire creation and that is Love. Perform each and every task with love.

We call others as brothers and sisters. At the physical level, they are separate. These relationships are of your own making. But never observe diversity. Brothers, sisters, and all other relationships are one. You see an old man or a child, both are essentially divine. God is beyond all ages and all forms. Only love is His true form; the same love is present in all forms that you see. Hence, every one of you should develop love.

You may call God as Rama, Krishna, or Sai. But it is only a difference in names. God is only one. Love everyone wholeheartedly. Then only can you experience bliss. So long as you have love, you will not be devoid of bliss.

People today observe individual differences. There are three aspects of an individual: (1) the one you think you are; (2) the one others think you are; and (3) the one you really are.

At the physical level you may be identified by your name, form,

and village, but in reality you are only one. This is what you should realise. Recognise the unity of the entire creation. Your worldly relations will also have some value when you recognise this unity.

You may append any number of 0s to 1, the value will go on increasing. If you remove the 1, there is no value. In the same manner, you may chant any name realising the oneness of God. *Ekam sath viprah bahudha vadanthi* (Truth is one but the wise refer to it by various names). The Vedas authenticate the same Truth. With love in your heart, you may go to any country, chant any name, perform any spiritual practice.

Do not hate anybody. Help Ever, Hurt Never. This is what devotees are supposed to do. When you call yourself a devotee, do not observe any differences, "You are not mine, he is mine." This is not good. It amounts to hating God. You should think, "God is in

me, with me, around me, above me and below me." Wherever you see, the same God is present there. Develop this feeling of oneness. Then you will attain highest bliss.

You have come from different countries and you have different names and forms. But, having come here, you are all one. From today onwards, may you always remain in bliss for ever and ever.

People say, "Today is my birthday." What is the meaning of birthday? It is the day of the birth of the body. Today it is born, tomorrow it may die. But you are eternal; you have no birth, no death.

Be always happy. This is what I desire. Do not allow the differences of mine and thine to come near you. All of you have sung the glories of the Lord in one voice. This unity is divinity. Where there is lack of unity, there is diversity. Hence, develop unity. Where there is unity, there

is purity. It is purity that attracts God.

The white dress that you have put on symbolises purity. Differences are seen when you put on dresses of different colours. You should not give room to differences. Not only in dress, observe unity and purity in your mind, feelings, and thoughts. All are one. On returning to your respective places, lead your lives with unity, love, and bliss.

Consider *bhajan* as your *bhojan* (food) that satiates your spiritual hunger. Partake the food of *bhajan* every moment, day in and day out. Right from morning till night, constantly do *bhajan* in your entire waking time. This is Swami's teaching to you. Perform all your tasks while contemplating on the name of God within you. God is within you, without you, beyond you, below you and behind you.

Prasanthi Nilayam
15 December, 2007



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Is Transformation Possible Without the Help of External Associations?

SHANTA LALWANI

Since time immemorial, the sacred land of India has maintained its spiritual Truths and the tradition of the teacher-student relationship. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Supreme teacher, kept this sacred *guru-shishya* (disciple) tradition of Vedic ages alive by Himself imparting the “Art and Heart” of secular knowledge and spiritual wisdom to humanity.

In the Summer Course of 1973 held for students in Brindavan, Bhagawan’s discourses were based on the devotional song *Bhaja Govindam* composed by Adi Guru Shankaracharya about 1,200 years ago. Swami expounded on the non-dual (*Advaita*) philosophy, which teaches that every being in the world is a manifestation (and an indivisible part) of the one Supreme Consciousness. We are part of a natural web of life in which we are all inter-connected and inter-dependent on each other. The sole purpose of our lives is to experience the oneness of God, Nature and Man and to realise one’s True Self.

Swami said, “*It is generally not possible for anything to change or transform by itself without the help of external associations.*” Reflecting and contemplating on Swami’s statement brought to light the truth that, at every stage of my life, I have been dependent on external associations for my well-being and progress.

Filled with an immense sense of gratitude, as I thought about this article I walked down memory

lane to reminisce with reverence and respect about all the external associations that I have been blessed with, for they are my protectors, guides, teachers (*gurus*) and torch bearers. They came into my life to sow seeds of strong desire to seek Govind, the Supreme source of all joy and bliss in one’s own spiritual heart, the *Atma* (the indweller within). I am grateful for the eternal connection with my Guru, Sathya Sai Baba.

The Bhagawad Gita states, “*As the embodied soul continuously passes in this body from childhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death.*” Past *karma* and unfulfilled desires that were craved for out of delusion are the cause of rebirth. We are actually ‘old souls’ in this vast university that is the Lord’s ‘Earth School,’ where we can learn the necessary lessons of life and steadily progress through different stages to realise our True Self, should we pay attention.

By learning the lessons and practicing introspection, I was led into deeper layers of my self-awareness, which enabled me to visualise the various stages of my human journey.

In the infant stage, parents, as the first teachers, sow the seeds of love, affection for others, human values, right conduct, etc. to create a foundation for the blossoming of the human personality. Swami says: “*A father is the seed and a mother is the earth. The soil offers lifelong nourishment to the plant. Even*

when the plant becomes a tree, its roots need the nourishment and support of the soil.” Living in the physical world, the infant is entirely dependent on others for its survival and nurturing.

The individual’s dependency is not only on food and nutrition but also on the vital, cosmic life force energy (*Prana*), which keeps all beings alive. The Earth’s bounties – sunlight, air, water, food and breath – keep the soul encased in an energised body. Our associations with Nature have provided invaluable lessons in selflessness and sacrifice through the prescribed duties and disciplines that are so evident in Nature, and indeed required in schools.

In the youth stage, the individual expresses himself more ‘independently’ in the field of his desires, likes and dislikes, passions and emotions, and he drifts away from his parents towards different associations, i.e. friends. In the adult stage, one’s personal Mahabharata war rages in fullness, between the forces of one’s desires and the supreme virtues that emanate from God, and the aspirant seeks the company of other aspirants and a *guru*.

I am grateful to all Masters and scriptures for bringing to my awareness the potential of the magnificent subtle level of my being: mind, intellect, memory and ego. Being extrovert by nature, the mind constantly runs out to the external world through its five senses, seeking objects for its gratification, which it gets attached/bound to. And yet, the same mind and intellect are the necessary tools to turn inwards, away from material pleasures, until we are ready to drop them, leaving only our True Self. Wisdom is required not only to understand the mind but also how it can be used to guide us along this journey.

Sri Krishna warns of the perils of delusion when wisdom is absent, which causes one to think that external objects and relationships grant happiness. Fulfilled desires lead to greed and unfulfilled desires to anger. Both emotions cloud the intellect and make one forget what is right and wrong. The bewilderment of one’s memory results in the destruction of the intellect, the internal discriminating guide. This ‘ladder of fall’ keeps the soul bound to the cycle of birth and death.

Swami reminds us that the mind is a powerful tool of CHANGE. Embracing change is key to personal



transformation. He says: *“From the worldly point of view, it may be a bundle of desires but from the spiritual point of view, the mind is a bundle of divinity. This body is the cocoon you have spun around yourself by means of your impulses and desires. Use it to grow wings so that you can escape from it.”*

By observing and learning from Nature, a small butterfly becomes a most profound and enduring symbol of change and transformation. Just as a humble earth-bound caterpillar sheds its skin at the chrysalis stage to become a beautiful butterfly blessed with wings of flight, every human being is blessed with the necessary intelligence and will-power to reach higher levels of self-awareness, all that is required is effort and self-confidence.

To avoid a fall and to concentrate on climbing the ‘ladder of progress,’ the most valuable associations at this point are good company (*satsang*) and selfless service (*seva*).

Emphasising the importance of keeping good company, Swami said, *“Iron which is hard, black and dull becomes soft, red and shining when it associates with fire. The same iron acquires a lot of rust and loses its strength when it makes friendship with dirt and moisture.”*

Similarly, the company (*satsangatvam*) of scriptures, *gurus* and devotees who are seekers of the highest Truth help the human mind to steadily develop a capacity to withdraw from the sensuous delusory fields of attraction and discover in itself the secret

of detachment (*nisangatvam*). Detachment steadies the mind (*nischallatatvam*) and frees it from delusion (*moha*), see the *Bhaja Govindam*. Until the mind has been stilled and one can turn inwards to experience the silence in which God resides, in this world of forms one's external associations will determine one's destiny.

The main purpose of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation is to help one realise one's innate divinity by practicing divine love through selfless service and, thereby, becoming aware of the interconnectedness of God, Nature and Man.

Sathya Sai Baba says, "*Just as hands, nose and mouth are limbs of the body, likewise, all human beings are the limbs of society. Society is a limb of nature and nature is a limb of God. One should understand the fundamental truth that Divinity pervades the entire creation.*"

Developing wings of withdrawal (*pratyahara*) and mind-breath control (*pranayama*), in this world plane the soul glides into the mature and discriminative intellectual stage. It breaks through the wandering butterfly mentality to evolve into the swan mentality. The swan is a symbol of purity and wisdom and has the unique capacity to separate water from milk, thus teaching human beings the art of discerning impermanent worldly pleasures and extracting the eternal joys of the *Atma*. Just as the swan is equally at home on land and water, similarly the sage lives with joy and equanimity both in the realm of matter and spirit.

Without a doubt, one must live with one's feet lightly treading the world as one performs duties there, for the ultimate association must be with the *Atma* within. The fruits of that association will naturally manifest in the world through our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Swami says, "*There is only one God. That is yourself, residing in the spiritual heart of love and compassion!*" He also says, "*The Atma which is inherent in man can be seen only when the ash of ego, anger, desire and body attachment is blown away by chanting the Name of the Lord.*"

The body is a temple of the Divine and the *sanctum sanctorum* is the heart. My gratitude flows out to all external associations for bringing me to the gates of the temple and guiding me to keep the lamps lit

with the clarified butter of *japa*, *dhyana*, meditation and *namasmaran*. All teachers can only bring me this far. The journey to the inner sanctum is the individual's internal journey.

To have the vision of the Lord in the chambers of my heart, I pray intensely for wings of faith and devotion to become the Divine bird, Garuda, the Lord's vehicle, so that I too may carry the Lord with me as He makes me an instrument of love and service.

"Faith is to believe what you do not see and the reward of this faith is to see what you believe." (St. Augustine).

Surrendering all doership of actions and ownership of all *sadhana*, I seek the Lord's Grace. "*God's grace is as the shower of rain, as the sunlight. You have to do some sadhana to acquire it, the sadhana of keeping a pot upright to receive the rain, the sadhana of opening the door of your heart, so that the sun may illuminate it,*" says Sathya Sai Baba.

Gratitude and respect for parents and *gurus* and our Supreme *Guru* for their unconditional love is living with God. Loving and serving those from whom we receive is living for God. Surrendering to the Lord's will is living in God. Our journey of evolution and transformation is from I to We to He – that final state is Oneness with God.

*With Loving Sairams,
Shanta Lalwani*





“FOLLOW SWAMI”

A Devotee's Path to Divinity

NAINA P. SHAMDASANI

“Are you a devotee?” I was recently asked by someone who had spotted a picture of Swami resting on the corner of my monitor. I just smiled and for some reason I neither agreed nor disagreed, but that question certainly triggered some serious reflections! *Am I a devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?*

What is the definition of a devotee? Do I meet all the criteria? Who has confirmed me as one? Most importantly, *why* did I hesitate to give a straight forward reply to the simple question and just say, “Yes, I am a devotee.” What held me back?

To appease the monkey mind that was casting doubts on my fidelity, I decided to take direction from what Swami says about being a devotee. I had to reassure myself that I had not forsaken He who I claim to love! It didn't take rocket science for me to realise that merely claiming to love Bhagawan does not qualify me to be the devotee He wants me to be. At best, I could be branded a ‘worshipper’.

As devotees, many of us believe that performing various spiritual practices, such as *bhajan*, *japa*, rituals or other austerities, are enough to earn us the tag of devotee. Swami explains that while there is a place for these practices, especially when an individual is trying to improve himself spiritually, Swami's expectations of His devotees go beyond mere spiritual practices. They include:

“No evil traits, such as hatred, jealousy, anger and cravings.”

“Adherence in action to what one says in speech.”

“Surrender completely to Him.”

“Ready to carry out every command of the Lord.”

“Shed animal qualities and behave like a true human being.”

“Treat joy and grief, gain and loss with equal fortitude.”

“Show in action evidence of faith...”

And there's more!

I had to stop as I was beginning to understand my previous hesitation. While I do adhere, or try to adhere, to many of Swami's benchmarks, I cannot claim that I live life wholly conscious of these! He said:

“Today devotion is used for deriving sensory enjoyment. It is used more as a source of fleeting pleasure than experiencing a fountain of enduring bliss. God will not approve of such part-time devotion.”

Part-time devotion? Is that the deficiency I was suffering from, that would not allow me to claim wholeheartedly, “Yes, I am a devotee.” Swami's expresses His rejection of such devotion:

“You all ‘show’ only part-time devotion. What I want is full-time devotion!”

He explains that just as a part-time employee cannot avail of all the benefits that full-time employees do, a part-time devotee does not deserve what the full-time devotee does. The lure for striving to become a full-time devotee, however, is indeed irresistible, because Swami says:

“If you are doing full time devotion, not only I will grace you according to your devotion but also give you ‘Dearness and Nearness allowance.’ Dearness

allowance is my proximity and pension which will be useful for beyond this life”

DEARNESS AND NEARNESS

ALLOWANCE

In the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, we are instructed that true devotion must be a natural inclination and uninterrupted. Needless to say, to be a full-time devotee requires much more substantial commitment than the mere 40-hour work week that a full-time employee needs to put in!

Devotion is not a commodity nor something that grows on the ground or on trees. We have all experienced this unexplained feeling of love for Bhagawan that wells up from within. Such pure devotion should, therefore, flow uninterrupted in selfless attachment to Bhagawan and be evident in every thought, word, and deed.

Undoubtedly, we will each have our own difficulty reaching this level of constant, unbroken devotion, to be engaged in the service of our beloved Bhagawan twenty-four hours a day. But as devotees in the *Golden Age*, Bhagawan is prodding us to rise to a new level of conscious awareness, to work on our own spiritual development if we really wish to qualify as full-time devotees, to bask in Swami's *Dearness and Nearness*.

I AM A DEVOTEE

In *Gita Vahini* Swami categorises His devotees into four types. The first (*artha*) is worn out by ailments that affect the body and so he worships God to relieve the distress. The second (*artha-arthi*) is caught up in life's struggles and so prays for power and other forms of wealth. Both seek Bhagawan in order to achieve their desires or goals. Bhagawan says He listens to their prayers and satisfies them in relation to that particular difficulty or thing craved.

“I am like the wish-fulfilling tree. My task is to give each what they ask for. I have no prejudice, no favouritism.”

The third (*jijnasu*) is a seeker of wisdom who yearns for the realisation of the *Atma*. He reads scriptures and sacred texts, and engages in the company of spiritual seekers. He avails of opportune moments to do action without regard to its fruit and has an intellect that is sharp enough to discriminate between *Atma* and non-*Atma*. This type of devotee

achieves his goal through spiritual activities. He qualifies for the 'Nearness' allowance.

“I bless such people so that they are saved from distractions and they are helped to concentrate on the single aim of liberation.”

The fourth (*jnani*) is the wise person who goes one step further. While being constantly engaged in spiritual activities, he is immersed in the formless God (*Brahma-thatwa*) with one-pointed devotion. He sees Bhagawan in everything and everywhere. He understands Swami's omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence and that he is not separate from Bhagawan. Such profound devotion!

“The rays of the sun fall equally upon all that are directly in their way; but if something is behind something else, inside a closed room for instance, how can the sun illumine? Cultivate the higher yearnings and you receive the higher gains”

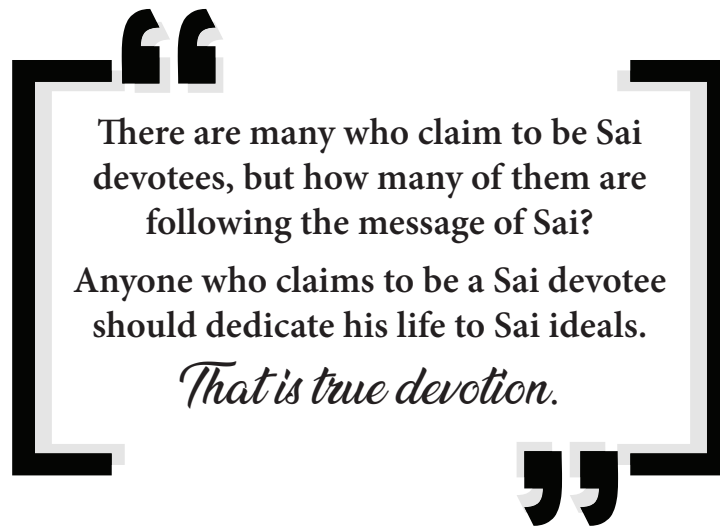
In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna declared that it is this wise one who is dearest to Him. He said, *“Bhaktimaan yah sah me priyah,”* meaning those who are full of devotion are dear to Me. This fourth type definitely qualifies for Swami's 'Dearness and Nearness' allowance.

FULL-TIME DEVOTEES OF A FULL-TIME GOD

Each of us can recognise where we are and where we want to be. Will we always remain as part-time devotees of a full-time Bhagawan? Or do we have the urge to ascent from mere worshippers to devotees and eventually to the wise one. A worshipper, no matter how ardent his devotion and his worship, is often rooted in the fulfillment of some underlying desire or benefit, as seen above in the first two types of devotees. That's why we pray so much!

A devotee on the other hand has *“no reason for love, no season for love.”* The progress from worship to seekers of wisdom (the third type) will be evident when study classes, *seva*, mixing with other devotees or *satsang* become the chosen and more attractive option to engage in, versus other lesser preparatory activity.

But the ultimate higher *yearning* (as Swami says) is to be immersed in a formless God and not see Bhagawan as separate from our own self. How does one begin to reach that vast ocean of His Grace? We have already put one foot on this path when we said



to Bhagawan,
 “I Love You, Sai Baba.”

Once, Swami endearingly asked His students, “So boys, do you love Me?” In a resounding chorus the response came, “Yes Swami, we love You!” Bhagawan’s reaction, however, was not expected. Shaking His head in disapproval, He said, “No, my boys don’t love Me, My boys only like Me.”

What’s the difference? Bhagawan said, “You have a dog at home and you love him. All day long you pet and caress the animal. You care for it, feed it, play with it, etc. But do you follow the dog through every moment? Wherever the dog runs, do you run behind it? No, you don’t. Then, how can you say whether you like or love the dog?”

And then, Swami said, “My boys like Me too in the same manner. They want to be with Me and around Me, they want to feed Me and see Me happy but don’t want to follow what I say.” And then the penny dropped: “To love Swami is to follow Swami.”

FOLLOW SWAMI

Like me, I’m sure you would happily let Him lead the way and follow Him. That would be easier if He was physically here with us. Unfortunately Swami’s call to follow Him is much more than just an invitation for us to walk two steps behind Him. The great thing is Bhagawan doesn’t just leave us wondering how to do follow Him, He tells us precisely where to start:

“There are many who claim to be Sai devotees, but how many of them are following the message of Sai? Anyone who claims to be a Sai devotee

should dedicate his life to Sai ideals. That is true devotion.”

The *Bhagavad Gita* declares that one cannot be called a devotee if one lives without regard to the commands of the Lord. What if we really listened to Bhagawan’s words and heard what He is saying? There is no shortage of Swami’s instructions, whether in the *Vahini* series, the discourses, the publications, all available now at the click of a mouse.

When we sincerely engage in Swami’s personal invitation to follow Him through His teachings and even His example, everything changes.

“YOUR LIFE IS MY MESSAGE”

If we would only stop reading this as if it is just another quotation. When Swami said, “My life is my message” He demonstrated how one should live. Later when He evolved this to “Your life is my message” He was calling on us to emulate Him and live by the ideals He laid out for us. Just think of how He lived life – His practices, His behaviour, His disciplines – and we will find that we too can adopt many of these to make our life His message.

Give, give, give. His hands were always stretched out to give, never receive. What has He not given us? Has He asked for anything in return except our unconditional love? Can we follow His example of sharing whatever He entrusted us with? It doesn’t have to be monetary, we have ample time, talent, strength, courage, compassion, etc. Selfless service (*seva*) is not just giving food to the hungry, we can share our own selves too, our love, with others in need.

Make every act a spiritual activity. Did He waste time in meaningless activity? Did He gossip? His every word was sacred. He was always teaching something to someone. He was always working for the welfare of all, especially the poor. All His actions were for others, nothing for Himself. We too can spiritualise our every act by engaging in meaningful activities.

Of course, we all have our roles to play in life but if we consciously play these roles with love, following the rules of *Dharma*, as He taught it to us, we too can transform every activity into a spiritual *sadhana*. His example should become my life!

All are One; be alike to everyone. He never differentiated between people. He didn't favour some and condemn others, no matter what their attitude towards Him was. Any type of distinction did not exist for Swami because He only saw Divinity in all creation. Why can't it be the same for us?

Every move this loving *Avatar* made is one to be studied; every gesture of His should be noted and engraved in our hearts so that we can follow; every word uttered by those Divine lips carry precious gems to lead a spiritual life; every moment of His life on earth is full of His love for us. He walked the talk silently and selflessly and wished for us to *"Follow Him."*

Follow Swami is a sermon to live truly free from bondage, to experience the love He gave to one and all. Swami lived for all of us, no one barred. Can we live for Him? Swami says,

"Follow me, I will give you my power; Follow me to get bliss. Find the bliss always with you, in you, around you always."

FOLLOW THE FORMLESS

In *Gita Vahini*, Swami explains what He seeks from His devotees. He requires that we see Him in every being, that we are aware of Him at every moment. He wants that we should dedicate all acts to Him and, finally, that we renunciate all attachment to the self and perform all actions in a spirit of worship. If all acts are offered to Him with unconditional love, they will not be tarnished by ego, 'I' or 'mine'.

When a devotee lives his life with the feeling that everything is Swami then that devotee is one who

is not separated from God. At all times and under any circumstance the acts and feelings are Swami-centred.

Lord Krishna summarises it beautifully in the *Bhagavad Gita* when He declares, *"Whatever the act, a devotee should not feel it is, 'my action.'"* Krishna says it must be understood to be *"an action for the Lord, by the Lord to the Lord."*

A disciple once asked the master, "Where is God?" The master asked him in return, "Where is He not?" For a full-time devotee, when asked this question, the only reply should be, "When I am not with Him, He is not with me."

As full-time devotees, to qualify for Swami's Dearness and Nearness allowance, we can only give that answer when we grow into the feeling, "I'm not with Him, He's not with me." And if we want Him all the time, we have to be immersed in Him full-time, with the attitude and feeling, *'All for Bhagawan, by Bhagawan to Bhagawan.'*

Attaining this level of surrender is not an easy task. But if we make the slightest effort, Bhagawan will confer courage and perseverance to reach the destination. He will walk with us and help us as a Friend. He will be our Guide. He will guard us from temptation.

He is with me when I am with Him. When we grow into this awareness, we earn Swami referring to us as *"Bangaru"*.

"Do not walk in front of Me,
I may not follow you.
Do not walk behind Me,
I may not lead you.
Walk beside Me and be my friend."

*With Loving Sairams,
Naina P. Shamdasani*



Pathways that Lead Back to Divinity

ARUL SHANTY

ILLUSION OF SEPARATION

Most of us consider ourselves to be our body-mind. This is an illusion. Our true nature is Divine. We are pure, unbounded, ever-present, Divinity. Not a part of it or a fragment of it, but the entirety of it. Swami said, “Never consider God as someone separate from you... Understand that you are He and He is you;”⁽¹⁾ “You are the Full, you are God. God is You.”⁽²⁾

Although our true nature is Divine, we do not recognize this. We are under the illusion that we are separate from Divinity, each of us having a separate identity of our own. Swami told us that our senses would see “different cultures and traditions, languages and styles of dress, food, etc. but this variety should not hide from our vision, the unity of Divinity inherent in all of you.”⁽³⁾

WEAKENING THE SENSE OF SEPARATION

Our sense of a stand-alone identity and the resulting illusion of separateness from others is both powerful and persistent. To weaken this sense of separateness, Swami told us to “Love all and serve all.” When a person loves another person unconditionally, or serves another person without self-interest, his focus will be not on his self but on the other person. This shift of focus is what is needed to weaken our ego and the associated sense of separateness.

Swami said:

“Learn to live in love and harmony with all the members of your society.”⁽⁴⁾ “Have love for all. Impart your love even to those who lack love. ... Speak lovingly, act lovingly, think with love and do every action with a love-filled heart.”⁽⁵⁾ “The

hallmark of love is thyaga (selfless sacrifice). ... Love has to be cherished with feelings of selflessness and sacrifice.”⁽⁶⁾

The more we love and the more we serve, the greater will be the softening (or cleaning up) of our mind, which is a pre-requisite for realizing the ‘divinity within us’.

Swami made this point:

“You are doing seva (selfless service) for your own sake. ... You serve yourselves. You do not serve the world. You serve your own best interest.”⁽⁷⁾ “Seva (selfless service) in all its forms, all the world over, is primarily a sadhana (spiritual discipline) for mental clean-up.”⁽⁸⁾

REALIZING OUR DIVINE NATURE

The wise have suggested four paths that we can follow to overcome our sense of separation and to realize our true divine nature. Swami summarized the paths:

“Those who strive through activities and achievements to establish the union are the Karma-yogis; those who follow the Prema path are the Bhakti-yogis; those who strive to manifest their latent powers and canalise them are the Raja-yogis; and those who stick to logical analysis and rational interpretations and attain intuitive perception are the Jnana-yogis.”⁽⁹⁾

The four paths are briefly described below.

Bhakti Yoga or the Path of Devotion

The path of devotion entails love for Divinity, which intensifies with time. In the beginning, a devotee offers to her Lord everything – whatever

she does, whatever she eats, whatever she drinks – as an expression of her love. As the love matures, the devotee becomes saturated with the sweetness of divine love, which intoxicates her and makes her oblivious to everything around her.

Like Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Mirabai, the devotee becomes unmindful of the world, loses her sense of separate identity and enters into a merged state of oneness with Divinity.

Swami said, “*Bhajans and Japas (singing and repeating God’s name) and performance of yagas and yajnas (sacrifices and rituals) are not the real marks of devotion.*”⁽¹⁰⁾ “*The flute ... is a very good example of an instrument close to the Lord. There is one great quality in the flute and that is its complete surrender. There is nothing left in the flute. In fact, the inside of the flute is completely hollow.*”⁽¹¹⁾

At the highest level of *Bhakti*, a devotee “*offers oneself to the Lord in complete surrender*”⁽¹²⁾ – thus losing her sense of separate identity.

Karma Yoga or the Path of Action

Karma Yoga entails doing all our actions as spiritual activities. On this path, we make spiritual progress in two stages. In the first stage, we do our actions without getting attached to the outcome of our actions. We accept the outcome, whatever it might be, as Divine will. The adoption of this attitude weakens our ego, which normally desires all outcomes to be according to its will.

In the second stage, we perform our actions without thinking that we are the doer. Initially, we may consider ourselves to be instruments of Divinity but, as we mature, we consider all activities are done by the Divinity within us.

When we feel that all activities are done by Divinity, and the outcomes are determined by Divinity, the need for a separate self disappears and we will identify ourselves only with Divinity.

Swami said:

“*The Bhagavad Gita has proclaimed that the path of disinterested action is the royal road to perfection. It exhorts man not to crave for the fruits of action and merely perform one’s duties in a detached manner, leaving the results thereof to the Lord.*”⁽¹³⁾ “*Man must get rid of the feeling that he is the doer. As long as the ego is dominating,*

the Atma, or God-consciousness, will not be realized.”⁽¹⁴⁾

Jnana Yoga or the Path of Knowledge

When we follow the path of knowledge, we first study scriptures and teachings by the wise and we question our current beliefs about God, ourselves, and the world around us. We then undertake self-enquiry, which is when we turn our attention away from the outside world to our inner-self, and ponder on who we really are.

When we do that, we will discover that we are not the body or the mind but the driving force that makes our body and mind function. We will also discover that we are not separate from Divinity. We will realize that Divinity, the world, and we are one and the same. The aim of this path is not to replace one set beliefs with another set of beliefs, but to question our beliefs and discover for ourselves our true nature.

Swami said, “*Self-enquiry is the means to Self-realisation. Self-enquiry reveals that you are not the body, the senses or the mind. You are their master. You are the Atma (Self).*”⁽¹⁵⁾ “*You have first to inquire into this mystery, who you are. You can then realise that you are nitya, eternal, beyond the boundaries of Time.*”⁽¹⁶⁾ “*When you ... arrive at the true answer to the question, ‘Who am I?’, you have identified and recognized the entire Cosmos and its mysteries.*”⁽¹⁶⁾

Raja Yoga or the Path of Meditation

The three paths outlined above use our mind (feelings and intellect) to discover our true nature. The path of meditation, on the other hand, aims to transcend our mind and experience our true nature directly. Several meditative practices are available but most involve focusing our attention, first, on a tangible part of our body (say, the breath or pulse) and then gradually shifting the focus to subtler and subtler aspects of us, until it comes to rest on the innermost core of ourselves.

As our innermost core (the Self) is formless, it may appear to be empty. Without a tangible thing to focus on, our attention may waver initially, but with practice we can make it abide in the Self. Enlightened beings such as Ramana Maharishi have indicated that when this is done for extended periods of time, our mind will collapse and in that transcendent stage we will come to realize our true Divine nature.

Swami said that in this state we “*will be saturated with unexcelled Ananda ... will be in ecstasy, immersed in the One and Only, the Eternal Divine Principle.*”⁽¹⁷⁾

We will also realize first-hand what Swami said:

“The reality of each is the reality of all and that Reality is the One Indivisible Atma.”⁽¹⁷⁾ *“Tat Tvam Asi ... You are that ... You are Brahman.”*⁽¹⁸⁾ *“There is only One - the Parabrahma ... Brahman alone is true; ... The Jivi or the individual is Brahma Itself.”*⁽¹⁹⁾

WHICH PATH TO FOLLOW?

None of the paths outlined above will be effective in making us to realize our true Divine nature if we don't first soften our mind. For this, we need to love all and serve all – without any self-interest. Assuming we do soften our minds, Swami has hinted the effectiveness of the paths as follows:

“The path of karma or work is like a path by which you go on foot. The path of bhakti or devotion is like a path by which you go on a cart. The path of jnana or wisdom is like a path by which you go on an airplane. The path of yoga or concentration is like a path by which you go on a steamer.”⁽²⁰⁾

The path suitable will vary from person to person, depending on the temperament of the individual. It will also vary with time, in that an individual will be drawn to different paths at different times. An individual may also follow multiple paths, and that is beneficial since each path will reinforce the awareness brought by the other paths. Regardless of which path we follow we will eventually realize that we are indeed Divinity, and that **we were always Divinity.**

Swami said in a letter:

“After long searches, here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back. Completing the circle from where you started to your own soul, you find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you are looking as the mystery of all mysteries, shrouded in the clouds, is the nearest of the near. He is your own self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature.”⁽²¹⁾

*Om Sai Ram
Arul Shanty*

- (1) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume29/d960905.pdf>
- (2) <http://saibaba.ws/vahini/sathyasaivahini/sathyasaivahini09.htm>
- (3) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume18/sss18-23.pdf>
- (4) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume23/sss23-36.pdf>
- (5) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume29/sss29-28.pdf>
- (6) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume29/sss29-22.pdf>
- (7) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume13/sss13-29.pdf>
- (8) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume09/sss09-10.pdf>
- (9) <http://saibaba.ws/vahini/sathyasaivahini/sathyasaivahini10.htm>
- (10) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume20/sss20-15.pdf>
- (11) <http://www.ssbpt.info/summershowers/ss1974/ss1974part1.pdf>
- (12) <http://saibaba.ws/teachings/nineformsdevotion.htm>
- (13) <http://www.ssbpt.info/summershowers/ss1979/ss1979.pdf>
- (14) Sanathana Sarathi – December 2003
- (15) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume28/sss28-33.pdf>
- (16) <http://saibaba.ws/vahini/sathyasaivahini/sathyasaivahini18.htm>
- (17) <http://saibaba.ws/vahini/sathyasaivahini/sathyasaivahini02.htm>
- (18) <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume02/sss02.pdf>
- (19) <http://saibaba.ws/vahini/sathyasaivahini/sathyasaivahini17.htm>
- (20) <http://www.ssbpt.info/summershowers/ss1973/ss1973-28.pdf>
- (21) <http://saibaba.ws/messages/searches.htm>

*Love is God, God is Love,
Live in Love*

God is love and love is God.

*When you hold on to this principle of love and
develop love to love relationship,
you will attain the state of non-dualism.*

(Telugu Poem)

*M*odern youth fail to understand the true meaning of love. Love cannot exist if there is a feeling of duality. *Ekatma Prema* (non-dual love) is true love. Give and take relationship does not reflect the true spirit of love. One should keep giving and giving, without expecting anything in return. That is true love. To retreat in times of difficulty is the sign of selfish love.

Yathartha Prema (true love) will reign supreme only when you give up *Swartha* (selfishness) and strive for *Parartha* (welfare of others). You should know the difference between *Padartha* (matter) and *Yathartha* (reality). Reality transcends matter. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman). Consider everything as divine and treat the dualities of life, such as pain and pleasure, loss and gain with equanimity. *Sukhadukhe Samekruthwa Labhalabhau Jayajayau* (one should remain unaffected by happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat).

Never be carried away by the vagaries of the mind. When you follow the mind, you see only matter but not the reality. Mind is related to matter. You should not have anything to do with matter. When you associate yourself with the mind, you can never visualise unity. You cannot develop true love and devotion unless you give up duality.

Understand that the same principle of love exists in you and others. A true devotee is one who understands the principle of unity and acts



accordingly. Non-dualism is true devotion. Share your love with others without any expectation. Love everybody only for the sake of love. When you extend your love to others, you can attain the state of non-dualism.

The love that you experience day in and day out at the physical and worldly plain is not true love at all! True love is that which is focused on one form, one path, and one goal. It is a great mistake to divide love and divert it in different directions. Love is God; God is love; Live in love. Only then can you realise the principle of oneness and attain fulfilment in life. *Prema Muditha Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram ...* (sing the sweet name of Rama with your heart filled with love).

You may choose any name you like but you should call Him only with love. Love is most sacred, sweet, and non-dual. It is a great mistake to divide such love and associate it with multiplicity. Your love should remain steady in pleasure and pain.

Love and devotion do not give any scope for differences. All differences are the making of your mind. Develop the feeling of oneness that you and I are one. Never think that you and I are different. That is the sign of true devotion.

The letter 'I' stands for oneness. 'You' (individual identity) will not exist when you develop purity and experience oneness with Divinity. Hence, give up

dualistic feelings. The principle of oneness has to be experienced through love. It cannot be explained in words.

But, you have not understood the true meaning of love. You are interpreting it in the physical and worldly sense. Consequently, your love is never steady. It keeps changing every now and then. Love should not be tainted with body attachment. Body is made up of matter. All that is related to matter will never give you peace and happiness.

Hence, transcend matter and see the reality. Develop *Ekatma Bhava* (feeling of oneness). All are one, be alike to everyone. It is a big mistake to attribute worldly feelings to love. There is no scope for dualism in love.

Your names and forms are different but the principle of love is the same in all of you. That is why I address you as the "Embodiments of love." Love is always one, it should not be divided. Consider God as one and love Him wholeheartedly. Such one-pointed love towards God can be termed as true devotion.

Devotees like Jayadeva, Gauranga and Eknath developed such divine love and sanctified their lives. Likewise, Mira and Sakhubai had unwavering love and devotion towards God. They did not worship various names and forms. They followed one path. They installed one name and one form in their heart and contemplated on their chosen deity incessantly.



Your names and forms are different but the principle of love is the same in all of you.

**That is why I address you as the
*"Embodiments of love."***

**Love is always one, it should not be divided.
Consider God as one and love Him wholeheartedly.**

**Such one-pointed love towards God
can be termed as true devotion.**



Those who are dual-minded and change their path every now and then are bound to ruin their lives. Hence, never be dual-minded. Experience Divinity with *Ekatma Bhava*. You may choose any name you like Rama, Krishna, Easwara, etc., and contemplate on the form. You will certainly reach the goal of life. Lead your life with your mind always focused on the goal.

Once Radha could not find Krishna anywhere. As she was deeply attached to Krishna's physical form, she went in search of Him everywhere. She always yearned and pined for His physical proximity. The name and the form are one and the same. However, people are unable to enquire deeply and experience such oneness.

The power of love is unparalleled. It is beyond the ken of human understanding. Love can be understood only through love.

Mira's husband Rana had built a *mandir* for Krishna. Being a great devotee of the Lord, Mira was always found in the *mandir* singing His glory ecstatically. Consequently, she earned the wrath of Rana. He commanded her to leave the *mandir*. This came as a great shock to Mira. She thought to herself, "When Krishna is all-pervasive and not confined to this *mandir* alone, how can Rana take me away from Him?" She left her home and hearth and set out to Mathura.

Where is Mathura? It is not some geographical location. The heart suffused with nectarine love is Mathura. She sang, *Chalo Re Man Ganga Yamuna Teer* (Oh mind! Go to the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna). Here Ganga and Yamuna symbolically mean *Ida* and *Pingala* (left and right nostrils). The central part of the eyebrows where *Ida* and *Pingala* meet stands for Mathura. This is the esoteric meaning of the song. She proceeded towards Mathura chanting the Name of Krishna incessantly crossing rivers, hills, dales and forests.

When she ultimately reached Brindavan, she found the temple doors closed. In spite of her repeated prayers, the doors did not open. Then she said, "Oh Krishna, my heart is Your temple. I have installed You in the altar of my heart." She banged her head against the temple door, calling out to Krishna. She had the vision of Krishna and merged in Him. King Rana repented for having driven away Mira from the temple. He prayed to Krishna for forgiveness.

People these days do not enquire into the inner meaning of certain words they use. They are carried away by the worldly meanings and interpretations. You should take into consideration the feelings that emerge from your heart, which are true and eternal. This is how Mira experienced oneness with Krishna.

If one wishes to tread the path of devotion, one should hold on to the principle of love firmly. Ordinary mortals do not have such firm determination but a true devotee will never deviate from the path of love under any circumstances. No other path except love can take us to God. Develop love more and more. Wherever you are, love is your sole refuge.

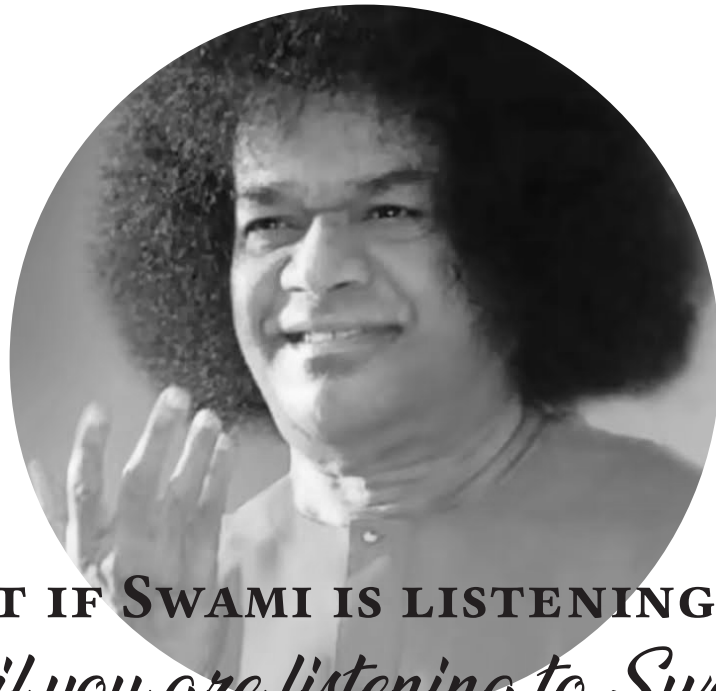
Fill your hearts with love and let love be the guiding principle in all your activities when you return home. When you have love in your heart, you do not need to worry about anything. God will always be with you, in you, around you and will look after you in all respects.

When you say, "Krishna, I will follow You," it means that Krishna is separate from you. It is then possible that you will lose your way. Hence, you should pray, "Krishna, please be with me always." In fact, He is always in you. When you enquire deeply, you will experience this Truth. It is impossible to be away from Him.

Many devotees proclaim, "Oh God, I am in you, I am with you and I am for you." They repeat these words like parrots but do not say them from the depths of their hearts. Actually, God is never separate from you. Pray to Him wholeheartedly with the conviction that He is always in you, with you, above you, below you and around you. When you offer such a prayer to God, He will certainly redeem your life.

13 April, 2005
Prasanthi Nilayam





**ASK NOT IF SWAMI IS LISTENING TO YOU,
*ask if you are listening to Swami!***

DR. MOGI NAYAGAR

“Believe Me, though I pass away, My bones in My tomb will give you hope and confidence. Not only Myself but My tomb would be speaking, moving and communicating with those who would surrender themselves whole-heartedly to Me. Do not be anxious that I will be absent from you. You will hear My bones speaking and discussing your welfare. But remember Me always, believe in Me, heart and soul, and then you will be most benefitted.”

If we hold our palms open in prayer to Him, Swami will immediately be with us, whether day or night. Our prayers are moments when we invite God to listen to us, and our daily *Dhyana* (meditation) is when we focus our stilled minds and listen to Him.

Conversations with Swami are both personal and practical. If we listen with a still mind and a pure heart, they inspire us to seek the One Supreme Truth and they reveal unmistakable wisdom to guide our daily lives. They also gift us the energy and a ‘can do’ attitude, especially when hope is steadily waning.

As a teenager, this idea of conversing with the Lord seemed dubious and I thought the messages were mere voices in my head – would the Lord of the Universe really zoom down into my little world and communicate with me? Would Swami, who knows everything, whose eyes see long back into every

creature’s history and far into the future, talk to me about my life? The mind struggles that this can be true.

The perennial question raises its ugly head every time: “How do I know if it is truly the voice of Swami?” We are all guilty of being the Doubting Thomas! The challenge is to identify the source of the conversation, whether it springs from the ego or heart. The voice of our conscience is never hurtful to anyone or anything, it is selfless. The test is in our ability to dispassionately question the source of the voice being heard.

“Go wherever you will, over the wide world, I am with you. My abode is in your heart and I am within you. Always worship Me, Who is seated in your heart, as well as, in the hearts of all beings,” says Sathya Sai. These comforting words of Swami are a

confirmation of His presence within us, guiding us as His instruments of Love!

The conditions laid down by the Vedas to be His instrument include: to adorn ourselves with the necklace of *Dharma*, to speak the Truth (*Sathya*), to have correct vision (*Samyuk Drishti*) and to listen to the creative sound, Om (*Pranava*), that permeates the Universe. Bedecking ourselves with these celestial jewels will make us Swami's priceless Chandrakanth jewel (servant).

The advent of Swami gifted us with the opportunity for *Darshan* (sight of the Divine), *Sparshan* (touch of the Divine) and *Sambhashan* (conversation with the Divine). In this discussion we focus on *Sambhashan*, being our conversations with God and vice versa. Swami declared, "*Darshan alone is not sufficient and we must have Sparshan, touch of the Divine, and Sambhashan, conversation with the Divine.*" (Divine Discourse: Kerala Youth meet at Puttaparthi)

As Swami has withdrawn from His physical body, it is important to understand the context of *Sambhashan*, which is listening to Divine guidance. As we don't have the physical Form to confer Divine Grace, the question to reflect on, "How are our prayers to be answered and our problems solved?"

To clarify the role of *Sambhashan* in a devotee's life, I am reminded of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and a young seeker named Narendra, later to become known as Swami Vivekananda. Narendra loved Ramakrishna very much but was sceptical about many of the latter's teachings. When he asked Ramakrishna whether he had seen God, Ramakrishna replied in the affirmative, adding, "*I see God as clearly as I see you.*" Ramakrishna not only saw Mother in the idol of Kali but also spoke to her regularly.

As I write this article, I am thinking of our personal conversations with future generations of *bhakta* about how we too can proclaim, like Ramakrishna did, that we have seen and spoken to Lord Sai. It becomes a mandatory *sadhana* for all of us who have had the joy of hearing Swami's voice and seeing His Divine smile to convey the eternal love of the 'Ever-present Sai'.

But beyond this, we need to highlight the endless opportunity of *Sambhashan* and the manifestation of the Divine Voice and Form through the ever familiar

appearance of *vibuthi* (sacred ash), the fragrance of scented jasmine, personal miracles of healing, the continuing materialisations of medallions and *lingam* in homes and Sathya Sai Centres around the world and His Divine Hands orchestrating events for all beings. These are evidence of His Divine presence and the heart-to-heart connection with His devotees, what Swami calls His "Calling Cards."

It is important to acknowledge that the blessings conferred by these physical and intangible manifestations of Swami's presence are His unique method of communication with us as individuals and as a collective.

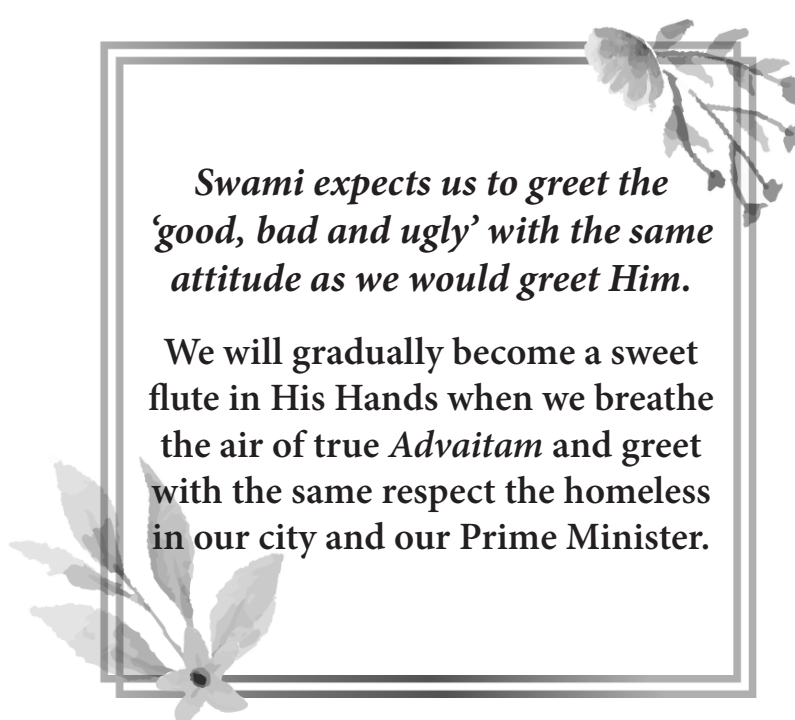
Recently, we lost our pet, Truffle, in Seattle. During that time we were in Hong Kong and prayed to Swami in the evening to receive Truffle well and we offered *prasadam*. The next morning it was so comforting to find materialised *vibuthi* on the apple in the shape of the alphabet T (as in Truffle). We offered our gratitude to Swami for His reassurance, which settled the family's sadness in Seattle.

Our personal faith (*Shraddha*) plays an integral role in Swami's communication with us. In addition, our practice of Constant Integrated Awareness and our awareness of Swami as our constant companion helps us to tune-in to the frequency of the Divine voice and guidance. Anyone can speak to Sai any time, any place; He listens!

Swami reminds us that, "*You can either make a picture into God or make God into a picture.*" If one feels one's words with the idol in the altar at home is not with an inanimate idol but with God, then with God it is with.

I am reminded of an incident that happened when my children were in primary school. It was a weekday evening and I had to attend a SSEHV meeting as we were publishing the first booklet that was going to be distributed in public primary schools in New Zealand. As I had no time to check my children's homework, I spoke to Swami in the picture in my bedroom and asked Him to see to the children and check on them after I went out.

On my return that night, I was absolutely astonished to hear my 8 year-old daughter tell me about how Swami stepped out from the picture, walked in the house, and told her not to be afraid as He had come to take care of them while her mum was busy. Words



***Swami expects us to greet the
'good, bad and ugly' with the same
attitude as we would greet Him.***

**We will gradually become a sweet
flute in His Hands when we breathe
the air of true *Advaitam* and greet
with the same respect the homeless
in our city and our Prime Minister.**

cannot describe my ecstasy. More importantly, it created an unforgettable, life long affirmation and experience for my daughter, reassuring her of Swami's guidance and compassion.

We must persevere to expand our self-awareness and learn to embrace the unexpected with Swami, and not have a limited assumption of how He may speak to us. We can even seek Swami in Nature, in the beauty of the sunset or the majesty and strength of a mountain.

Everything in your country should be revered as holy. *Puniya Bhumi*, the sacred land of India, is a fine example of people worshipping almost everything, from an ant to a mountain, the river Gangamata and snakes. This sacred vision of oneness, *Samyuk Dhristi*, is part of the preparation we undertake to be instruments of Swami as He speaks and serves through us.

In the words of St Francis:

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.”

The task may seem daunting initially. However, fear not, for as we hold on to the Lotus Feet of Swami, His

guidance will be provided. Start with 'baby steps' if need be, '*Padam padam*,' to develop the vision to see God everywhere and in everything, in the true spirit of Universal Oneness.

Swami expects us to greet the 'good, bad and ugly' with the same attitude as we would greet Him. We will gradually become a sweet flute in His Hands when we breathe the air of true *Advaitam* and greet with the same respect the homeless in our city and our Prime Minister. At work with your colleagues or at home with family, may we prompt ourselves to express our words from our 'joybox'... spurring ourselves on with Swami's nectarine words, "*Advaita Darshanam Jnanam*," meaning the experience of non-duality is true wisdom.

Each one of us has this mystical 'joybox' that contains our thoughts, words, and actions, with which we can tune into Swami for inner guidance. Remember, Swami is listening to every thought and uttered word, hence use the vocabulary of love and remove the exclamations of hate. Great leaders like Mother Theresa and President Obama are remembered for words that have been frequently uplifting and grand visions of man's best tendencies.

Likewise, we should carefully select our words so that they permeate with the 'Sai fragrance' that is so familiar to us. It should be an inclusive fragrance of love that connects to the heart of the receiver and vibrates in every wall of our home or workplace.

Just like the Universe reverberates with the *Pranava* sound of OM, our words must be filled with hope and prayers for all beings everywhere.

As Swami advised, *Sparshan* removes the Karmic consequences of past actions and *Sambhashan* removes *Sankata*, the difficulties encountered. It would be wise to remember Swami's comment, "Do you think you can get Liberation just by touching My Feet? If it were so easy then every fly that sits on My Feet would get liberated!" This should jolt our awareness to be earnest in conversations with Sai and to sincerely serve as His instrument, yearning to be exemplars of love.

The essential point is that we cannot expect to remain in kindergarten for all times, we must keep moving up the spiritual evolution ladder. Moving up implies being the instrument in a larger sense, as explained above. In the ultimate analysis, as the servant of love we must aim at *Advaitam*, whereby the difference between Swami and us is erased. We must take incremental spiritual steps, including spiritual self-audits, to keep us moving towards that seemingly distant goal of ONENESS.

We will do well to remember that we should accept what is served to us on the 'karmic buffet table' of life, instead of purposelessly crafting a self-designed menu that we expect God to serve us. Let us allow Swami to be the Divine Director of the play of our lives and follow His sacred script, taking the lead role of Swami's HERO in our personal life stories. Allow Swami to be the SOUL Director of our thoughts, words and actions, even if we have to go through the baptism of fire, for the end product is Divine!

In summary, I cite my personal journey to 'Revere Him in all.' From a very tender age, the principle of revering God in different forms was etched in my subconscious mind. I was raised in a large extended family spanning over four generations who regularly visited the mosque on Thursday, church on Sunday and temple on Friday. It was not a question of tolerance but revering each other's faiths.

Tolerance didn't enter the paradigm of worship in my family as we were raised with multi-faith reverence and the names of Jesus, Rahim, or Ram were uttered with the same gusto during our family worship. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7).

The clarion call is for our cells to know that our Sai is our *Antaryami*. We all need to make the effort to hear the Creator's voice in a bubbling brook, in the song of a bird, in the wind whistling through the trees and in a baby's cry. We need to be Swami's Hanuman in our faith and have our Ram mantra vibrating even in the strands of our hair.

Swami has assured us that our patience (*Saburie*) and faith (*Shraddha*) are our greatest spiritual attributes to clear doubts and resolve problems. Sai needs no intermediary, He speaks and answers His devotees through several channels of communication, including dreams and silent whispers. Through our sincere devotion and meditation on Him, we will hear His voice in the silence. Swami answers in mysterious ways.

"God knows whatever I do is because He is my Indweller."

*Loving Sai Rams,
Dr. Mogi Nayagar*





SPIRITUALITY - *an Ongoing Dance* WITH THE DIVINE

SEETHA SUBRAMANIAN

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Sathya Sai Baba explains that spirituality does not only mean doing *dhyana* (meditation), *japa* (chanting), or offering *bhajan*. To gain in spirituality, man has to give up the beastly qualities that are deeply rooted in his heart, having accrued over many past lives. We need to change both within and without in order to realise our innate divinity, and to believe that God is present everywhere at all times. Spirituality requires that we purify our hearts.

We cannot desire both God and the world simultaneously. To proceed on our spiritual journey, we need to cleanse and still our minds, i.e. to strive for *Chitta Shuddhi* (purity of mind), so that we respect others as we respect God and see only the good in them. Rectifying ourselves and practical transformation is spirituality.

The spiritual aspirant seeks to remove the desires and temptations borne of the senses by attending *satsang* (the company of those who seek the Truth and so avoid bad company), engaging in good actions and in spiritual *sadhana*. Selfless service to others, conducting ourselves in the way that we would like others to conduct themselves, and always being humble are simple proofs of our progress.

If our actions do not transform us to behave in a godly way then all our *sadhana* is of no avail. Spirituality has no pathway in such a case.

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS IS RIGHT LIVING, GOOD CONDUCT, MORAL BEHAVIOUR

Many of us have the mistaken notion that being religious and God fearing is right living. The four *purushartha* (objects of human pursuit) of life are *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (pleasure/love) and *Moksha* (liberation). The scriptures provide that we should use right means to make money and use the money earned for the right ends, to attain *Moksha*.

This also means that while we may enjoy the love and simple pleasures of the world, we do not get attached to them or depend on them for our

happiness, or that we make money in whatever way just to enjoy worldly pleasures. We need to work towards liberation, to get out of the cycle of birth and death.

Adi Shankaracharya says in the Bhaja Govindam,
“*Satsangatve nissangatvam;
nissangathve nirmohatvam;
nirmohatve nischalatatvam;
nischalatatve jivanmukthi*”

(that the company of the good brings non-attachment, and from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion, which leads to steadfastness that results in liberation).

Spirituality requires that each one of us asks oneself: “Where I did come from? Why I am here? Where will I be after I leave this body?” Spirituality teaches us the purpose of life and it blooms within us in the form of good conduct as its natural consequence.

Swami says, “*Be good, See Good, Do good – That’s the way of life.*” This sounds simple but it requires one to develop harmony of thoughts, words, and deeds. Good living calls for us to do the right thing always, which requires us to go within and connect with the God in us at every moment.

Being aware of this is one thing but practicing spirituality and attaining divine qualities is not an easy task. All spiritual aspirants start with an earnest attitude when they undertake *sadhana*, like reading scriptures, visiting temples, singing *bhajan*, listening to the discourses of saints and sages, and engaging in *Narayan seva* and other *seva* activities.

When engaging in such *sadhana*, we need to remind ourselves that spirituality is not a part-time endeavour but a way of life. Are our minds purified from engaging in *sadhana*? Are we following the Divine injunction, “*Love All, Serve All, Help Ever, Hurt Never*”?

Two aspects are important in this: firstly, that the aspirants are transformed into better human beings; and, secondly, the source of their encouragement to continue in their *sadhana*. Is it the acknowledgement or appreciation they get and the praise and feeling of being better than others, or are they humble and grateful for the opportunities they have been given only by the Grace of God to perform these *sadhana*.

Without our own efforts, we cannot practice spirituality. We will face challenges and even obstacles and from time to time we may even doubt if our efforts are doing us any good. Having doubts and striving to get them cleared, asking questions and getting them answered are essential elements to spiritual progress.

We have to make the effort to progress. When the mind is not pure and we do not always have good thoughts, we should stop those thoughts and not allow them to develop into words and action. We need to reflect upon the thoughts we have and enquire from where they have come, and then remove the mental processes and ignorance that cause the negativity.

This requires that we turn our minds inwards to quieten our thoughts, that we concentrate on higher thoughts so that we develop stillness of mind and peace within – in this way we will purify our minds.

Swami’s “Oka Chinna Katha” (one short story) titled “It shone like a mirror” shows the value of purifying one’s mind. It includes a story: Once a great painter was asked by a king to execute a huge fresco on the wall of his Durbar Hall, particularly a scene from the Mahabharatha battle. Another painter came and asked for permission to execute a fresco on the opposite wall, he said he would prepare on his wall an equally grand fresco within the same period, in fact an exact replica of the other, in spite of a curtain between the walls.

On the date fixed for the frescoes to be seen by the king, the curtain was removed. The king was amazed to find the other painter had produced an exact copy of the same scene from the Mahabharatha battle that the great painter had produced, down to the minutest lines and curves, tints and tilts, light and shade. The king questioned that painter how he did it. The artist said he had not used any brush or paint, what he had done was to thoroughly polish the wall assigned to him so that it shone like a mirror. The duplicate fresco was only a reflection of the original.

Similarly, we have to cleanse our minds and make them pure so that God’s sublime grandeur and beauty may be reflected in our hearts.

‘Dance,’ the Encyclopaedia Britannica says, is the movement of the body in a rhythmic way, usually to music and within a given space, for the purpose of expressing an idea or emotion, releasing energy, or simply taking delight in the movement itself. So, are we enjoying a beautiful dance with the Divine in our spiritual journey?

We need to take one step towards God and He then takes ten towards us as our dance begins. Unless and until we take the second step, the dance does not continue. In the same way, unless we shed the dross that has held us back and we are transformed there will no rhythm, our actions will not be in-sync with God’s.

We all genuinely want to be spiritual and pure but we tend to get caught in our comfort zone and we find it difficult to go beyond that. We take refuge in

our body-identity and find excuses to not further our dance with the Divine – we seem happy in the distractions of the glittering lights of the ballroom. Yet, knowledge that is not put into practice is like food that is not digested, says Sathya Sai Baba.

Respect, dedication, communication, a complimentary skill set and trust are some of the qualities dance partners look for. Do we have all these for our spiritual dance partner, God! Can our dance be a seamless rhythm with consistently endearing movements?

Will we dedicate ourselves to this ongoing dance with the Divine till we can dance no more and we reach the end of the song of our lives only to merge with the Divine, or achieve Self-realisation?

Unfortunately, in life, we place our hands into God's during our so-called spiritual time and then act completely differently at other times, when we are fully immersed in worldly pleasures and assume our body-identity is our real identity, when we exhibit human emotions like desire, lust, greed, pride, envy, jealousy, etc. We treat compassion, kindness, and service as moments of spiritual time and at other times we act on our selfish desires and go after comfort, luxury, popularity, fame and recognition, and seek credit for all our good actions in the name of righteousness. Why do our qualities like compassion, forgiveness, forbearance and humility just disappear when we are absorbed in the world?

Spirituality is not just some outward action of service, it should remake us so that we see only the good in others and in ourselves. *“Even he, who you were treating as your worst enemy, has the self-same light in his inner heart. Know that that same jyoti (divine flame) or light is inside us all,”* said Swami.

So, how do we improve in our dance with the Divine? Awareness is our first step. Then we should use our spiritual *sadhana* as the means for our self-improvement, rather than thinking our spiritual *sadhana* is an end in itself, earning us temporary merits and rewards for our karmic good actions. They are, indeed, just opportunities given to us to realise the Divine in us.

The more we want to enjoy our dancing time with the Divine, the more we should practice leading a spiritual life, rather than dancing like a drunkard

between Divinity and our human/animal instincts. Let us practice spirituality with single-minded attention and discipline so that we progress from being an amateur dancer to a professional dancer. We need to do *abyasa* (constant practice) and earnestly meditate upon God all the time till we get harmony in thought, word, and deed, and then we will get our steps and rhythm with the Divine in sync.

Swami says, *“I am the dance master. I am Nataraja, Prince of dances. You are all my pupils. I alone know the agony of teaching you each step of the dance. Man learns through experience, and the spiritual path is full of different kinds of experiences. He will encounter many difficulties and obstacles, and they are the very experiences he needs to encourage and complete the cleansing process.”*

FOLLOW THE MASTER, FACE THE DEVIL, FIGHT TO THE END, FINISH THE GAME

When we are engaged in our life-long dance with the Divine, we live in constant harmony, connecting with our inner divinity all the time and operating from our Consciousness, having controlled and mastered our mind to become a Self-realised soul, living steadily inside and moving in the outside world without being affected by it at all (a *Jeevanmuktha*). Is this possible? Yes. Is this difficult? Yes. Yearning to merge with the Divine and our consistent effort are the keys to successfully invoking His Grace, which makes anything possible.

Life is a song – sing it. Life is a game – play it. Life is a challenge – meet it. Life is a dream – realise it. Life is a sacrifice – offer it. Life is love – enjoy it, says Swami. Let's dance with the Divine in this life journey, taking the lead from the Master Himself and learning through our life experiences, to reach the end of our song, merger with God.

*Aum Sri Sai Ram
Seetha Subramanian*



KAVITA L. CHABLANI
JAPAN



Since childhood, the most revered word I remember growing up with was ‘Dharma’. This sacred word has no equivalent in English, though it is loosely translated as a spiritual duty, righteous living, or right conduct. However, *Dharma* is much more than that – it is the natural law that combines concepts of both individual and fundamental duties at the different stages of one’s life, and it entails responsibility to the Self and society.

Dharma is the eternal order that rules the entire universe and the

laws that govern one’s life. My father, an ardent devotee Lord Rama, held Him as his role model, which is fitting as Lord Rama is the *Maryada Purushotam*, the supreme exemplar of the highest ideals of righteousness.

As an avid reader of the Ramayana, my father instilled in us the universal and sacred values of *Sathya* (Truth) and *Dharma* (Righteousness).

My mother, a pious devotee of Lord Krishna, was full of love (*Prema*) and enjoyed the Bhagavatham, which mesmerized her with Krishna’s *leelas* (miracles).

Lord Krishna is the most lovable and charming Form of God in Hindu *Dharma* and He inspires *Bhakti* (devotion) in all.

After I graduated from school, my brother introduced me to the teachings of the eternally sacred text of Hindu *Dharma*, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Fortunately, in Mumbai, we were blessed to attend the *Gita Gyana Yagna*, discourses that were delivered by Swami Chinmayananda. He explained that the essence of the *Gita* comes from the first word of the first stanza and the last word of the last stanza, namely, “*Mama Dharma*” (my *Dharma*).

Lord Krishna states that the highest *Dharma* to be achieved is to acquire spiritual wisdom. We need to realise our true Self is the *Atma*, or Supreme Consciousness, and to cultivate our own relationship with the Divine, the *Paramatma*. I used to ponder on this Divine Truth, wondering how we can realise our *Param Dharma* (Supreme *Dharma*) in this human birth whilst confronted with the powerful delusions and distractions of *Maya* (the divine power of illusion by which the soul identifies itself with the body).

After marriage, I began the joyful *Dharma* of a wife and mother, being in the *Grahasta* (homemaker) stage of life. I learnt that a child is the greatest miracle in this world and that it arrives saying, “*Koham Koham*” (Who am I?). The child’s real purpose in this life is to realise the answer to this question is, “*Soham, Soham,*” (“That I am,” referring to our true identity as one with God). As parents, we came to realise that our *Dharma* is to teach and inspire our children to use their discriminative faculty of reasoning early in childhood and we set about to instil in them the importance of listening to their conscience – the voice of God – to realise their *Atma Dharma*.

In 1975, a Sathya Sai Centre was established in Kobe, with a few devotees starting regular *bhajans*. Although there was a vast collection of melodious *Sai Bhajans*, there was nobody to play a musical instrument. My husband had always loved music, he plays the harmonium and sings beautifully too – “Music is food for the soul,” said Arthur

Schopenhauer – and he was soon asked by an ardent devotee of Baba to attend a *bhajan* session to play the harmonium for them. The captivating tunes of the *bhajans* touched his inner being and brought my husband into the Sai fold.

My *Patni Dharma* (the *Dharma* of a wife) led me to follow him, thus the weekly family *bhajan* sessions started for us. With the Grace of Swami, soon after my husband was appointed the National Bhajan Coordinator for SSIO Japan.

Our family developed a deep urge to meet Sathya Sai Baba in Puttaparthi. We eventually went there. Words cannot describe the joy that descends upon one in Prasanthi Nilayam. When Swami walked out for *Darshan* – He actually seemed to glide on air – all eyes were on this magnificent Divine Form, looking for His sublime smile. I was in awe of this Embodiment of both Rama and Krishna. The Love that emanated from Him was all-consuming. In Puttaparthi, I picked up many Sai books as reading Sai literature is one of the 10 point Code of Conduct for Sai devotees.

Swami often explains that one has earned this human body and that this human life is the reward of many lives spent in acquiring merit (*Punya*). We have won this unique good fortune of having the *darshan* of Sai.

Of great importance is His message, “*I am God and you are God. I have realised it and you have not.*” I was overwhelmed by the impact of this sacred and transformative declaration, my heart filled with joy and I

experienced an inexplicable peace.

I came upon a verse that explained the incarnation of God on earth. It is a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita* that we have all heard:

“*Yada yada hi dharmasya
glanir bhavati bhārata
Abhyu tthanam adharmaḥ
tadatmanam sṛjamyaham*”

Swami alluded to it in His Milestone Speech on the occasion of His 43rd birthday on 23rd November 1968 when He explained His own incarnation. Swami declared:

“*For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil doers and for establishing righteousness on a firm footing, I incarnate from age to age. Whenever ashanti, or disharmony, overwhelms the world, the Lord will incarnate in human form to establish the modes of earning prasanthi, or peace, and to re-educate the human community in the path of peace. At the present time, strife and discord have robbed peace and unity from the family, the school, the society, the religions, the cities and the state.*”

The arrival of the Lord is also anxiously awaited by saints and sages. Sadhus (spiritual aspirants) prayed and I have come. My main tasks are fostering of the Vedas (Hindu scriptures) and protection of the devotees. Your virtue, your self-control, your detachment, your faith, your steadfastness, these are the signs by which people read of My glory.

You can lay claim to be a devotee only when you have placed yourself in My

hands fully and completely surrendered with no trace of ego. You can enjoy the bliss through the experience the Avatar confers. The Avatar behaves in a human way so that mankind can feel kinship, but rises into superhuman heights so that mankind can aspire to reach the heights, and through that aspiration actually reach Him. Realizing the Lord within you as the motivator is the task for which He comes in human form.

Avatars like Rama and Krishna had to kill one or more individuals who could be identified as enemies of the Dharmic (righteous) way of life, and thus restore the practice of virtue. But now there is no one fully good, so who deserves the protection of God? All are tainted by wickedness. Therefore, I have come to correct the buddhi, the intelligence by various means. I have to counsel,

help, command, condemn and stand by as a friend and well-wisher to all, that they may give up evil propensities and recognize the straight road, tread it and reach the goal. I have to reveal to the people the worth of the Vedas, the Sastras and the spiritual texts which lay down the norms.”

Such a Divine assurance from the Avatar! Only He can give it with such majesty and authority.

Swami revealed the consequences when Dharma is absent in our life. In His discourse on 7th January 1988 in the Poornachandra Hall He said, *“The man who is bereft of Dharma, of compassion and truth, and hath no virtues in him but is replete with vices, cannot find happiness here or in the hereafter.”*

Dharma (righteousness) and Moksha (liberation) are transcendental. Even the Vedas

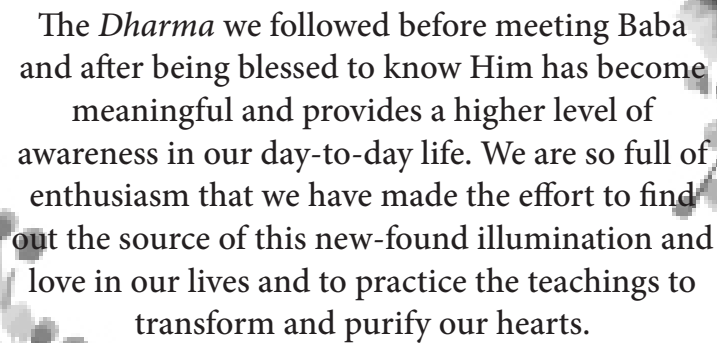
are not competent to grant Dharma and Moksha. That is why the Vedas have declared, *“Na karmana, na prajaya dhanena thyage naike amrutava mamasuhu”* (not by action, not by progeny, not by wealth; but by sacrifice alone can man attain immortality).

Swami provided the perquisite in carrying out one’s Dharma. In the message Swami gave at Nairobi on 4th July 1968, He said:

“Love is the basic nature that sustains him and strengthens his resolve to march ahead. Without love, man is blind; the world for him will be a dark and fearsome jungle. Love is the light that guides the feet of man in the wilderness. The Vedas laid down four goals before man, two pairs of goals, rather: Dharma-Artha (morality-wealth), the earning of the wherewithal for living through moral means; and Kama-Moksha (desire-

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“The man who is bereft of Dharma, of compassion and truth, and hath no virtues in him but is replete with vices, cannot find happiness here or in the hereafter.”



The *Dharma* we followed before meeting Baba and after being blessed to know Him has become meaningful and provides a higher level of awareness in our day-to-day life. We are so full of enthusiasm that we have made the effort to find out the source of this new-found illumination and love in our lives and to practice the teachings to transform and purify our hearts.

liberation), the attainment of liberation from the twin experience of pain and pleasure and the desire for that liberation, and for nothing less than that supreme treasure.”

The *Dharma* we followed before meeting Baba and after being blessed to know Him has become meaningful and provides a higher level of awareness in our day-to-day life. We are so full of enthusiasm that we have made the effort to find out the source of this new-found illumination and love in our lives and to practise the teachings to transform and purify our hearts.

Only after serious reflection and self-inquiry, we have realised that all this is happening as a result of the Divine *Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan* we had in the divine valley of Puttaparthi, where we experienced complete peace (*Prasanthi*) even in the midst of the thousands of souls who had gathered there. The all-embracing Divine Consciousness pervades all when we are in His Divine presence and He touched our hearts, changing it forever.

These divine vibrations were felt many years later when we were present at the painful and sombre occasion of the *Mahasamadhi* on 27th April 2011. The varied crowds that had gathered there filled the entire Sai Kulwant Hall – emissaries of the major religions came to pay homage to Swami, whilst leaders spoke about Swami’s omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.

The huge cry of anguish that sprang in unison from the hearts of those present when His physical body was lowered into Mother Earth reverberated throughout Prasanthi Nilayam. It was an unforgettable moment.

Yet, the unity that held that moment together was proof that although our God, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, had left his physical Form, His *Sarva Dharma* mission had been realised and yet, still continues.

When God comes down to earth in human form He too bows to time, since that is the *Dharma* of the body He dons and He is Himself *Dharma*. His withdrawal is part of a master plan that

no one can ever comprehend. Yet, He does not leave us, He is always in our hearts, vibrant and always prodding us to remember Him and that He is the Doer of everything in our lives.

We are truly fortunate to have been a contemporary of the *Avatar* of this age and to have been blessed with His teachings to illuminate our journey to Self-realisation. The onus is on us devotees to march forward, confident that He continues to walk with us. It is our *Dharma* to share His light with others and to live our lives as His message!

*With Loving Sairams,
Kavita L. Chablani
Japan*





LIVE IN God

The hard-working farmer has no fear of starvation. The one who chants the name of God has no fear of worldly worries. The man of few words will be free from enmity, for excessive talk causes a man to fall prey to quarrels. Everyone should cultivate moderation in speech – restraint in speech is conducive to friendly feelings. The one who is careful in his behaviour, doing all actions after due deliberation, will have no fear of danger.

All these precepts are related to education. True education consists in knowing how to lead a peaceful life. This means that in embarking on one's educational career, one should aspire for world peace. The reason is he is a part of the world community; his well-being is intimately bound up with the well-being of the world. He should give up all narrow feelings. Students have also got to acquire unity and fellowship.

All these qualities cannot be taught by teachers. For every individual, Nature is the best teacher. Nature is teaching all lessons to man all the time.

THE SUPREME VIRTUE IN A MAN

What lends beauty to sports and games is the spirit of unity in the participants who play in them, eschewing feelings of envy and hatred. The supreme virtue in a man is to forget his individual differences with others and move with them in a spirit of equality and harmony.

Today, people derive only physical fitness and strength from taking part in sports and games. But man is not the body alone. Fulfillment in life is not attained by physical health and strength alone. Even when the stomach is full, the mind

must get satisfaction. Hence, effort should be made to promote mental health also. Only when both the mind and the body are hale and well can one experience happiness. However, young people today are concerned only about physical appearance and fitness.

By Divine grace, man is endowed with physical, mental, and spiritual potencies of many kinds. Unfortunately, young people tend to misuse these powers and come to grief. They do not recognise the magnitude of their internal powers. The mind is the source of all powers and only when the mind is subdued can man realise the Divine.

USE AND ABUSE OF ENERGIES PRESENT IN MAN

For achieving anything, strong determination is necessary. Young people in particular should take note of the powers in them. It is comparable to a kind of electrical energy; this energy enables them to see things through the eye (which is like a bulb). You must ensure that your vision is pure, sacred, and pleasing. Do not taint or pollute your sight by looking at undesirable objects, do not look at anything with bad thoughts. The eyes are spoilt by misuse.

Then, you have circulating in the entire body a magnetic energy. Although this energy is present throughout the body, its presence is conspicuous in the hands. Hence, the hands should be employed for good purposes; they should not be used for doing harm to others or hurting them.

Moreover, in the body there are rays that emit light. The electrical energy in the body serves to transmit these rays throughout the body like radio waves. People do not use these energies for right purposes. The ears listen to gossip, slander, and evil talk, and as a result the power of hearing gets polluted.

Then, you have the power of speech. This power finds expression in sound waves. This power has to be used with great care. The words one utters should be examined to see that they do not excite, irritate, or anger others. Bad words come back to the speaker with double strength and, hence, one's speech should be soft and sweet.

The major weakness of young people is the tendency to misuse their boundless potencies. This degrades them as human beings. Failing to exercise control over their actions, young people tend to become unruly and ungovernable. You may be great scholars or intellectual giants but there are many Nobel Laureates and how many remember them?

The great benefactors of mankind, the men of noble qualities, are cherished by all mankind. For instance, there is the example of a noble soul from Calcutta. Calcutta produced many great intellectuals but after a time they were not remembered at all. If today Ramakrishna Paramahansa, an illiterate person, is enshrined in the hearts of millions all over the world, is education responsible for it? Likewise, if many noble persons are enshrined in the hearts of

people, what is the reason? They have earned their good name by their faith in God, their character, magnanimity and spirit of sacrifice. God has been the prime factor in their lives.

A CHILD'S FAITH IN GOD

The other day you witnessed in the sports festival a young child dancing as Krishna on the hood of a serpent. Owing to the firing of some crackers, the cloth on the platform where the child was dancing caught fire. As the flames rose, the police, the students, and others rushed to the spot with buckets of water to put out the fire. There was great commotion.

But the child Krishna went on with his dance, totally indifferent to what was happening all around. His entire concentration was on the role he was playing. The child went on with the dance with his concentration on Swami. His eyes were centred on Swami. When one's look is centred on the Lord, nothing untoward can happen.

All around the child, the decorations had been prepared with paper. Behind the decorations, five hundred children were seated. What disaster might have happened if the fire had spread towards them? But, even a mountain of danger will melt away like ice if one's thoughts are centred on God. This means that together with concern for worldly things, there should be devotion to God. Together with education, *Samskara* (refinement of character) is essential.

What is meant by *Samskara*? "*Samyak Kriti Iti Samskara*" (refinement of action is culture). The true implication of the benediction, "*Lokah Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*" is not properly understood. "All should be happy." This is the assurance of the Divine.

VALMIKI, VYASA AND POTHANA

How did a highwayman like Rathnakara become the immortal author of the great epic Ramayana? By continuous chanting of the name of the Lord, as taught to him by the *Saptharishi* (seven great sages), his face acquired a new effulgence and he became the sage Valmiki, who is immortalized as the author of the Ramayana. He composed his work to please the Lord. He did everything in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.

GOD WILL NOT GIVE UP DEVOTEES

God can never give up the devotee. It is the devotee who gives up God. God can never forget the devotee. It is the devotee who forgets God. God is never away from you. Only the devotee is away from God.

You think that God is moving away from you. Not at all. You forget God and declare that God has forgotten you. Your own feelings are reflected in your utterances.

Take the case of Sage Vyasa. He was the author of eighteen Puranas (ancient spiritual epics). He wrote the Mahabharata and many other great works. But it was only when he was filled with divine fervour and wrote the Bhagavatham that he became enshrined in the hearts of the people. Valmiki and Vyasa have become immortal through their devotion.

We have Pothana, the author of the Telugu Bhagavatham. He began writing his Bhagavatham with an invocation in which he declared, "What is being composed is Bhagavatham. The one who inspires the writer is Ramachandhra. What is written by me will be redemptive. I shall write as there is no greater story to tell." Pothana began composing his *magnum opus* with the feeling that everything he was doing was by the will of Sri Rama. So, when you think of Bhagavatham, you are reminded of Pothana. By his great work he has installed himself in the hearts of the devout.

MIND SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS GOD

Students should not end with mastery of books. The hearts should be filled with right knowledge. The students should see that the darkness which envelops the mind is dispelled. This was the prayer that the gopikas requested Uddhava to convey to Krishna: "Oh Krishna! Dispel the darkness in our

hearts and fill them with your effulgence. Pour your love on the parched fields of our hearts so that devotion may sprout from them."

The *gopikas* and *gopalas* prayed to Krishna that they cannot live apart from Him and, therefore, they should be endowed with forms related to whatever forms He took, so that they may stay with Him. Separation from God is the cause of men's wallowing in sensuous pleasures. The mind is the cause of man's pleasure and pain. It should be directed towards God to secure freedom from pleasure and pain.

GOD WILL NOT GIVE UP DEVOTEES

People today say that God has forgotten man. This is not true. God can never give up the devotee. It is the devotee who gives up God. God can never forget the devotee. It is the devotee who forgets God. God is never away from you. Only the devotee is away from God. You think that God is moving away from you. Not at all. You forget God and declare that God has forgotten you. Your own feelings are reflected in your utterances.

What is the result of education? You find that in any conference, the members criticize one another in unspeakable terms. The critics are invariably petty-minded persons. Many leaders today indulge in

mutual mud slinging, which is totally unbecoming. Indulging in abuse of others is a grievous sin.

Develop your own good qualities and share them with others. That is the right way. Try to correct yourself rather than to criticize others. Most young people today indulge in slander instead of cultivating qualities like devotion to God, service to society, and sympathy for fellow beings. They should realise that they have to lead exemplary lives and serve their fellowmen. Every individual should dedicate himself to social service.

The spirit of sportsmanship which you display in sports and games should be displayed in other fields also. The determination displayed in sports should also be shown in the game of life.

You young people have to learn many things. First and foremost, get rid of *Ahamkara* (arrogance). Earn a good name as a scholar, a man of character, endowed with a spirit of sacrifice. Realise that if you please God, you can please the whole world.

You saw the film about the saint Ghora Khumbhar. In his total absorption in God, he forgot the presence of his son and unwittingly caused the child's death. When he realised what had happened, he did not mourn the death of the child. He declared that God took away what God had given him. Such was his total faith in God.

While pursuing your studies remember that you have also to strive for the well being of the world (*Loka hitharathah*).

SERVICE SHOULD JUSTIFY THE SALARIES

Make use of your education for public welfare. You have no doubt to take up a job for earning a living. See that the work you do justifies the emoluments you get. It is treason to the nation to receive thousands by way of salary and do hardly a few hundred rupees worth of work. Today, such disloyal employees are increasing in numbers all over the world. High salaries and poor turnout are the rule today.

This accounts for the deplorable condition of Bharat today. The public debt is growing alarmingly. Who is responsible? If public servants rendered service according to the salaries they received the country would not be in such a bad plight.

Discharge your duties according to your conscience. Our students should live up to this ideal. There is nothing wrong in receiving a high salary provided you do the work to deserve it. Now young people are concerned only about the pay packets and not the work they have to do in the service of society to deserve the pay. Think more about what you owe to society than what you can get from it. It is sheer selfishness to be concerned only about your earnings. The Veda has declared that immortality can be attained only through sacrifice.

“STUDENTS ARE MY ONLY PROPERTY”

Students. Boys and girls. Wherever you may go, wherever you may live, serve the elders at home, serve the society and bring a good name to the institutions that have educated you. Observe discipline all through your life. Do your duty.

It is not easy to bring back the glorious days of the past. You young people cannot be aware of the times when a bag of rice could be purchased for four rupees, when people could go about without any fear of attack, and houses could be left unlocked. Today, fear stalks the country; no one is safe. For all these evils the insatiable craving for money is responsible. The evil began in a sway in the Dwapara Yuga, but today it has reached frightful limits. The craving for wealth has led to many other evils like jealousy and pride.

The money that comes from the people should be given back to them in one way or other. This is Bhagawan's Will. People say that Sai Baba is spending crores of rupees on the drinking water project. There is not a single rupee of Sai Baba in all this. What has been received from the people is being given back to them. I do not own anything. I have only one property, my most valuable property – My students are my only property. It is enough for me if my students conduct themselves well.

I bless you all that you should carry on your lives in the same spirit in which you have distinguished yourselves in games and sports. Win prizes in the game of life, carry out the injunctions of God, and stand forth as ideal citizens. Never forget the supremacy of love as the ruling principle in life.

**Poornachandra Auditorium
14 January, 1996**



ARE WE THE *Chosen Ones?*

VENKAT BOPPANA

As I collected my thoughts on this topic, I remembered a question Swami had once put to His students, “*What is the rarest phenomenon?*” One of the students answered, “*Self-realization.*” Swami replied, “*No, it is the destiny of every soul, all souls will have to reach Self-realization, and therefore it is not the rarest of the rare.*”

Swami then explained that God coming down in human form is the rarest phenomenon. But then, He went on to say that even more rare is knowing God in human form, pointing out that of the more than 7 billion humans only a few hundred million are aware of Swami. But even rarer are those tens of millions who come close to Swami. And, truly, the rarest are those who have the opportunity to serve the Lord, which may only be a few million people.

Are we the chosen ones? The answer is a resounding YES!

We are no doubt most fortunate. But that blessing comes with responsibility. We know very well that Swami's every word and act has deep meaning, and so if we believe we are the chosen ones we must also remember His instructions: *"Your mission has begun. Those are my words to you, My devotees. Each of you has a unique and valuable part to play in this lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve Me."*

Swami has reworded His earlier statement *"My Life is My Message"* to *"Your Life is My Message."* In doing so, He has placed a sacred duty on His students, devotees, and members of His organizations from all over the world. The duty? To love and serve all creation and by this means to purify oneself and achieve Self-realization.

His servitors (*sevak*) aspire for a three-fold transformation to be a true SAI *sevak*: First, and foremost, is spiritual transformation; second, is transformation of one's attitude towards society; and, third, is change at the individual level. When spiritual transformation takes place, there is an automatic change in the attitude towards society, as we are more aware of the underlying unity in diversity. When society becomes harmonious and prosperous, the individual also changes.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION?


We should examine ourselves whether we are leading our lives with worldly feelings or with whole-hearted faith in God and equal-mindedness in both pleasure and pain. We should always reflect on whether we are progressing or declining in our devotion.

HOW SHOULD ONE'S ATTITUDE TO SOCIETY BE CHANGED?

Every thought has to be examined rigorously: will it promote love, joy, and peace in us, in society, in the nation and in the world? Thoughts often arise from bursts of emotion or passion and must be rejected if they cause evil or bring a bad name if acted upon.

We ought to give up talking ill of others, reviling them or ridiculing them, feeling envious of good people. Evil traits like these lead to loss of peace in society. It is better to develop a friendly and loving disposition, and the attitude of oneness with our fellow beings in society. To develop a sense of helpfulness there should be a spirit of self-sacrifice and feelings of sympathy and understanding.

**This three-fold transformation
is implicit in the term SAI**

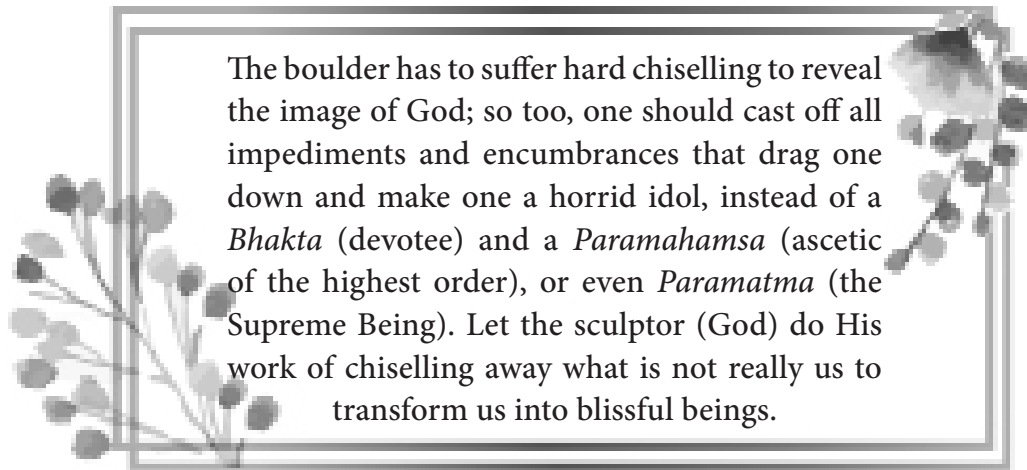


"S" stands for **Spiritual change**.

"A" stands for **Association change** – this is change in one's relationships with others in society.

"I" stands for **Individual change**.

SAI signifies changes at all three levels – Spiritual, Association, and Individual. This triple transformation is what Sai desires. When this transformation takes place, the whole world will be prosperous and happy.



The boulder has to suffer hard chiselling to reveal the image of God; so too, one should cast off all impediments and encumbrances that drag one down and make one a horrid idol, instead of a *Bhakta* (devotee) and a *Paramahansa* (ascetic of the highest order), or even *Paramatma* (the Supreme Being). Let the sculptor (God) do His work of chiselling away what is not really us to transform us into blissful beings.

What is society? Society is our own reflection. We need not distance ourselves from society, rather we should be always engaged in the service of society. God gave us hands not just to scribble things on paper we will eventually discard but to be fully engaged in service. Work is worship, Duty is God. Let us do our duty, let us fill ourselves with love and express it as service to society.

Looking upon society in this way, we exist for society and society exists for the good of all. Swami tells us we can sanctify our lives by doing service and spreading joy and comfort all around.

HOW IS INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION TO BE ACHIEVED?

The mind is like a boulder that the intellect, as sculptor, transforms into a meaningful state. If the intellect allows the senses to direct the design, the boulder will be shaped into a horrid idol. But if, on the other hand, the senses are sublimated by the spirit, the image created by the intellect will be simply adorable. The mind must be fully engaged in spiritual discipline so that its progress is not obstructed. Liberation is the goal and the mind must help the pilgrim by not engaging in any activity that is contrary to *Dharma* (righteousness) or injurious to spiritual progress.

Now, what does a sculptor do when he sees a suitable boulder? He pictures in his mind the lovely idol of God that is inherent in it and sets about liberating the idol from the hard clasp of the rock. The boulder has to suffer hard chiselling to reveal the image of God; so too, one should cast off all impediments and encumbrances that drag one down and make one a horrid idol, instead of a *Bhakta* (devotee) and a *Paramahansa* (ascetic of the highest order), or even

Paramatma (the Supreme Being). Let the sculptor (God) do His work of chiselling away what is not really us to transform us into blissful beings.

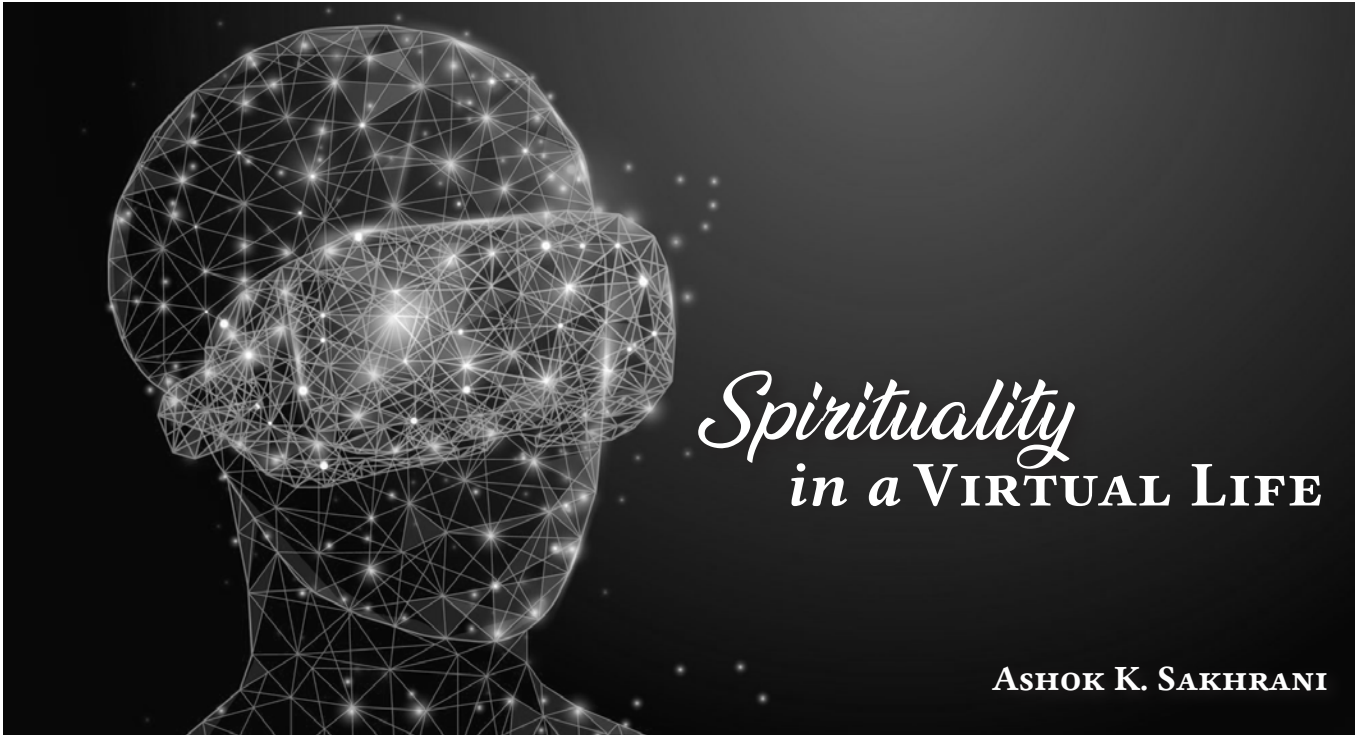
Our bad habits such as smoking, drinking liquor, meat eating and gambling not only degrade us but also inflict hardships on our families. Offer these bad habits to Swami so that we can be free of them and left only with our inherent goodness. One's personality can blossom only when we lead a moral life. True spiritual transformation lies in understanding one's real nature.

For true spiritual transformation, the qualities that are needed are *Dhaya*, kindness, love, forbearance and compassion. People today have forgotten these sublime qualities because they have lost the fear of sin, ceased loving God and do not observe social ethics.

The time has come for each one to live up to the lofty ideals exemplified by Bhagawan. Each member of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations can re-dedicate him/herself to join the many activities of the organizations and extend one's service and cooperation in activities of the Education, Spiritual, Seva, Mahila and Young Adults Wings.

May our Master, Guide, Father, Mother and Philosopher make us befitting instruments in His master plan to rejuvenate the whole creation. All of us have been taught by our loving Swami and it is now our duty to continue His service to society with renewed enthusiasm – to transform the world by transforming ourselves.

Jai Sai Ram
Venkat Boppana



Since time immemorial, the scriptures have reminded us that the world is transient and illusory and the only reality is God. Swami has also told us that we too are God. Yet, whilst we may have grasped this intellectually, the fact is that most of us remain caught in the clutches of *Maya* (the illusion that causes the individual soul to forget its true nature because it is identified with an ignorant mind).

Our spirituality is, thus, an effort to still our minds and purify our hearts by our *sadhana* and to turn our attention inwards to the eye centre, so that with the Lord's grace we can transcend the mind and achieve Self-realisation.

As clear and simple as this may sound, the mind is a formidable foe that is not easily restrained, as it seeks to preserve its egotistical self. The mind is heavily invested in our lives being consumed by this material world, where the mind can thrive. In this state, it is near impossible to pierce through the illusion. Deluded, we live our lives believing that this creation is real and that we must use our time and energy to find happiness in this material world, what some call a "relative reality." I shall use this term hereafter to refer to creation and the material world.

Such is the power of this illusion that many do not even consider the need for the teachings in the scriptures. Of those who do, many seem content

to worship God but maintain duality in this relationship. Thus, it is believed that God is separate from us – possibly He lives in heaven above – and is to be worshipped in the hope that He may grant us happiness and prosperity and remove misfortune or ill-health. In this hope for a good life, we ignore the teachings that, at one level, we are to a large extent the masters of our own destiny, for our thoughts and actions determine what life returns to us.

With the technological revolution of the last two decades and the pervasive presence of new gadgets in our daily lives, we are able to live many aspects of our lives virtually through the many online platforms that allow us to communicate, maintain friendships, entertain ourselves, work, shop, etc. over the internet, without the need for in-person engagement. Whilst the technological revolution has brought undoubted benefits, there have also been numerous nefarious consequences that actually put us at risk.

Increasingly, we have become addicted to our electronic devices (for anecdotal evidence, just watch passengers on a train or bus glued to their smartphones). Of great concern is that many, particularly young people, spend hours each day living in a virtual world with dangerous consequences.

In South Korea, for example, official government figures in 2018 showed that 140,000 young people – which it is accepted is probably an underestimate

– are addicted to the internet. The government has started internet addiction camps to assist them to detox. But this is just the tip of the iceberg.

A study by a team at King's College London published in BMC Psychiatry in November 2019 found that in 41 studies consisting of almost 42,000 participants, predominantly in their teens or early 20s from Europe, Asia, and America, that as many as one in four had problematic smartphone use. Studies showed that people with problematic smartphone use are more likely to have depression, anxiety, feelings of stress, poor sleep and poorer educational attainment.

I suggest that problematic smartphone use brings a further distortion of the relative reality in which we live and it aggravates the commotion and misery that we already experience in the relative reality.

From the spiritual perspective, our slavish addiction to technology has focussed our attention and energy on the distractions and over-stimulation in the outer world. This has compounded the problems we have long experienced from our already weakened ability to discriminate between what is good for us and what is harmful, both from a physical-mental dimension and from a spiritual dimension. Our slavish addiction to technology has made it even more difficult to sit still and turn our attention inwards without an overactive mind constantly drawing our attention back to the vagaries of the outer world. As a result, we have become even more estranged from ourselves.

We have forgotten that our spiritual journey is a journey ultimately directed and consummated inwards, in the realisation of our true identity. It is not travelled virtually but to the Supreme Reality of our inner divinity. With this understanding, we are free to use technology as mere tools for the benefits they bring.

The Covid-19 pandemic has totally disrupted the relative reality we have hitherto lived in. It is now said that we live in a surreal 'new normal,' in which the very infrastructure of our relative reality has become a potential threat to our individual well-being – members of our families and our friends and colleagues can transmit the virus to us. It is little wonder that the pandemic has bred more fear, anxiety, financial insecurity, etc. and has had a devastating effect at many levels.

In fact, the inadequacies and unspoken problems of the relative reality that we previously lived in have been magnified by the pandemic. Trapped in their homes with limited social engagement and their work and earnings significantly impacted, many are unaccustomed to being at home by themselves or with their immediate families, they struggle with living simply, denied the trappings of their previous lives. Because they had not previously sought solace from the Lord, they do not know where to seek Him now.

This has resulted in far too many cases of loneliness, mood/psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc. One can safely assume internet addiction has just got worse.

It is perhaps fitting to remind ourselves what Sathya Sai Baba said long before the technological revolution. He warned:

"All the trials and tribulations faced in this world are due to the so-called development in science and technology. It is not technology but 'tricknology'. Do not become a slave to such technology. Uphold truth and righteousness. Cultivate love and experience divinity."

If truth be told, did we not become slaves to technology and did we not exploit technology for selfish reasons at the expense of our spiritual well-being and commitment to practising the universal human values propagated by all religions/spiritual traditions? These values were meant to nurture goodness in us and develop in us the fortitude to accept change and bear any suffering with faith in God.

And did we not delight in the latest technological advancements and forget that these advancements are only useful tools insofar as they serve all creation and are not used as means to perpetuate inequities in society? They were not supposed to distract us from the true purpose of our lives, which is to discover and practice in this birth the lessons we need to make our souls less burdened by the weight of our human experience, so that we may proceed on our journey to Self-realisation.

The significance of Covid-19 is that it has affirmed the truth in the scriptures that the material world, our relative reality, is transient and illusory. Covid-19 has upended so much of that relative reality and confirmed that our previous lives, as

much as we revelled in the pleasures it promised us, did not provide us lasting happiness but actually became the very threat to our existence.

Our lives in the relative reality did not make us more secure as individuals, communities, and as nations. Nor did it foster in each of us the inner strength to accept its disruption and grant us the wisdom to know that we really exist only by the Will of God. Most importantly, it failed to teach us how to live in harmony with Nature in the presence of God, who is the omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient loving Father of all creation.

Covid-19 also reminds us that we must give up the false notion that we are masters of all creation. Nature has revealed its infinite potency to put man in his place.

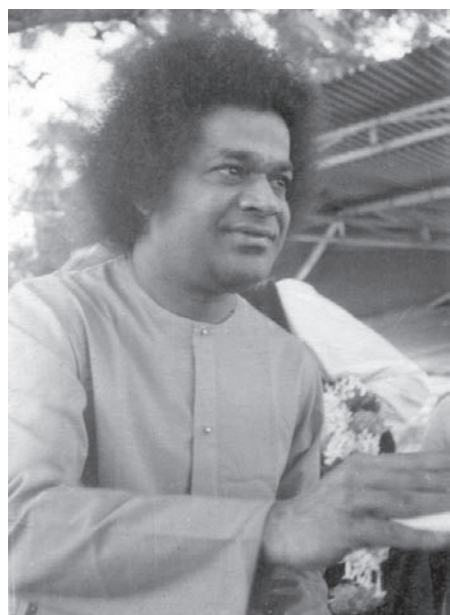
It is uncertain when we will find a vaccine and how effective it will be, whether it will enable us to fully resume our previous lives. Some are predicting that we will never really return to that life, that relative reality. This uncertainty should be humbling.

There is always hope. Some believe that this 'new normal' will increase people's awareness about themselves and life generally, that it will bring change to our understanding and expectations and we will live better. That remains to be seen. Man is a creature of habit and once the pandemic is over I do not under-estimate our capacity to slip back into our previous lives and ways of thinking. If that happens, it would have been a 'wasted pandemic'.

I sincerely pray that man's collective awareness will increase and he will live with greater wisdom. This really depends on the effort we make, for we determine our destiny. Our *sadhana* will bear fruit when the eternal wisdom within each of us is revealed to us and the illusions, virtual or otherwise, drop away.

There is no place for living virtually in spirituality, for spirituality is about realising the truth of who we *really* are and, as Swami told us, that we are God.

*With Loving Sairams,
Ashok K. Sakhrani*



The astonishing progress of science and technology has not brought with it corresponding powers of discrimination and wisdom. Man must realize that the sense organs, through which he explores the external and discovers the powers latent in Nature and the physical universe, function because of the Divinity which is immanent in them. Without the power of the Divine, the eyes cannot see, the ears cannot hear nor would the mind be able to think.

Experiencing Divinity

Archana (Worship) vs. Arpitham (Surrender)

KALPANA L. BHOJWANI

Our dear Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, says, “*Living in God is true Spirituality.*” What does this mean? It means, in Swami’s own words, “*getting absorbed in God as the only thought, the only goal. God only, only God. Think God, breathe God, love God, live God.*” It is to live and perform all our duties with an awareness of our True Self, our innate Divinity.

Swami has told us that we are God, we are Divine. We are *Sat, Chit, Ananda Swaroopa*. To remind us of our divine heritage and truth, He addressed us as “*Premaswarooplara*” or “*Divyatmaswaroopa*”. All our scriptures tell us the same – we have known accepted, at least intellectually, that “God created Man in his own image.”

Yet, we do not seem to accept this whole-heartedly – we do not behave in accordance with our true Divine Self. We do not seem to experience the love, peace and joy that is our true nature. Why is this so?

We see and experience everything with our senses. The world is how we perceive it through our senses and our mind gives shape and colour to the experience of our senses. But, in truth, the material world does not exist except in our minds, which is caught in “*Maya*,” or illusion. Slowly and unknowingly, from a very young age,

we get entangled in the body-mind complex of the external world. This veil of illusion enchants and entangles us in the many objects of our desires that give us temporary pleasures, and we keep drifting further and further away from our true Divine Self.

Our scriptures remind us of our True Self and show us the way to Self-realisation. They encourage us to reflect on “Who am I?” “Where have I come from?” “What is the purpose of my life?”

The Bhagawad Geeta shows us three paths for Self-realisation. The paths of *Bhakti* (Devotion), *Gnana* (Wisdom) and *Karma* (Selfless Action). Swami in His immense love gave us the Sathya Sai Organisation with the three wings, Spiritual, Education, and Seva, that correspond to these three paths.

Of these three paths, the path of devotion is considered by many to be the easiest path as it is mainly based on Love, and has love as its foundation and chief component. It does not require anything else and does not depend on anything else. Swami says, “*Single minded devotion is the easiest path to salvation.*”

What is devotion? Baba says, “*Bhakti (devotion) is the yearning for realising oneness with the Divine.*” In the Narada Bhakti Sutra, Sage Narada tells us,

“Devotion is indeed of the nature of Supreme Love directed towards God.”

Everyone has love in the heart, it is our innate nature. Usually, however, this love flows in various directions, mostly to the external world, towards our family, friends and objects of our desires. But, selfless love directed towards God is *Bhakti*.

Bhakti has various aspects. In the Bhagavad Purana, nine types of devotion have been mentioned, namely *Shravanam*, *Kirtanam*, *Maranam*, *Padsevanam*, *Archanam*, *Vandanam*, *Dasyam*, *Sakhyam* and *Atma Nivedanam*, which is the highest and the final stage of devotion.

Bhagawan Baba says, *“What is the most important to experience Divinity? There is an ocean of difference between Archana (worship) and Arpitham (total surrender). It is not archana but arpitham that is most essential.”*

What is ‘*Archana*’? *Archana* is a form of *Bhakti Yoga* (the *Yoga* of Love and Devotion) which refers to worship through rituals and offerings to God, some describe it as deity worship. The devotee expresses his love by the offerings. The goal of *Archana* is the same as the goal of other *Bhakti Yoga* practices, to experience inner bliss and awakening through devotional worship of the Divine. This aspect of devotion is more ritualistic.

In *Archanam* most of the outwardly directed rituals – like worship, *yagnas*, offerings of various kind – help to purify one’s heart, mind, and senses. They help soften the heart and intensify our love towards the Lord. They prepare the ground for the mind to receive the higher learning, or *Jnana*, and go inward. It is the first step to go higher towards Self-realisation, or realisation of our own divinity.

However, in this form of devotion the devotee often gets absorbed in the ritualistic aspect of *Bhakti* and remains content with it, not necessarily understanding or focusing on the significance to our spiritual journey to Self-realisation. At times, the emphasis on the rituals and offerings eclipses the ultimate purpose behind the offering. As a result, many times the *puja* and offerings can become mechanical.

All worship and related rituals are to be practiced with an understanding that they are just the means

to the supreme goal and not the goal itself. Our practices should not reinforce thoughts steeped in duality but rather free us so that we absorb ourselves in the Creator.

Swami says, *“It is good to be born in a church but it is not good to die in it. Grow and rescue yourselves from the limits and regulations, the doctrines that fence in your freedom of thought, the ceremonials and rites that restrict and direct. Reach the point where churches do not matter, where all roads end, from where all roads run.”*

The goal is to realise and experience the underlying unity in everything and everyone in the universe. The aim is not only to realise our own divinity and live and act in constant awareness of it, but to see each and everything, animate or inanimate, as an expression of the same Divinity.

Just as the Sun shines everywhere but is reflected in different ways at various places to produce a multitude of outcomes, the fact remains that there is only one Sun and its rays are identical projections.

In *Archanam*, there is an obvious duality, God and the devotee are separate from each other. They are two different entities. The aim of all *sadhana* (spiritual activities) is to experience and realise the unity in all the apparent diversity.

The devotee has to give up his attachment to the Form manifested in an idol or picture and instead perceive the same God that he worshipped at the altar in the street sleeper. Ultimately, the devotee seeks to experience Him within and without. That is why Swami says it is *arpitham* that is most essential to realise Divinity.

Arpitham is total surrender. It means to offer, to give away. What do we need to surrender? What do we offer to the One who has given us all, who is the Creator of all?

What needs to be surrendered is our ego. That is why *Arpitham* is also called as *Atma nivedanam*, giving up our self-identification to merge into our Higher Self, or Supreme Consciousness. Giving up our ego means to give up our identification with our instruments of body, mind and intellect, which creates a veil between our self, the *Jeevatma*, and the Supreme Self (Higher Consciousness or *Paramatma*).

The great devotee Mirabai sang, "Remove the veil to meet the Beloved."

Swami has shown the way and taught us how to remove these veils of body, mind, and intellect by following certain *sadhana*.

The reference to total surrender is deliberate and necessary. We offer our intellect and obey the instructions of the Guru without question and without the slightest doubt. Swami once explained that the attitude that one has to develop and make one's own is, "*Thwameva sarvam mama deva deva*" (You are my all, my God of Gods).

There was an incident once when Swami was with the Prime Minister of India. The PM had asked Swami a short while before what real devotion is. While they were speaking a student brought a glass jug and some water glasses on the tray for water to be offered to them. As he entered the room, Swami said to the student, "*Drop the tray.*" Almost instantaneously, without question, the student dropped the tray causing the jug and water glasses to crash to the ground. Swami looked at the PM and said, "*This is devotion.*"

It should be understood that Truth can be grasped only through spirituality and that the Will of the Divine is the cause for every happening; nothing happens in the universe without the *sankalpa* (Will) of *Ishwara* (God).

What are the veils to be removed to make our offering complete?

Body Consciousness: Constantly remembering that I am not this body but the *resident within*. To remember that body is merely an instrument to reach the goal of Self-realisation. For this, *Namasmaram* is the most effective. In the beginning, the devotee has to take refuge in a Form until his love for God expands and he comes to see his Lord in each and every one. Swami taught us a *mahamantra*, "I am God, I am not different from God."

Nishkama Karma: Give up the sense of doership, dedicate all action to God. When all actions are dedicated to Him, then the results of actions also belong to Him. When one adopts that attitude then the opposites of joy and sorrow, profit or loss also do not affect him. He remains equal-minded and peaceful.

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Purandara Dasa sang: "As long as I am aware of Your presence in my heart, I do not feel lost. You are the real doer and not me. You impart knowledge. You protect and You also reprimand when necessary. There is nothing that is not Yours. I am wholly Yours. When You, the Lord Almighty, are doing so much for me and are taking care for me, how can I be called poor?"

Swami has shown us the path of *Seva* to perform selfless action with the right understanding and attitude, so that we slowly learn to see Him in those we serve. That is why it is called *Narayan Seva*. Thus, service is transformed into worship.

The Mind: A student of Swami who loved Him a lot, did not want to go back to college and just wanted to stay with Swami and serve Him. He felt that the college was coming between him and Swami. Swami told him that it was not the college but his mind. Swami said, "Am I not in the college? Am I not in the teachers? Where am I not? What comes before you and Me is the mind. Master the Mind. Become a Mastermind."

Implicit Faith: In God, in Divine Will. Acceptance of all that happens as His Will is most important. The story of Krishna and Arjuna illustrates this so well. Once, both were strolling together and Krishna seeing a bird flying in the sky, asked Arjuna, "Look Arjuna, is it a dove?" Arjuna replied, "Yes My Lord it is indeed a Dove." "But wait," said Krishna, "I think it is an eagle. Isn't it an eagle?" And Arjuna replied, "Yes, it is certainly an eagle."

And, thus, Krishna kept changing His statements and Arjuna kept agreeing to them. Krishna then chided Arjuna, asking if he didn't have eyes of his own to see, rather than just agreeing to whatever Krishna had said. Whereupon Arjuna replied, "Krishna for me, your words are far more trustworthy than the evidence of my eyes."

That's the unquestioning, implicit faith that is required of a devotee. As Swami always said, "Do not try to understand Me. Just follow Me."

It should be emphasised that this is not blind faith but a mature acknowledgment that one's perception and experience of the material world through a limited mind is inferior to the Supreme Wisdom of the Lord.

Dedicating all to Lord, such a purified devotee gradually awakens fully to his own Divine Self. As Upanishadic declaration goes, "Knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman." He has no separate existence. He becomes one with his beloved.

Saint Kabir said, "The path of Love is narrow. There is no room for two to exist. When I (meaning ego) was there then God was not there. Now that God is there I am not," indicating that the ego had disappeared and the devotee and God merged into One. There is no distinction between devotee and the Lord.

It would be apt to end with a beautiful poem composed by our dear Swami Himself.



*Jai Sai Ram
Kalpana L. Bhojwani*

भगवान ईश्वरमा रहनु

मानव जिवन अती दुर्लभ छ । हाम्रो प्रारब्ध कर्मको फल र ईश्वरको अनुग्रहले यो पबित्र जिवन पाएका छौ। कलीयुग अबतार भगवान श्री सत्य साईबाबा भन्नुहुन्छ "मनुष्य जिवनको मुख्य उद्देश्य नै आफु भित्रको दैवत्वको अनुभूति गर्नु हो "। त्यसैले स्वामीले दिनुभएका दिव्य उपदेशहरुलाई अत्यन्त श्रद्धा, भक्ति र विश्वासका साथ चिन्तन, मनन र अनुभव गर्नु पर्छ । यसरी निरन्तर आध्यात्मिक साधनाको रुपमा कठोर प्रयासबाट निष्काम कर्म, अनन्य भक्ति र वास्तविक ज्ञानको प्राप्ति भएपछी ईश्वर परमात्माको आशिर्वाद र क्रिपाले आफुभित्रको दैवत्वको अनुभूती गर्न सकिन्छ । भगवानसँग एकाकार हुन सकिन्छ । त्यसैले मनुष्यको पुरुषार्थ र ईश्वरको कृपाबाट मात्र यो सम्भव छ"।

भगवानमा रहनु भनेको आफु भगवानमा मिल्नु हो । यो यस्तो अवस्था हो जहा जिवनै ईश्वरमा विलय हुन्छ । जिव नै ईश्वर अर्थात् भगवान हुन्छ । भगवान वावा भन्नुहुन्छ "प्रेम ईश्वर हो, ईश्वर प्रेम हो । ब्रम्ह, आत्मा, भगवान, ईश्वर सबै प्रेमका प्रर्यायवाची शब्दहरु हुन । यी सबै अन्तत प्रेम हो । प्रेम नै सत्त चित्त आनन्द हो । प्रेम नै सबैको बास्तबिक आधार हो । ईश्वरको निश्चित नाम र स्वरुप छैन, यो सर्वशक्तिमान, सर्वब्यापक, सर्वअन्तरयामी र सर्बग्य छ । अत्यन्त सुक्ष्म छ र अनन्त छ । यो अनन्त साक्षीको रुपमा सबै जिवहरुमा विधमान छ"।

भगवान वावा भन्नुहुन्छ "ईच्छाहरु सँगको जिवन मानव हो । इच्छा रहित जिवन भगवानको स्वरुप हो । मानिस अज्ञानवस आफुलाई नाम रुप शरीर सम्झिरहेछ । काम, क्रोध, लोभ मोहमा ब्याप्त भएको छ । खराब मन, बुद्धि, चित्त अहङ्कारको कारणले आफ्ना वास्तविक स्वरुप आत्मालाई बिर्सिएको छ । मन, वचन र कर्ममा एकता छैन । हृदय राक्षसि गुणहरुले भरिएको छ । अशुद्ध मन, बुद्धी, चित्त र अपवित्र हृदयले गर्दा नै मानव आज भगवान हुनुपर्नेमा दानव अर्थात् राक्षस भएको छ । सत्य धर्म शान्ति प्रेम र अहिंसा जस्ता मानवीय गुणहरुको ओझेलमा परेका छन् । यही नै दुःखको मूल कारण हो । यही भ्रम अज्ञान र अपवित्रताले नै मानिसले आफू भित्रको दैवत्वको अनुभूति गर्न सक्दैन ।

भगवान वावा भन्नुहुन्छ "म तिमीहरूको हृदयमा प्रेमको दियो बाल्न प्रेमको पथ, प्रेमको मार्ग, प्रेमको आलौकिक सिद्धान्त बुझाउन आएको हो । म भगवान हो तिमी पनि वास्तवमा भगवान नै हो मलाई थाहा छ तर तिमीलाई यो सत्य थाहा छैन यही कुरा अनुभूती गराउन म आएको हुँ । वास्तवमा तिमीहरु सबै प्रेम स्वरुप आत्मा स्वरुप हो । तिमीहरुले आफूभित्रको यही दैवत्वको अनुभूति गर्दै जिवात्मा बाट परमात्मामा लिन हुनुपर्छ । वास्तवमा ईश्वर तिमी भित्र छ आत्मा तत्वको चिन्तन गरेमा तिमीहरुले निश्चय नै आत्मानुभव गर्नेछौ ।

भगवान वावा भन्नुहुन्छ "छिनछिनमा परिवर्तन भैरहने यो नासवान भौतिक संसारमा रहेता पनि आफूलाई अविनाशी शाश्वत प्रेमस्वरुप परमेश्वरमा समर्पित गर्नु पर्छ । संसारी भोग विलास मा आशक्त नभई दत्तचित्त आनन्दस्वरुप आत्मको दर्शनको लागि आफूभित्रकै हृदयबाट मात्र सम्भव हुन्छ । मन चापी हो हृदय ताल्चा हो । यही चञ्चल र अस्थिर मनलाई संसारतिर फर्काए संसारी भईन्छ भने हृदयतिर फर्किए प्रभुको दर्शन हुन्छ यसैले मननै बन्धन र मोक्ष को कारण हो । मानवलाई शुद्ध र पवित्र बन्नको लागि आध्यात्मिक साधनाको रुपमा जप ध्यान पूजा-पाठ निस्वार्थ सेवा, अध्ययन, चिन्तन, मनन, भजन कीर्तन नाम स्मरण श्रद्धापूर्वक गर्नुपर्छ । यस्तो अनुशासन पूर्वक गरिएको साधनाबाट मन शान्त हुन्छ । आध्यात्मिक साधनाले मनमा भएका इच्छा, दुर्गुण, अहंकारहरु सबै नष्ट हुन्छ । दुषित मन बुद्धि चित्त अहंकार ले भरिएको अन्तस्करण सफा हुन्छ । मन वचन र कर्ममा एकता हुन्छ । यस्तो शुद्ध शान्त मन जब संसारलाई छोडी आफ्नो

वास्तविक स्वरुप आत्मा मा फर्किन्छ तब आत्मानुभाव हुन्छ"। चित्तको शुद्धि, विशुद्ध चित्त र नष्ट चित्तको प्रक्रियाबाट नै साक्षात्कार हुन्छ ।

भगवान बाबा भन्नुहुन्छ "हृदय शुद्ध बनाउनका लागि प्रेम नै एक आधारशिला हो। पवित्र हृदयमा नै दैवत्वको अनुभूति हुन्छ। भगवान प्रति जब सच्चा प्रेम हुन्छ तब मात्र हृदय पबित्र बन्छ। यस्तो दैविक प्रेम भगवान प्रतिको अटल विश्वासबाट जन्मन्छ। भगवान प्रति सच्चा आस्था भक्ति अनुशासन विवेक र दृढ निश्चय भएमा अर्थात् 5D सिद्धान्तबाट प्रेम गर्न सकिन्छ आफुमा भएको अहंकार सबै भगवान मा चढाउनु पर्छ यो नै निष्ठा (Dedication) हो। भगवान प्रति सधै कृतज्ञ हुनु आभारी हुनु र समभाव मा रहिरहनु भक्ति (Devotion) हो। समर्पण र शरणागत हुनु भक्तिको मूल फुट्नु हो। मन बचन र कर्महरूमा एकता गर्दै सत्य र धर्मको पालन नैतिक र चरित्रवान भएर गर्नु अनुशासन (Discipline) हो। सत्य र असत्य छुट्याएर सत्यको मार्गमा लाग्नु नै बिवेक हो। भगवान एकमात्र साश्वत सत्य हो अरु सबै झुटा मिथ्या हो भनि जान्नु यो नै बिवेक हो। भगवान नै मेरो सबै थोक हो एकमात्र सहारा हो र जीवनको अन्तिम लक्ष्य हो भनी दृढ भएर लागिरहनु दृढता हो। यस प्रक्रियाको निरन्तर अभ्यासबाट भगवान प्रति प्रेम उत्पन्न हुन्छ। यस्तो प्रेमले मात्र हृदय पवित्र हुन्छ। यस्तो पवित्र हृदय बाट मात्र आत्मानुभव अर्थात् दैवत्वको अनुभव हुन्छ।

भगवान बाबा भन्नुहुन्छ "अनुशासन तिम्रो हिँडाईमा बसाइमा वाणी भोजन कर्म इन्द्रियहरू सबैमा हुनुपर्छ। यस बिना दैवत्व प्राप्त हुँदैन। हरेकले ब्रह्माण्डमा व्याप्त विविधतामा एकता को भाव वृद्धि गर्नुपर्छ। यसले पवित्रता जन्माउँछ। यसका लागि व्यक्ति आफैमा दृढ विश्वास हुनुपर्छ जसबाट आत्म सन्तोष प्राप्त हुन्छ र आत्म बलिदानको लागि तयार हुन्छ। आत्म बलिदान द्वारा नै आत्मानुभूति प्राप्त हुन्छ। तिम्रो आफू नै सबैथोक हो अर्थात् भगवान हो भन्ने अनुभूति हुन्छ ।

भगवान भन्नुहुन्छ "तिमीले जहिलेपनि सोहम मन्त्रलाई ध्यान गर्नुपर्छ जसले तिम्रो दैवत्वलाई निरन्तर सम्झाईरहेको हुन्छ म ब्रह्म हुँ आत्मा हुँ भनेर। तिम्रीले चौबिसै घण्टा म पञ्चमहाभूत ले बनेको जीव होइन म त सत्त चित्त आनन्दस्वरुप साक्षात आत्मा हुँ भगवान हो भन्ने पुर्ण अनुभूति गरेपछि तिम्री जीव देह भगवान आदिमा एकाकार हुन्छौ। तिम्री नै भगवान हुन्छौ। जब मानिस आत्माको साक्षात्कार गर्दछ वास्तवमा मोक्ष प्राप्त हुन्छ। निरन्तर आत्मा चिन्तनमा मग्न हुन्छ। परमानन्द प्राप्त गर्छ "।

भगवान बाबा भन्नुहुन्छ "मानव जीवन अति पबित्र छ। हाम्रो कर्मले गर्दा आज मनुष्य जन्म पाएका छौं"। हाम्रो जीवनको उद्देश्य के हो? भगवानको सानीध्यमा रहन पाउनु अनि यो जीवनमा जीवन मरण चक्र देखि मुक्ति भई भगवानमै लीन हुन पाउ भन्ने हो तर हामी यो संसारमा आएर लोभ माया मोहको चक्रमा फसेर भगवानलाई नै बिर्सिरहेका छौं। अब हामीसँग समय छैन। अब स्वामिले दिनुभएको सन्देशलाई शुन्य मात्र होइन त्यस सन्देशलाई आत्मसाथ गरेर आफ्नो जिबनमा उतार्नु पर्छ सधै भगवानको चिन्तन गर्ने जप ध्यान नामको स्मरण गर्ने अनि सत्कर्म गर्ने सबैलाई प्रेम गर्ने कसैलाई घृणा नगर्ने अर्कालाई गलत नसम्झने गर्नुपर्छ। केही मानिसहरू भगवानलाई समेत असमझदारी बनाउँछन्। यो सबैभन्दा ठूलो पाप हो। यदि कुनै बेला तिम्रो मनमा नराम्रो विचार आउँछ भने यस्तो बिचार लाई आफ्नो सत्रु सम्झेर भगाऊ प्रेम गर सबैलाई प्रेमले मात्र हामीलाई आनन्दित बनाउँछ भगवानलाई आफ्नो सर्वश्व एकमात्र आश्रय सम्झेर उनैलाई सबै अर्पण गर भगवानले दिनुभएको उपदेशलाई आत्मसाथ गर्यो भने हामी सबै आनन्दित को साथै भगवानको सनिद्यय मा पुग्न सकौं ।

जय साईराम



心的純淨是真正的 靈性修習

沒有任何真實的工作，一整天都在聊天，
這是靈性修習嗎？你認為呢？
依照一個‘一日三餐喂飽你肚子’的慣例，
你認為它是靈性修習？
白天劇烈的活動而夜晚酣睡，
你認為這是靈性修習？
這可是神創造你的原因？
你花費很多時間於這種生活慣例
但這並非靈性修習。
不要這樣浪費你的時間。
從這一刻起要致力於認識神。
只有這個才是靈性修習。

(泰盧固詩)

諸位愛的化身！那遍及一切的意識就叫做神。它也說，神出現在所有生命體之內。但沒有人見過那無所不在的神。

只有人類能靜慮和認識那廣大無邊的神。實際上，人的生命本身就是神聖力量的彰顯。但有些人不同意這種說法。

神性彰顯於每一個生命體之內。同樣的自性原則 (*Atma Tatwa*) 不僅出現在人類之中，同時也出現在宇宙中的一切生命體之內。但一個人必須有一個純淨的和無私的心才體會到這真理。為了體會這真理，你要不斷地靜慮於神。憑借這麼做，你的心就變得純淨與平和。你達到那境界的那一刻，神肯定會明顯地彰顯於你。

這必須是你的靈性修習 (*sadhana*)。它並非僅靠練習坐禪就能使神彰顯給求道者。

神以內寓者均等地出現於人類之中，以及昆虫鳥獸之中。假設你提出一個問題，“神現在在哪兒？”不假思索的回答是，神也出現於你之內。有些人從事靈性修習，如坐禪以尋找這種問題的答案。

聖者Narada (那羅陀) 確定可以通過九大形式的虔誠來認識神，諸如，聆聽、贊唱、靜慮於毗濕奴、

服務於祂的蓮花足下、頂禮、膜拜、勞役、友誼、和自我降服 (*sravanam, kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, Padasevanam, vandanam, archanam, dasyam, sneham, Atmanivedanam*)。

在這世界上沒有一個人的心不是神以內寓者寓居的場所。因此，為了看到這樣的一個遍在的和全在的神，坐禪是必需的嗎？

今天，很多人教導不同的坐禪技術。但坐禪是為了獲得靈心的純淨，因為，沒有達到心的純淨，覺知的寶座，神，就不能被認知了。是故，你必須致力於達到靈心的純淨。

Kamsa (甘沙) 在 *Dwapara Yuga* (二分期，伽利期之前，基士拿誕生於這個時期) 時所執行的是哪一種靈性修習？其實，他一直不斷地辱罵主基士拿。然而，主基士拿是那麼的仁慈，以致於還賜給甘沙祂的 *darshan* (一睹聖容)。

沒有靈修可以幫助你體認神，假如你缺乏心的純淨。不同種類的靈修如禁食和坐禪等等，會助你培育信心於全在的神，而祂其實以內寓者寓居於你之內。

一般上，人們認為神把“達瞻” (*darshan*) 給某某人。但真實情況是神從來就不把達瞻給心不純淨的人。是

故，如果你希望獲得神的達瞻，你就必須培育心的純淨。

所有種類的靈性修習都是為了達到純淨而已。你達到心的純淨的那一刻，無所不在的神會彰顯於你面前。不幸地，今天在世界上，能堅定地帶領求道者步上純淨之道的導師確如鳳毛麟角。他們只專注於坐禪的某些機械式技術以換取金錢。

其實，你大可不必執行任何複雜的坐禪系統。你可以執行‘不斷的靜慮於全在的神’的簡單靈修就可以了。現在很少人教授這樣簡單的法門。人們聆聽和閱讀幾種有趣的坐禪方式而開始選擇那個引起他們的興趣或想象力的來學。

愛的化身們！如果你想看到神，你就必須獲得心的純淨。你指著某一個人而說他是你的父親。但那父親感到尷尬，這樣地被指為父親，因為他其實是出現於所有人之內同樣的自性原則 (*Atma Tatwa*)。

神出現於每一個人之內。

**所有人類其實就是這樣的一個全在之神的反映。
是故，每一個人必須被視為神的化身一般來尊重。**

你跟某個女子結婚，並指她是你的妻子，但她其實是神聖自性的化身。同理，你親切地撫摸著一個小孩，稱他為你的兒子。但那兒子也許會告訴你說他其實不是你的兒子而是神的化身。因此，在這世界上所有關係實際上只是自性的關係而已。

說真的，真正的自我証悟 (*Atmasakshatkara*) 是命我 (*jeeva*) 之融合於至高無上之我 (*Brahman* 梵)。你所遇到的任何人都確實是神。沒有如此全在的神，怎麼可能有人類？

主基士拿宣稱祂一再地下凡，每當正義的實踐式微的時候。祂也宣稱祂是在所有生命體之中的種子。雖然祂親切地與牧牛男孩們和女孩們 (*gopalas* 和 *gopikas*) 活動在一塊，可祂從來就不會被他們與祂之間的關係所束縛。

那些覺知這真理的牧牛女們不斷地靜慮於祂，念誦神聖名號，“基士拿！基士拿！”基士拿的名號把神聖阿特瑪的化身帶到她們眼前。牧牛女們是高度覺悟的靈魂；她們對於同樣的自性原則出現在每一個個人之中，不，每一個生命體之中，抱著堅定的信念。那就是為什麼她們能在每一個人之中及世界的每一物體之中看見基士拿的原因。

在這物質世界裡，所有我們看到的，例如這禮堂，周圍的建築物等，並非真的是客體。人們在看到它們的外貌時，常常被誤導入這樣的妄想。宇宙的自性原則 (*Atma Tatwa*) 出現於所有這些客體中。只有牧牛女

們天生的、自然地認識那無上的真理。她們能在所有個人與客體中看到基士拿。

因應世俗的關係，我們往往指某某人為我的兒子，我的兄弟，我的父親，我的母親，我的妻子等等。但事實上，同樣的神正通過所有那些人而彰顯。是故，你一定要認每一個人為神的化身。整個宇宙都充滿著神的原則 (*Brahma Tatwa*)。所有給予自性原則的名字與形相都是我們自己造成的。

Ramakrishna Paramahansa (羅摩基士拿巴拉馬漢沙) 常給 Mother Kali (母親伽利) 一整天執行幾種膜拜法門。有一天，神聖母親出現在他面前並問道，“羅摩基士拿！你越來越瘋了。你膜拜我於一個特別的形相。為什麼你局限我於某一形相？其實，所有形相都是我的。不論你遇到什麼人，都認為他們是神的化身。”

神是純淨的和無屬性的。這樣的一個無屬性的和無瑕疵的神出現在每一個人之內。所有人類其實是這樣的一個無所不在的神的反映。是故，每一個人都必須被看作神的化身來尊敬。雖然神是無所不在的，祂採納一個特別的形相並在多方面去服務人類。從現在起，要認清‘一切名和一切相都是祂的’的這個真實情況。要認為你遇到的任何人都是神的化身。當你培育起了這樣的心態，你就隨處能見到神。

到 Mathura (秣兔拉) 或 Dwaraka (杜瓦拉卡，多門城) (這兩個基士拿住的城市) 去看看人們怎麼以同樣的虔誠熱忱照舊膜拜主基士拿，即便祂已離開祂的肉身於二分期 (*Dwaraka Yuga*)，大約五千年前。

當神化身為人的形相時，認為祂是一個平凡的人，那是自然之事。這不是正確的途徑。我常重申我是神，但我也提醒你們，實在的你們也是神。不要提供余地給任何在這方面的困惑與意見分歧。真的，你們每一個人都是神的化身。

當你們建立起這樣的一個堅定信念時，你們就能在每一個人身上看到神了。只有在維持這理念，經書裡的表達“感覺是什麼，結果就是什麼 (*yad bhavam tad bhavati*)”才得以成立。

不要認為任何人是你的敵人而辱罵他們。

一天，他們也許是你的敵人，

但在另一天，你們也許成為朋友。

不要認為某人跟你是分開的。大家都是朋友。

由於人們不知道神的真正本質，他們指某些人為父親、母親、叔叔等，只關注他們的形相及與他們的關係來決定。如果人們是那麼容易地被身體關係的基礎上所蒙騙，他們一定會對有關神的真實本質有所混淆。

在展示祂的無所不在的神性之際，主基士拿有一次宣稱，除了祂之外，在這整個宇宙間沒有第二個了。同樣的事實包涵在這宣布之中，即：“真理是一，但智者以各種不同之名稱之（*Ekam sath viprah bahuda vadanti*）。“例如，1 這個數字只是 1。當你加上三個 1 時，它就變成 4。如果我們繼續給 1 加上數字，就會得出其它數字。然而，第一個數字保留一樣，還是 1。那是神。這就是那深奧的宣稱，“那一意願成為眾多，（*Ekoham bahusyam*）”所說的。

人們常用這兩個術語‘神（*Deva*）’和‘個靈（*Jeeva* 命我）’。其實個靈或個別生命體是完全不存在的！一切僅是神的化身而已！

於是問題產生了：為什麼人會死亡？由於人們不能了解寓居於人體之內的阿特瑪的不朽本質，他們就利用死亡這個術語。阿特瑪是沒有死亡的！它是不朽的。那些理解這真理者得與神融為一體。而那些不能理解這真理者，個靈依然是個靈而神依然是神。這二元性感覺在他們之內持續著。

什麼是在公告裡，“神是一而沒有第二個（*Ekameva adviteeyam Brahma*）”的基本意義？由於在這宇宙內，除了梵外不存有其他實體，它因此而被宣布。這是吠陀經的宣布。

奧義書（*Upanishads*）解釋我們真正的本質於偉大的格言中“你是彼（*Tat Twam Asi*）。“在另外一則偉大的格言裡，他們宣布”梵是至高無上的意識（*Prajnanam Brahma*）。”這宣布指的是誰？再一次，它指的是神。因此，所有吠陀經和奧義書聲明個靈（*Jeeva* 命我）與神（*Deva*）為一而只有這個一的非二元性概念。但沒有人正致力於認識這真理。結果，他們認為神與他們是分開的。

人們常常區分神的不同形相，例如基士拿，羅摩等。由於他們試圖把他們自己投身於一個特別的形相，所以他們就懷著差異的感覺。因這麼做，他們就漸漸離開神而僅僅保留個靈（*jeevas* 命我）。所有這些差異只存在於個靈而已。神只有一個。

其實，祂跟你沒有不同。祂在你之內，而你的確是神！如果不是如此，為何吠陀經宣稱“你即彼”？

培育堅定的信念，即：你和神是一個。當你達到這樣的一個堅定信念時，你就與神合一了。

例如，你擺放一些賽峇峇的照片在你的祈禱室裡，但在所有的照片裡，你看到同樣的神有不同的拍照姿勢。當你了解神的根本一體性時，就沒有任何混淆的空間。你將能夠了解和體現真理。我所談論的只是真理。由於你不知道這真理，你不能建立對它的信心。

有好些人今天自稱是神人；他還沒有止境地教授這理念。相信我，他們都是為了疑惑信徒們。其實，當你建立起堅定信心於這宣言，即：神只有一個，你就能明白這真理。一個能明白這真理者不會陷入混淆與懷疑之中。

切莫對任何人用苛刻的語言。其實，在世界上是沒有敵人的。不要認為任何人為敵人而加以辱罵他們。一天，他們或許是你的敵人，但在另一天，你們或許成為朋友。不要認為某人跟你是分開的。大家都是朋友。

愛的化身們！你們正以偉大的愛去膜拜和祈禱神。要繼續愛神並對祂培育起信心。只有在那時，你所有的懷疑才會清除，而你就能夠完滿地了解神的本質。

懷疑意味二元性，即，您與神之間的一種分離感覺。其實，並沒有兩個實體——神和你。一切都是“我”，“我”，“我”。堅持著“神是一而沒有第二個（*Ekameva adviteeyam Brahma*）”的真理。

舉個例子，鐘表展示幾個小時？12 個小時。當時針越過十二點時，它又移到一點。當它越過一點時，它移到下一點。因此，只有當時針越過一的時候，它才移到二。同理，沒有任何東西可以被稱為第二個。神只有一個。

然而，如果你希望糾纏你自己於世俗的事務，二元性就來了。其實，就神而言，二元性是不存在的。有時我叫醒睡在我房裡的學生們並問他們，“現在幾點了？”

他們回答，“斯瓦米！十二點。”

我問，“是白天或是晚上？”

他們回答，“是晚上十二點。”

因此，當白天的十二小時加上晚上的十二小時，它就成了二十四小時。

嚴格地說，二十四小時是不存在的。因為日以繼夜而夜以繼日，所以才有 24 小時。是故，不要在日夜之間找差異。

鐵路局人員為了他們的操作方便而制作這樣的差異。對我們來說，日以繼夜而夜以繼日。日與夜兩者是為一體。

所以，在你於世界上所遇到的一切，要建立起對一體性原則的信心。神是一個而且是唯一的一個。如果你對這原則不建立起堅定的信心，你可能膜拜神的一個形相而憎恨另外一個形相。總是要堅持神的一體性的原則。那就是真理。

如果你不能建立這樣的信心，就不要理會它，也不要引起爭論和沖突。絕不要把二元性歸因於神。神總是一個而只有一個。當你能夠理解並建立堅定的信心於神的單一性，你的一生便一帆風順了。

(手裡拿著一束花兒在聽眾面前，斯瓦米問)這是什麼？一束花兒。好多朵花靠一條線的幫助把它們穿在一起，結果，花兒採取一束的形式展現。雖然花兒有多種，把它們握在一起的線只有一條。同樣的原則在吠陀經裡也解釋過了：神是一而沒有第二個 (*Ekameva adviteeyam Brahma*)。以上的例子展示二元性中的一體性。

你指一個人為一個男人或女人。你指聚集在一起的許多人為一群人。雖然指個人與一群人所用的術語有很大的不同，在分類中還是有著一個基本的一體性。那一體性就是神，永遠不要忘記祂。

不幸地，現在，人們在這物質世界裡看到的是明顯的二元性，而忽略基本的一體性原則。例如，般達瓦兄弟。他們是誰？那五個般達瓦兄弟是昆提 (Kunti) 的兒子。一個母親但五個兒子。在一般世俗意識裡，他們是五個。

你或許不能了解神的單一性的這個原則，但假以時日，當你能以一個成熟的心念去認識這原則時，你就會了解真理是一，不是二了。

繼續去愛神和建立對祂的信心。只有這樣，你的懷疑才能被清除，而你將能夠完滿了解神的本質。

這是一條手帕！(展示一條手帕給聽眾)幾根線編織在一起而成。由於線的經緯編制，手帕就成了這個模樣。布是一，而線則很多。

你必須了解‘二元性中的一元性’的原則。我們看到好幾個學生聚集在這禮堂裡。每一個人看起來都有不同，但他們都是斯裡沙迪亞賽大學的學生。因此，你要致力於發展那一體性。

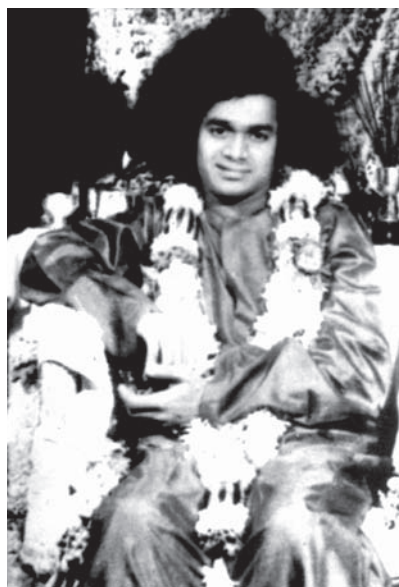
親愛的同學們！我非常高興看到你們大家。我從早起就寢，執行了多項任務並參與一些節目。我感到高興並且精神充沛。沒有其他的人像我一樣地享受這種福樂。我總是高高興興，快快樂樂的。

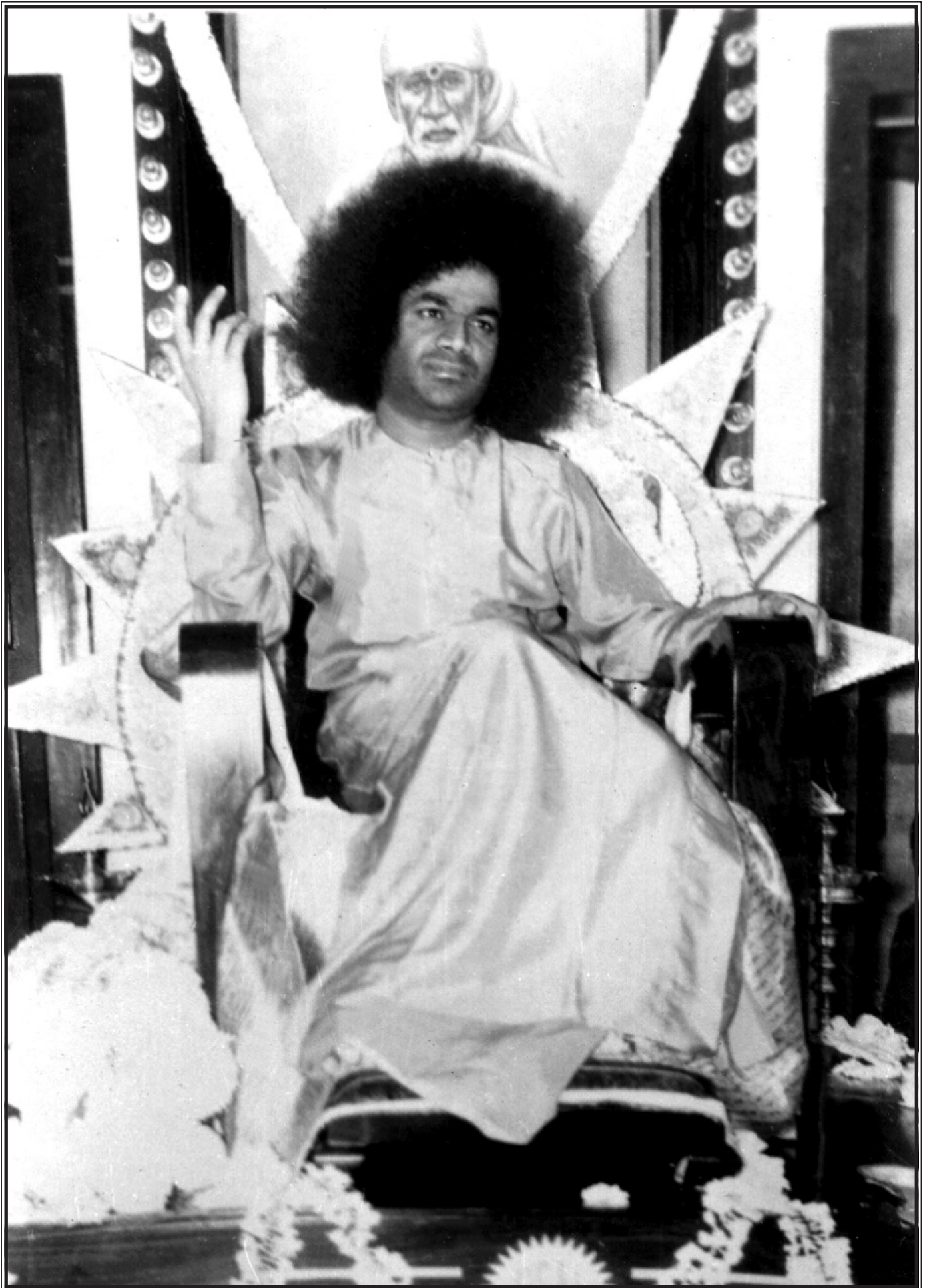
我不在乎褒貶。它們只是一個人的感覺所表達的言語。它們與我無關。我根本不懷有任何差異的感覺。“萬物一體，要一視同仁。”

(薄伽梵於2005年10月9日
達薩羅節於百善地尼樂園的講道。
source:《百善》第45期第40-52頁)

I have come with one purpose:

To reveal to everyone of you the mystery of your reality and the goal of your life! What you should place before me as an offering is Pure Love from within. When you offer Me that, I derive *Ananda*! From today, spend your days and years in activities that help and care for those who are in dire need, and make this human existence of yours worthwhile and fruitful. Conduct yourself appropriately and realise the goal of your life. My blessings to you!





The Year in Photos



Lingam Abhishekam at Maha Shivaratri celebrations



Bal Vikas Bhajan Session at Guru Poornima



Narayana Seva



Distribution of Masks and Hand Sanitizers



Distribution of provisions to the under-privileged



Serving home cooked meals to street sleepers

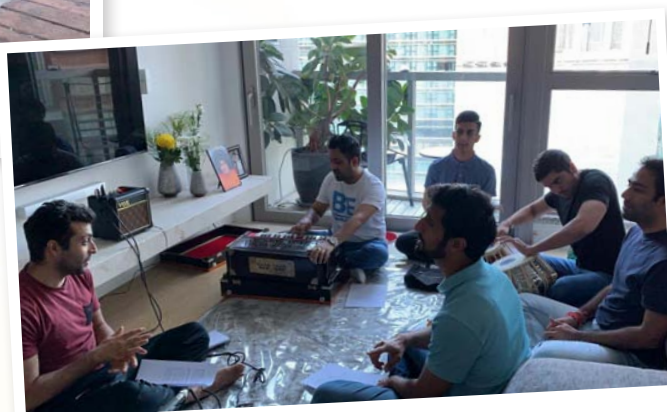
Young Adults



Serving breakfast to street sleepers




Ladies' online study class




Bhajan Jamming

Online Satsangs

 SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG

*Sri Sathya Sai
Aradhana Mahotsavam*

FRIDAY, 24TH APRIL 2020
8:30 PM - 9:45 PM HKT
ONLINE SATSANG




**Faith
IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**


LIVE STREAM VIA YouTube WITH
MRS. GEETHA MOHAN RAM

JOIN AT:
<https://www.youtube.com/ssiohk/live>

www.saibaba.org.hk @sathyasaikh




Mrs. Geetha Ram comes from a family associated with Swami for four generations. Geetha, who was named by Swami, has had the incredible fortune of experiencing the multi-faceted personality of our Divine Lord from birth. While Swami graced her home in Bangalore regularly, all her holidays were spent in Puttaparthi. At Swami's command and with His blessings, Geetha has been sharing her intimate and wonderful experiences of our beloved Lord for the past 20 years.

 SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG

DANCE WITH THE DIVINE

Krishna JANMASHTAMI
CELEBRATIONS

ONLINE SATSANG WITH **PROF. R. GANGADHARA SASTRY**
WEDNESDAY, 12TH AUGUST 2020 | 8:30 PM - 9:45 PM HKT
LIVE STREAM VIA YouTube
JOIN AT: <https://www.youtube.com/ssiohk/live>



Prof. R. Gangadhara Sastry has been on the faculty of SSSIHL since 1979. He has served as Director of the Campus, Member of the University's Academic Council, and Chairperson of the Board of Studies. He has been an ardent devotee of Sathya Sai Baba for almost four decades.

Global Akhanda Gayatri Chanting



 SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG

GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

Gold ONLINE SATSANG

LIVING IN GOD
WITH DR. SHASHANK SHAH

THURSDAY, 27TH AUGUST 2020 | 8:30 PM - 9:45 PM HKT
LIVE STREAM VIA YouTube
JOIN AT: <https://www.youtube.com/ssiohk/live>



Dr. Shashank Shah completed his doctoral studies in Business Management from the SSSIHL. He has received numerous academic accolades, including the Governor's Gold Medal from Bhagawan when he was awarded the Master of Philosophy Programme in Business Management in 2006. He was a Visiting Scholar at Harvard Business School. He has published over 100 research-based papers and is a national best-selling business author. He is presently a stakeholder management strategist. He has compiled and edited over 30 books on the message of Bhagawan.

www.saibaba.org.hk Verkha Mahtani +852 9377 7671 @sathyasaikh





GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

Devotees were invited to participate in various devotional activities that the National Council initiated for Bhagawan's 95th Advent Celebrations.

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

TAPOVANAM PARAYAN
WEEKLY GROUP READING
(FROM MARCH TO JULY)

- Tapovanam consists of 18 chapters
- Every week 18 dedicated devotee readers will offer one Parayan to Swami as their *Sadhana*
- Every week a chapter will be assigned to each reader
- Reading is done at your own Altar
- By July each reader would have completed reading the whole Tapovanam

Option 1 - Thursday 11:00 am to 12:00 pm 19-Mar-2020 to 16-Jul-2020	Option 2 - Sunday 11:00 am to 12:00 pm 22-Mar-2020 to 19-Jul-2020
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If you would like to participate in this *Gold* Tapovanam Parayan, please register with Nisha Sakhrani at 6338-2706 by Sunday, 15-Mar-2020.
First come first serve ... register now!

www.saibaba.org.hk @sathysaihk

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

SATHYA SAI KATHA
THE SACRED STORY OF SATHYA SAI BABA
(18TH JULY 2020 - 20TH OCTOBER 2020)

Let's continue intensifying our *Sadhana* and stay connected to our beloved Sathya Sai Baba.

In the lead up to Avatar Declaration Day, let us reflect upon some of His Divine *leelas* through the **SRI SATHYA SAI SATHYA NARAYANA KATHA** for 95 days on a roster:

- Choose one or more dates from:
 - Round 1: 18th July to 20th August
 - Round 2: 21st August to 20th September
 - Round 3: 21st September to 20th October
- Reading is done at your own Altar anytime between 8 am to 8 pm, individually or with your family.
- The *Katha* consists of five chapters and takes approx. 45 minutes.
- *Katha* is available online in various languages - English, Hindi and Chinese. (If u would like a printed copy please let us know and we will arrange for you).
- Open to all Teenagers, Young Adults, Men & Women of all ages.

If you would like to participate in this *Gold* *Sadhana*, please register with Vimal Mohinani at 9485 4065 by Wednesday, 15-Jul-2020.

www.saibaba.org.hk @sathysaihk

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

ONLINE LEARNING ON ZOOM
PRAYER FOR AWAKENING THE INNER DIVINITY
SUPRABHATAM
RECITATION AND MEANING BY SEETHA SUBRAMANIAN
6:30 PM - 7:30 PM | EVERY WEDNESDAY
STARTING ON 19TH AUGUST 2020

'Suprabhatam' refers to the prayers that are sung at dawn in praise of the Lord to awaken the divinity present within each one. It is the act of dedicating oneself to the Lord and praying for His blessings right at the start of a new day.

If you would like to participate in this *Gold* online learning, please register with Anjali Grewal at +852 5472 3818 to receive the Zoom link.

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SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

ONLINE LEARNING ON ZOOM
Sri Sai Paadam
Ashtothara Shatha Naamaavali
RECITATION AND MEANING BY SEETHA SUBRAMANIAN OF THE 108 DIVINE NAMES OF THE LORD'S FEET
7:30 PM - 8:30 PM HKT | EVERY TUESDAY
STARTING ON 15TH SEPTEMBER 2020

If you would like to participate in this *Gold* online learning, please register with Nisha Sakhrani at +852 6338 2706 to receive the Zoom link.

www.saibaba.org.hk @sathysaihk

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

ONLINE LEARNING ON ZOOM
Sri Sathya Sai Navaratna Maala
A Garland of Nine Precious Gems of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
RECITATION AND MEANING BY ANJALI (HEERU) DASWANI
WEDNESDAY | 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM HKT
NOVEMBER 4TH, 11TH, 18TH 2020

If you would like to participate in this *Gold* online learning, please register with Anjali Grewal at +852 5472 3818 to receive the Zoom link.

www.saibaba.org.hk @sathysaihk

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

My Gift to Swami
SURRENDER A DESIRE AT HIS LOTUS FEET

When? 23rd of each month, from March to November

What? Let us give up a small pleasure or indulgence in our daily life and offer that sacrifice to Swami on that day - e.g. refrain from your favourite coffee, tea, chocolate, non-veg food, TV programme, social media, gossip, etc.

Why? "Man's many desires are like the small metal coins he carries about in his pocket. The more he has the more they weight him down."
— Sathya Sai Baba

Like the small metal coins in our pocket, desires are weighing us down. So let us find a desire that we wish to work on... so that we can practise sense control and "lighten our load" in life.

To participate in this *Gold* *Sadhana* please register with Milan (Rajni) Bharwaney at 9365-5293. A whatsapp group chat will be set up with all participants.

www.saibaba.org.hk @sathysaihk

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION, HONG KONG
GIFT OF LOVE & DEVOTION - A SERIES OF SADHANAS

"I SAW GOD HERE BECAUSE..."

As a part of the GOLD offering to Swami on His 95th Birthday we would like to invite the Bal Vikas children to take part in a Photo Caption Activity.

The children will take photos with the help of a parent (if necessary) of anywhere or anything that makes them feel God's presence. Once the photo is taken, they must write a caption "I saw God here because..." and submit it to their BV Guru.

95 captioned photos will be collated into a digital presentation and showcased in the Center on Avatar Declaration Day as our Gift of Love & Devotion by the Bal Vikas children of Hong Kong.

Register NOW with your BV guru... and FOCUS to capture 'God' in your photograph as your GOLD offering to Him!

The purpose of this activity is for children to understand that God is everywhere and in everything.

Photos with captions may be submitted from now until Easwaramma Day. Each child may send more than one photo with caption.

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SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF HONG KONG

WING REPORTS

SATHYA SAI CENTRE OF KOWLOON

The social distancing measures placed by the Government did not deter the activities of the Centre as the Devotional Wing, the Ladies' Section (Mahila Vibhag), the Young Adults and the SSE children and Gurus quickly adjusted to online activities via Skype, Zoom and Google Meet. The opportunities to offer *Narayana Seva* did not diminish in any way either and *Seva* Team volunteers continued to serve with the same dedication and selflessness as before.

DEVOTIONAL WING

Members of the SSIO of Hong Kong and devotees were invited to participate in various devotional activities that the National Council initiated through the GOLD project – A Gift of Love and Devotion for Bhagawan's 95th Advent Celebrations.

The initial intent was to run 95 devotional activities but the closure of the Centre due to Covid-19 required as many devotional activities as possible to be shifted either online or to the safety of devotees' homes. This in fact enabled devotees to take up the various *sadhana* as their personal offering to Bhagawan. The GOLD initiatives are shown separately in this magazine.

THE LADIES' SECTION

The Section initiated three GOLD *sadhana*. On 19th February 2020, more than 100 *mahila* took up

the chanting of the Maha Mrityunjaya mantra in their own homes between 8 am to 8 pm to celebrate Ladies' Day.

From 19th March to 16th July 2020, on each Thursday 18 devotees read one chapter each of the Tapovanam in the morning between 10am to 1pm. The reading of the Tapovanam was concluded with a *bhajan*, prayers, *arati* and *prasadam*. Bal Vikas Gurus also volunteered for the reading session.

From 15th September 2020, online learning of the Sai Paadam Naamaavali took place every Tuesday evening. On Ladies' Day 19th November 2020, the *Mahila* offered this as part of the celebrations.

Online study classes on the Bhagavatam are held every Tuesday morning from 11.30am to 12.45pm on Skype. The *Mahila* continue to participate in the monthly street sleepers dinner *seva* by cooking meals for distribution in their own homes.

BAL VIKAS (SSE)

Twenty five Gurus conduct online SSE classes every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday over Zoom to about 150 children aged between 4-17 years.

From April to May, the Gurus joined hands with the Seva Wing to initiate a hot meal dinner for street sleepers in Happy Valley, who normally depended on the local Gurudwara for their meals. Due to

Covid-19, the Gurudwara had stopped serving meals and the Gurus provided meals continuously for 38 days.

To celebrate Easwaramma Day, SSE children revered their mothers by spending the day with them in various activities. They then shared photos and videos of their activities, which were compiled into a slide show and shared with all parents.

At Guru Poornima celebrations, the SSE children participated in the Bal Vikas *bhajan* session specially held for the occasion.

In July 2020 BV Summer classes for 6-15 year olds started but had to be discontinued due to the rising number of local cases of Covid-19 and greater governmental restrictions on gatherings.

Gurus also initiated some GOLD *sadhana*. Since August 2020, Gurus and other *Mahila* have been engaged in online learning of the Suprabhatam every Wednesday evening. After the completion of this learning, they took up learning of recitation of the Navratan Mala. Sincere thanks go to Sister Seetha Subramanian and Sister Anjali Daswani for facilitating the learning sessions.

In September 2020, 6 SSE children contributed to the SSIO's online Ladies' Day Celebration in November by performing a short dance to '*Sai Eashwaraya Vidmahe*' for submission by video.

SERVICE WING

Covid-19 and restrictions on gatherings did not deter our many *Narayana seva*. The Seva Team have actively continued to serve the street sleepers, although the visits to the various homes for the elderly have stopped.

A total of about 6,000 masks and about 200 hand sanitizers were distributed between January and April 2020. Subsequently, masks, gloves, and sanitizers were regularly offered to street sleepers during breakfast and dinner *seva*.

In April 2020 the Seva Team with the cooperation of the Bal Vikas Gurus provided hearty home-cooked meals to a group of about 15 *Narayana* who depended on the local Gurudwara for their daily meals. Since the Gurudwara had to suspend their 24x7 service, the *Seva* Team availed of this beautiful opportunity to offer them meals.

The *Seva* Team has also adopted a new community of homeless who have set up shacks at the picturesque Kwun Tong ferry pier. Breakfast and dinner is served to them regularly and on a recent occasion when they requested Indian food the team obliged with a tiffin to brighten their day with delicious and wholesome vegetable biryani, samosas, and other Indian delights.

The team's determination to provide comfort and joy to *Narayana* has included distributing battery operated portable fans 500 sets of t-shirts and night shorts provided by a volunteer to ensure a cool and comfortable night's rest.

SSIO Zone 5 (Japan, HK, Taiwan and China) readily responded to an appeal from Zone 9A (Africa) by contributing US\$26,000 for a container load of food. African countries have had to face droughts and famines, war, and the raging Covid-19, and these crisis have taken a heavy toll on their population. This contribution was part of the 200 tonnes of food donated by the SSIO.

YOUNG ADULTS

Study classes are held every Friday evening with different facilitators on various topics of interest to the Young Adults. The classes were moved online when the Government's social distancing measures did not allow gatherings. The topics covered included 'A Journey from Pleasure to Bliss,' 'The Soul's Journey,' 'Authenticity with Spirituality,' 'A fun-filled devotee's Sai Journey,' 'Activating faith not fear,' 'Distinguishing Spirituality and Religion,' 'Am I a Hindu?' 'How to live a meaningful thank you' and 'See no evil, hear no evil.'

Our grateful thanks to the facilitators Venkat Boppana, Ashok Sakhrani, Prem Samtani, Gautam Daswani, Geeta Shahani and Anjali Grewal for their time and support.

Once a month the Friday session is converted into a fun activity, mostly online via Zoom. The activities have included a movie night on the film 'The Shift,' a Quiz-Up entitled "Fun with Swami," a quiz on Sai Baba's Life and Teachings, a yoga session, and a 'Sai Bingo' session with a twist and other board games conducted on Zoom.

In other ongoing activities, the YA continue to participate in the fortnightly breakfast *seva* for

street sleepers. They also took part in a local inter-faith programme by singing devotional songs. To practice *bhajan*, the YA hold regular *bhajan* jamming sessions on Sunday afternoons.

The YA were particularly instrumental in ensuring that Global Akhanda Gayatri chanting was smoothly broadcast on Zoom. With their technical expertise they guided the adults and handled the computer equipment with utmost diligence. Our sincere thanks for their genuine efforts.

SATHYA SAI CENTRE OF TSUEN WAN

(The Centre has remained closed since 26th February, 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, except during the festival days of Guru Poornima and MahaShivaratri.)

Bhajans are normally held every Sunday and Thursday evenings and when it was not feasible to hold these in the Centre, online *bhajan* via Zoom and Google Meet have been conducted.

Festivals celebrated started with ushering in the New Year 2020 with *bhajan*. Other festivals celebrated this year include Mahashivaratri, Aradhana Mahotsavam, and Guru Poornima, which took place in the Centre, while Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated online via Google Meet.

Devotees of the Centre participated in the online Global Akhanda Gayatri chanting in June, August, and October at the Kowloon Centre.

Devotees have been privileged to attend several online *satsang*. On Aradhana Mahotsavam a live stream *satsang* via Youtube with Mrs. Geetha Mohan Ram was organised by the National Council on the topic, "Faith in Uncertain Times". In May, devotees attended another live stream *satsang Samarpan* by Binay Kumar Hariharan. In August 2020, devotees

were privileged to join another live stream *satsang* organised by the National Council, entitled "Dance with the Divine" by Professor Gangadhara Sastry. A third with Bro. Shashank Shah was held in late August 2020.

The *Mahila* continue with their study class every second and last Thursday of the month conducted by Sister Kanta Rai, either in the Centre or online via Google Meet.

Bal Vikas classes are conducted every Sunday morning by three Gurus leading about 20 junior and senior BV children. Since September, these classes have been on Zoom.

NARAYANA SEVA

Narayana Seva continued uninterrupted from January to September on the last Sunday of each month and on every alternate Friday and Saturday. On each occasion, 130 packs of dry food that consist of a banana, water, tea/juice, pocket tissue, biscuits, noodles and a sandwich were distributed in Jordan and Yau Ma Tei districts in south Kowloon.

A special *seva* was organised in Yuen Long in September to distribute 45 sets of t-shirts and shorts, kindly donated by a devotee. Dry food items and face masks were also distributed.

The *Mahila* have regularly visited 30 cage-homes in various locations in Sham Shui Po, Nam Cheong, and Cheung Sha Wan. The Young Adults join these cage-home *seva* on the last Sunday of the month. Dry food packs that include noodles, biscuits, rice, tissue rolls, soy milk and juice are generally distributed.

In the Service of Sai
National Coordinating Committee





REPORT OF THE INSTITUTE OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION HONG KONG (ISSE HK)

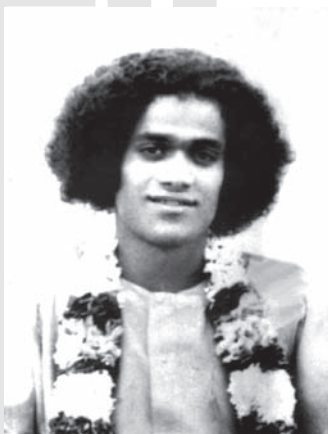
Despite school and university closures, our SSEHV training in Mainland China has continued online with participants working from home. Postgraduate Education students from four universities and one teacher-training college have completed monthly activities on topics such as ‘Understanding the human values,’ ‘Starting the day with love,’ and ‘Putting Ceiling on Desires into practice in our daily lives,’ as well as studying how to integrate SSEHV into Chinese schools.

124 certificates were awarded to students who completed the first year of activities successfully, and advanced certificates were awarded to 54 who had continued for a second or third year. The students have liaised with ISSE HK teacher-trainers and alumni teachers (who have completed our training programmes in the past) via social media share new teaching ideas.

A research project conducted by ISSE HK with teachers who have been practising SSEHV in four provinces in China for several years revealed that the teachers found their practice helped to reduce their professional and personal problems. In particular, they found that the regular use of silent-sitting helped them to handle their daily lives with more peace and love.

By doing so, they discovered they were more able to detach from their problems and challenges, thus not being affected by them as much as they had been in the past. They also found that the SSEHV practices in their classrooms and in their personal lives had a positive impact on their students and other people around them. This had the effect of actually removing some of the behaviours that had been problematic for them previously.

Sai Ram
Dr. Margaret Taplin
Senior Education Officer



**Whoever tries to understand
the Human Values of Truth,
Righteous conduct, Peace,
Love and Non-violence
properly, who practises these
values and propagates them
with zeal and sincerity can
alone be described as a truly
educated person.**

Sathya Sai International Organisation, Hong Kong

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For General Information, call us at 2367 4240

or visit our website: www.saibaba.org.hk



WEEKLY BHAJANS

Every Thursday : 6:25pm - 7:50pm

Every Sunday : 6:25pm - 7:50pm

SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

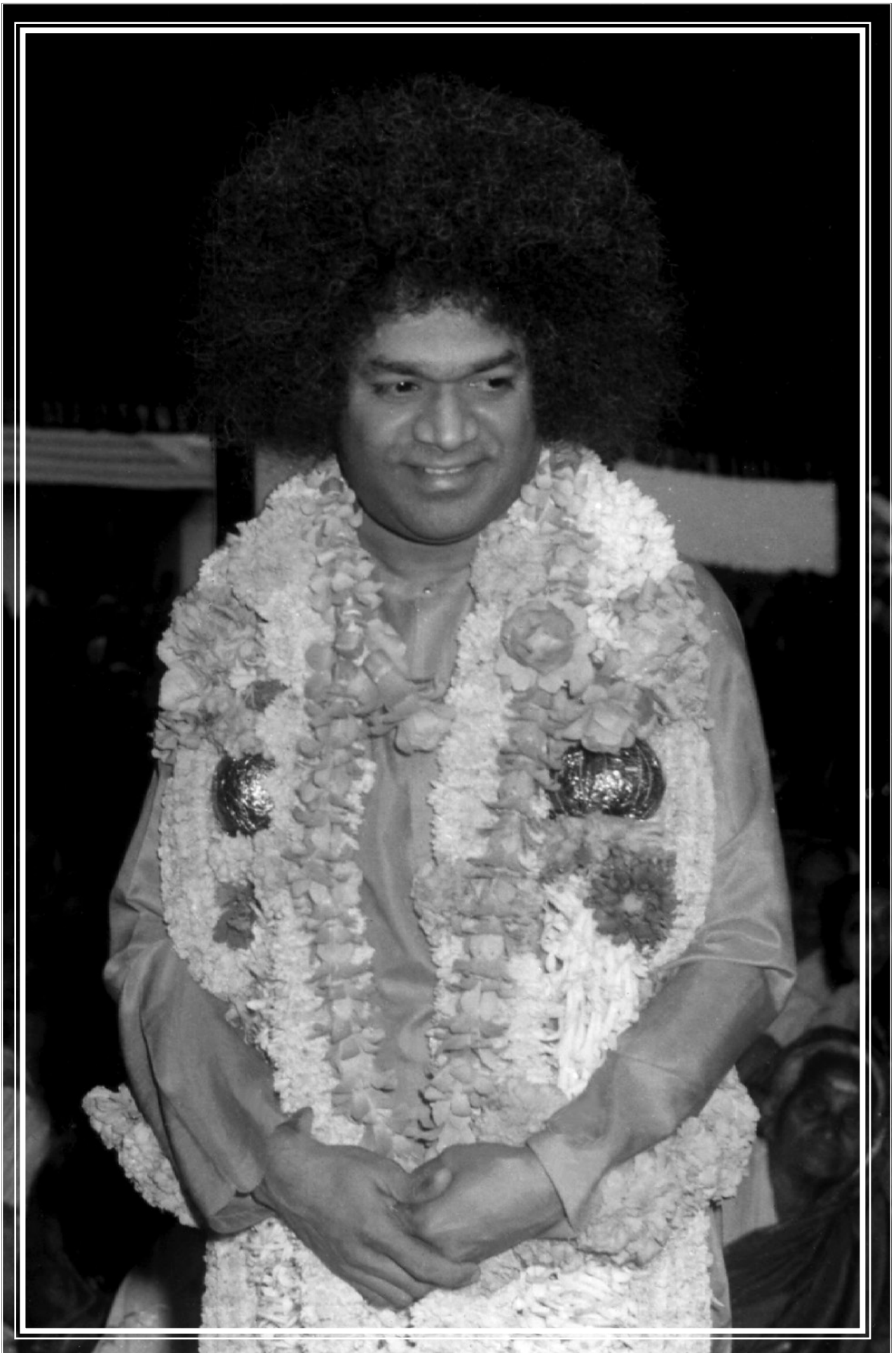
<p>Anju Daswani 9750 9315</p>	<p>Study Circle - 1st & 3rd Monday of every month 7:15pm - 8:30pm / Arul Shanty 2633 6850</p> <p>Bhajans & Study Circle in Mid-levels - every Monday 4:00pm - 5:15pm / Rakhee Nandwani 2530 4444</p>	<p>Bhajans in Ap Lei Chau - every Thursday 5:30pm - 6:30pm / Manju Aravind 9813 8903</p> <p>Bhajans in Mid-levels - fortnightly on Fridays 5:30pm - 7:00pm / Poonam Mahtani 2540 2292</p> <p>Bhajans in Tai Koo Shing/Tung Chung - once a month, Saturday 7:00pm - 8:00pm / Gope Daswani 9634 9239</p>
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SEVA ACTIVITIES

<p>Ashok Kirpalani 9779 5209</p>	<p>Visits to Home for Mentally Challenged Once a month, Saturday 1:30pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anju Nandwani 9230 7751 • Babita Mahtani 9465 5933 <p>Narayana Seva, Rice Distribution Dongguan (China) - every 2 months, Sunday Tobi Chu 6408 7648</p> <p>Street Sleepers Narayana Seva, Tsuen Wan Centre Third Sunday of every month</p>	<p>Street Sleepers Narayana Seva on HK Island</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second Wednesday of every month Haresh Wadhvani 9021 4467 • last Friday of every month Ashok Kirpalani 9779 5209 <p>Street Sleepers Narayana Seva on Kowloon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second Friday of every month Cooking - Anmol Nainani 9500 9090 Distribution - Anand Nandwani 9354 5198 • last Wednesday of every month Haresh Wadhvani 9021 4467 <p>Street Sleepers Breakfast Narayana Seva</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HK Island - second Sunday of every month Ashok Kirpalani 9779 5209 • Kowloon Side - second Sunday of every month Priya (Vimal) Mohinani 9485 4065 • Kowloon Side - last Sunday of every month Sonia Balani 9039 2751
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WINGS	REGULAR CLASSES	REGULAR ACTIVITIES
<p>EDUCATION</p> <p>Anjali Grewal 5472 3818</p>	<p>Kowloon (TST) every Wednesday, Saturday</p> <p>Hong Kong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-levels - every Monday • Aberdeen - every Monday, Wednesday <p>Tsuen Wan Centre - every Sunday</p> <p>New admissions - please email to balvikasadmissions@gmail.com</p>	<p>Guru's Study Circle - every Tuesday 6:00pm - 7:15pm</p>
<p>MAHILA VIBHAG</p> <p>Nisha Sakhrani 6338 2706</p>	<p>Senior Mahila - every Tuesday 11:30am - 12:45pm / Nisha Sakhrani 6338 2706</p> <p>Junior Mahila / Anushka Nainani 9040 9090</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • every Wednesday 6:45pm - 8:00pm • every Friday 10:45am - 12:00pm 	<p>Community Seva</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in Tai Kok Tsui Meghna Chotrani 9371 9294 • in Mong Kok Asha Mahtani 9056 1021 <p>Ladies' Day Celebration - 19th of every Month</p> <p>Knitting Seva - Nisha Sakhrani 6338 2706</p>
<p>YOUNG ADULTS</p> <p>Milan Budhrani 6197 2912</p>	<p>Young Adults Study Circle - every Friday 7:30pm - 8:45pm / Amrita Daryanani 6014 6064</p>	<p>Bhajan Jamming - 1st & 3rd Sunday of every month 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm / Harry Chainani 9353 9387</p> <p>Visits to Home for Mentally Challenged every 2 months 1:30pm - 4:30pm Ravi Sukhwani 6578 9774</p>

**For information of the Devotional, Educational & Seva activities of the Tsuen Wan Centre please contact
Bro. Bijay Sharma at 6058 6578**





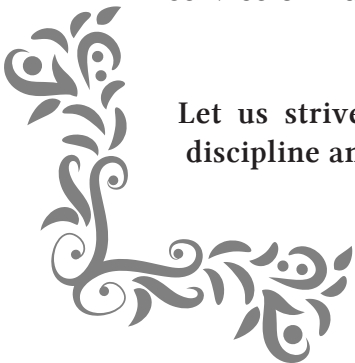
THE NINE-POINT CODE OF CONDUCT

As laid down by the Charter of
Sri Sathya Sai World Organisation

That in order to remember continuously Bhagawan's teachings and in order to put them into practise and to be a worthy instrument of our Divin Master, every member must undergo *SADHANA*, a spiritual discipline which should be merged with day-to-day life so as to make *SADHANA* a part of his or her wordly life, and ever member shall make his or her "Family as a Unit" for such *SADHANA*.

Thust with a view to quality to be a true member of the Organisation, the following guidelines shall be followed.

1. Daily meditation and prayer.
2. Devotional singing/prayer with family members once per week.
3. Participation in Sai Spiritual Education by children of the family.
4. Participation in community service and other programmes of the Organisation.
5. Regular attendance at devotional meetings conducted by the Organisation.
6. Regular study of Sai literature.
7. Use of soft, loving speech with everyone.
8. Avoidance of talking ill of others, especially in their absence.
9. Practice of the principles of "Ceiling on Desires", consciously and continuously striving to eliminate the tendency to waste time, money, food, and energy and utilising any savings thereby generated for the service of mankind.



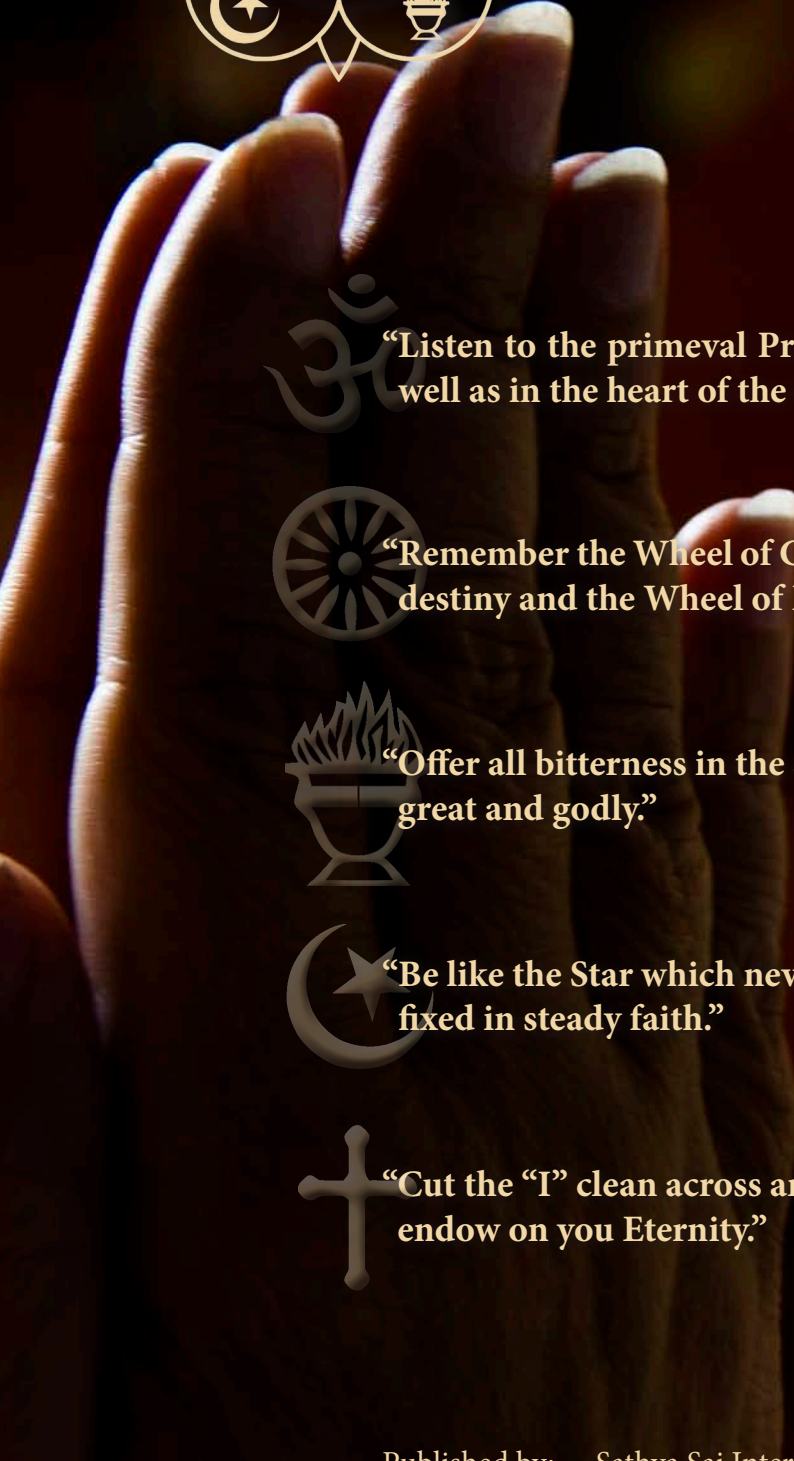
Let us strive to be Bhagawan's worthy followers through spiritual discipline and earn His Grace to attain perfection and enlightenment.

Jai Sai Ram




“Let the different faiths exist, let them flourish, let the glory of God be sung in all languages, in a variety of times that should be the ideal. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognise them as vaild as far as they do not extinguish the flame of Unity.”


- Sri Sathya Sai Baba




“Listen to the primeval Pranava resounding in your hearts as well as in the heart of the Universe.”




“Remember the Wheel of Cause and Consequence of Deed and destiny and the Wheel of Dharma that rights them all.”



“Offer all bitterness in the sacred Fire and emergy grand, great and godly.”



“Be like the Star which never wavers from the Crescent but is fixed in steady faith.”



“Cut the “I” clean across and let your ego die on the Cross, to endow on you Eternity.”

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