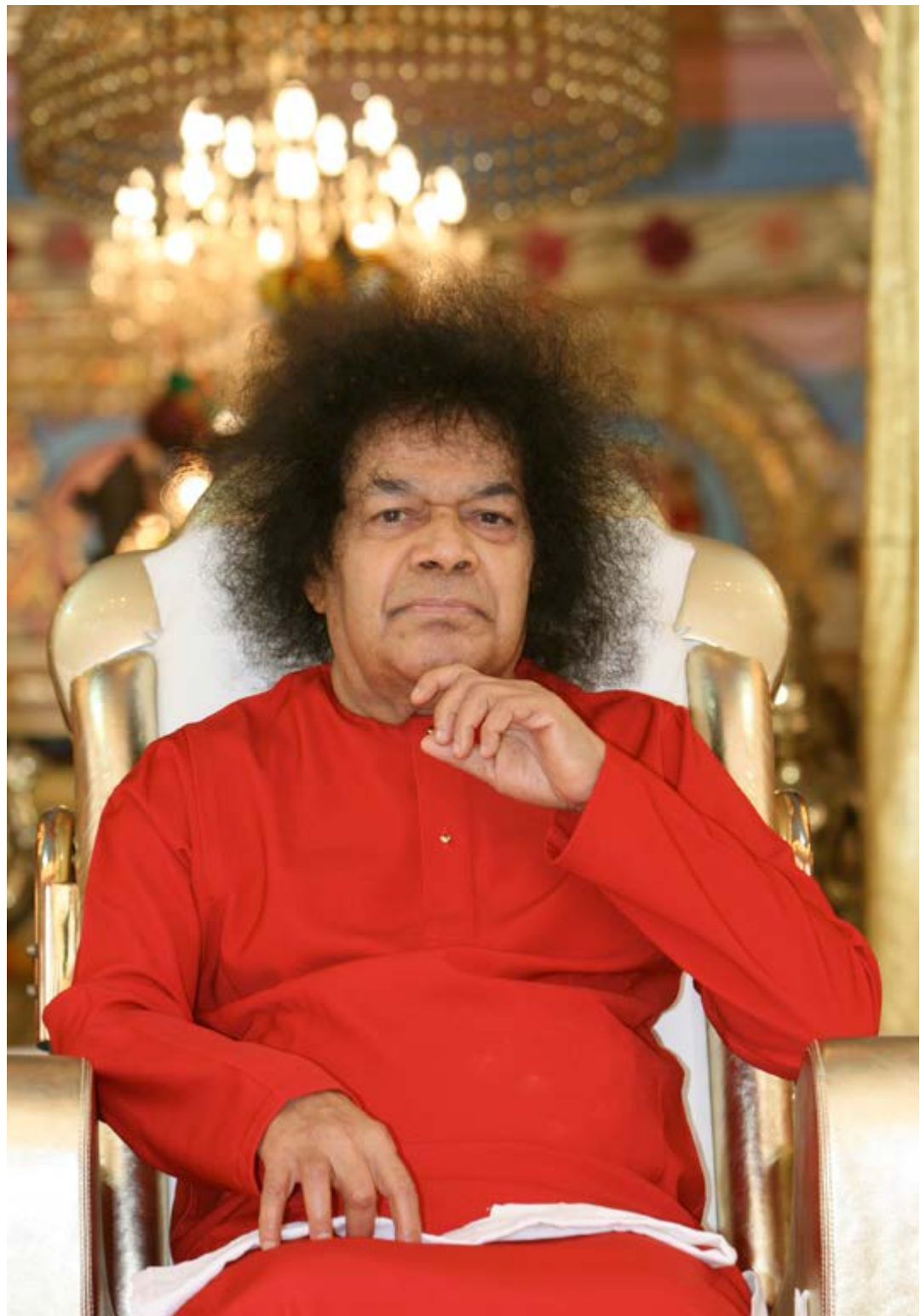




SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING
(Deemed to be University)

PRASANTHI VIDWAN MAHASABHA

2011



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Vidyagiri, Prasanthi Nilayam – 515134, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, India

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Preface

Dasara or Navaratri is a ten day festival, usually falling in the month of October, and is celebrated all over India in the worship of the Divine as the Mother principle. Bhagawan Baba has explained that the festival of Dasara is a celebration of the triumph of good over evil, signifying the vanquishing of the ‘six demons’ of lust, anger, attachment, greed, pride and jealousy within us.

Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna

Since the early sixties, the festival of Dasara in Prasanthi Nilayam has been closely associated with the ‘*Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna*’. This *yagnam* is a week-long worship conducted in the Divine Presence at the Poornachandra Auditorium each year for the welfare of the whole world. The *Yagnam* commences on the fourth day of Dasara and concludes with the ‘*Poornahuti*’ – the final oblation that is offered on Vijayadashami, the tenth day.

The most important component of the *Yagnam* is the *Rudra Yagam* where the oblations are made in the *Yagna Kunda* to Lord Shiva while chanting hymns from the *Sri Rudram*. In addition to this, other rituals like *Surya Namaskara*, *Sahasralinga Archana*, *Srimad Bhagavatha Parayana*, *Ramayana Parayana* and the *Devi Mahatmyam* are simultaneously performed.

The students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning take active part in the *Yagnam* by chanting the vedas, reading the

scriptures and performing other parts of the worship along with the learned pundits.

Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha

The evening programmes during the seven days of the *Yagnam* are held in Sai Kulwant Hall, under the auspices of the '*Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha*', where many speakers, primarily students and functionaries of Bhagawan's institutions, address the gathering on topics concerning spirituality and philosophy, Bhagawan's teachings and experiences of devotees.

This book, the first of its kind by the University, is a compilation of all the talks delivered during the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha* in 2011, that took place from 30th September to 6th October. Relevant transcripts of excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Divine Discourses are also included.

We are very grateful to several volunteers who contributed towards the successful compilation of this volume. In particular, we would like to thank Sri K.V.R.K. Bhargav, alumnus, Department of Management Studies, who patiently transcribed all the talks of the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha* 2011, and also Dr. S. Jagadeeswara Rao, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, for meticulously proof-reading the final copy.

Bhagawan Baba on Dasara

On several other occasions of the Dasara festival, celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagawan Baba has given Discourses, clarifying the purpose and importance of the festival, and highlighting the inner meaning of the celebration and of the worship of the Divine Mother. Following are some excerpts from these Discourses.

Purpose of Dasara

Festivals like Dasara are designed to make man aware of his divinity, to endow him with purity, to become aware of its holiness, and to imprint on his heart the wisdom won by sages after years of yearning.¹ The sages who have decided on these festivals have a high purpose. They want us to imbibe the inner meaning and use each day as a step in Sadhana, as a reminder of the journey, which each person has to undertake alone to the Feet of the Lord. Dasara is the festival that celebrates the victory of the forces of the good over the foes that resist the progress of man towards light. The forces of good (Devas) are combating with the forces of evil (Asuras) in every living being and if only they rely on Mahashakti, the great Divine Force that fosters and feeds the universe, they can easily win and reach goal.² Festivals like Dasara at Prasanthi Nilayam bring together Sadhakas from all the continents, irrespective of religion, caste, creed, and colour. They are motivated by the same urge, to involve themselves more and more in attempts to realise their innate divinity. They have met here to enjoy the supreme delight in the holy presence of the

¹ Sathya Sai Baba. Sathya Sai Speaks (SSS), Vol. VIII, p. 115

² Sathya Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. V, p. 249

Lord and to recognise the unity of all in the Divine Atmic Splendour.¹ It is to give Ananda (bliss) to the Bhaktas (devotees) that I arrange this festival. I have no other wish. Do not muddy the pellucid waters of your faith by the slightest trace of doubt.²

Importance of Dasara

During the Dasara festival, the three Goddesses – Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati – are worshipped according to certain traditional practices. The tenth day of the festival is celebrated as the victory. The celebration has its roots deep in ancient history of Bharat. In the Dwapara Yuga, when the Pandavas had to spend one-year incognito, they hid their weapons on the advice of Krishna, in a Jammi tree which is thick in foliage and whose branches are filled with latent fire. Vijayadashami was the day on which they retrieved their weapons from the tree and used them to win victory over the Kauravas. In the Treta Yuga, Sri Rama's coronation, after his victorious return to Ayodhya from Lanka, was performed on the Vijayadashami day.³

Inner Meaning of Dasara

The term “Devi” represents the Divine power that has taken a Rajasic form to suppress the forces of evil and protect the Satvic qualities. When the forces of injustice, immorality and untruth have grown to monstrous proportions and are indulging in a death-dance, when selfishness and self-interest are rampant, when men have lost all sense of kindness and compassion; the Atmic principle, assuming the Form of Shakti, taking on the Rajasic quality, seeks to destroy the evil elements. This is the inner meaning of the Dasara festival.⁴

¹ Sathya Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. VIII, p. 11

² Sathya Sai Baba, SSS, Vol. V, p. 69. Discourse on 29 Sep 1965

³ Sathya Sai Baba, Sanathana Sarathi (SS), 12/92, p. 304

⁴ Sathya Sai Baba. SS, 11/91, pp. 284 & 285

Inner Meaning of Devi Worship on Dasara

When the Divine Goddess is in dreadful rage to destroy the wicked elements, she assumes a fearful form. To pacify the dreaded Goddess, Her feminine children offer worship to her with red kumkum (sacred red powder). The Goddess, seeing the blood-red kumkum at her feet, feels assured that the wicked have been vanquished and assumes her benign form. The inner meaning of the worship of 'Devi' with red kumkum is that thereby the Goddess is appeased. During the ten days of Dasara, the demons (Rakshasas) in the form of wicked qualities have been routed. Rakshasas do not mean demonic beings. The bad qualities in men are the demons. Arrogance is a demon. Bad thoughts are demons.¹

¹ Sai Baba. SS, 11/91, p. 285

Day 1 | 30 September 2011

Introduction

Dr. Shashank Shah

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*Ya devi sarva bhooteshu matru roopena samstitha
Namasyae namasyae namasyae namo namaha*

We offer our obeisance to the Goddess who is present in the form of the Divine Mother in the entire creation. *Navaratri* is the festival of victory, power and *Shakti*, adored and celebrated in three forms. The first three days are dedicated to *Maha Kali*, the facet of *Shakti* as anger, adventure and audacity, the *Tamasic* nature. The next three days are dedicated to *Maha Lakshmi*, the facet of *Shakti* as wealth, authority and prosperity, the *Rajasic* nature. The last three days of this nine-day holy festival are dedicated to *Maha Saraswati*, the facet of *Shakti* as self-control, knowledge and discipline, the *Satvic* nature.

From the ghats of the *Hooghly* in *Paschim Banga*, where the Divine Mother is worshipped as *Bhava Tarini Durga* at *Dakshineswar*, to the *maths* of *Kanchi* and *Sringeri* in *Tamil Nadu* and *Karnataka* where *Adi Shakti* is worshipped as *Kamakshi* and *Sharada* respectively, a billion *Bharatiyas* offer worship to the Cosmic Mother in the diverse forms for nine long days during this *Navaratri* festival.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, we have been blessed to celebrate the *Devi Navaratri* festival in the Divine presence of Bhagawan for over half a century. The Navaratri festival at Prasanthi Nilayam brings together and blends ideally the triune paths of Karma, Upasana and Jnana. While the Grama Seva conducted over a period of nine days by the students of Sri Sathya Sai educational institutions gives lessons in detached action and selfless service; the *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* glorifies the *Upasana* tradition and the rich Indian culture and heritage; the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha* which is held every evening for a period of seven day during the *Saptaha Jnana Yagna* gives valuable lessons on the path of supreme wisdom – *Jnana Marga*.

Time and again, Bhagawan declared that His descent is for achieving the four important objectives of *Veda Poshana*, *Vidwat Poshana*, *Dharma Rakshana* and *Bhakta Rakshana*. The *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* in Prasanthi Nilayam and other festivities during the Navaratri festival are the manifestation of this Avataric resolve of Bhagawan. I am very glad to share that today we complete fifty golden years since the *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* was performed for the very first time in *Bhagawan's* Divine physical presence in the *Navaratri* of 1961 at Prasanthi Nilayam.

On this occasion, I take you back to 1961, when the *Yagna* was performed in Swami's physical presence for the very first time. This small narration tells how Bhagawan was personally involved in the minute details of conducting this hallowed *Yagna*. When the list of qualified ritualists, pandits, shastris and reciters who were supposed to participate in the *Yagna* was drawn then, it was sent to Bhagawan. When Baba saw that all of them have been selected from only the *Konaseema* region (the delta area), He set aside the list saying, "*My Seema (area) is not Konaseema but Vedaseema, the place where all Vedas are revered*". So the lists were revised and Vedic scholars and pandits were invited from other

parts of India like Varanasi, Hyderabad, and Bangalore, along with the contingent from the Godavari basin.

The *Yagna* was called *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* and it consisted of two sessions. The morning session consisted of the *Rudram Homam* and along with it the complementary rites and rituals. The evening session was the time for the *Jnana Yagna* where distinguished exponents of Vedas explained to the vast gathering the meaning and significance of scriptures and their subtleties and intricacies. Since the festival had to highlight the efficacy of Vedic injunctions, Swami said that scrupulous care should be taken to follow the injunctions to the minutest detail.

Let me give you a glimpse into the type of details that are observed while conducting this hallowed *Yagna*. These include the number, the size and the situation of the pillars of the *Yagna Mandapa*, the shape of the sacrificial pit, the location of the shrines of subsidiary deities like the *Yoginis*, the *Vaastu Purusha*, the *Kshetra Pala* and the *Navagrahas*, all of these have to be correctly fixed and placed in the right positions. The *Kusha* grass seats for the participants have to be prepared in accordance with the dos and don'ts as mentioned in the scriptures and *Shastras*. The material for the sacrifice like – ghee has to be prepared from cow's milk; the earth has to be gathered from ant hills, the royal equestrian stables, the royal elephant stables, royal palace enclosures; the banyan tree twigs; the spoons of special wood; were all collected under Bhagawan's personal guidance and instructions. All together, 2,26,270 spoonfuls of ghee were offered on the seven mornings in the sacrificial fire with the concurrent invocation of the appropriate name of the Lord among His multifarious invocations.

On one of evenings, Bhagawan mentioned that the Vedas declare that those who desire higher peace or *Shanti* have to perform this auspicious ritual. Bhagawan also referred in His discourse about

the derision with which many Indians react to so much ghee being poured in the sacrificial fire. He mentioned a beautiful insight, which goes like this, 'When ghee is poured in fire, those who do not know or believe in the Vedas may say that it is a waste. In a similar fashion those who do not know the art of agriculture may say that casting seeds in the furrow is a colossal waste. However, they do not know that the tiller will get the grain a hundred fold at the time of harvest. This *Yagna* is also like that. Letters reach the addressee when it is duly stamped with Mantras and dropped into the sacrificial fire. Mantras for separate deities are like posting letters with the address of that deity. This is very much a science like any other prevalent in the land.'

Sri Uppaluri Ganapathi Sastry, a seventy year old scholar, one of the very few in India who expounded every syllable of the Veda correctly, in conformity with the authentic commentary laid down in the scriptures, and on whom learned society showered titles like *Vidya Bhashya Visharada* and *Veda Bhashya Alankara*, was chosen by Bhagawan as the President of the Jnana section of the *Yagna* conducted in 1961. After the completion of the *Saptaha Yagna*, Sri Sastry mentioned that he didn't have the opportunity of witnessing such a scrupulous *Yagna* that passes the most rigorous tests of ancient Indian scriptures and traditions. This was the very first that he had seen at Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine presence of Bhagawan. He also declared on the occasion that Bhagawan is the very embodiment of the Veda Purusha (the Cosmic Lord).

On that day Swami declared, "*Do not be misled, I am not the person who is performing the Yagna, but the One who is receiving the sacrificial offering and bestowing on you the awards of conducting the Yagna.*"

A Deal with the Divine

Dr. S. Jagdish Chandra

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*Girija bhavani shiva ranjani
Maatu bhavani vara dayeeni
Jai jai girivar raj kishori
Jai Mahesh mukha Chandra chakoori
Jai gajvadana shadaana maata
Jagat janani damini duti gaata
Nahi tara aadi madhya avasana
Amit prabhava Veda nahi jana
Bhava bhava vibhava prabhava kaarini
Vishwa vimohini swavasa viharini*

Many a time we have dreams and they are of different kinds. Once a man dreamt that he was in a shopping mall. To his utter amazement, when he came to the billing counter, he found God at the counter. Amazed and surprised he asked God, "God! What do you sell here?" God replied, "Whatever your heart desires." This was a rare opportunity, getting to buy something directly from God. So it was not worth asking for trivial things. He pondered a while and asked God, "God! I want truth, I want peace, I want love, I want satisfaction, I want everything that can make my life better and happier". God chuckled with a smile and replied, "We don't sell fruits here, only seeds". The path is shown,

we have to walk the path and as we live our lives, we find our life to be a life of deals.

We deal with people, we deal with elders and everyone around us. Just for a moment, imagine that we have to strike a deal with divinity. When God comes in front of us and we get an opportunity, what do we do? The best part of this relationship; of striking a deal with God is, you are always going to win. We find in our analysis that God is a very bad competitor, for he rejoices when we win and he cries when we lose, although at times we might think that he is our opponent.

Let me take you back to *dwapara yuga* to narrate a beautiful story of a deal that took place between little Krishna and the fruit seller. This fruit seller was from a low caste or the *nishada* clan and she was selling the *jambul* fruits. As she was of a low caste she was naturally shunned and not welcomed by the people into their houses or compounds. She slowly and steadily made her way out of the village. But at one point of time, she found a little boy with a dark complexion, playing in the veranda of his house. She was enchanted with his beauty. She goes into his house, the house of Nanda, and sees the little Krishna. He beckons her and asks if she would give him the *jambul* fruits. Enchanted and mesmerized by his beauty, she couldn't refuse.

Krishna said that he wanted many of them. As she was poor lady she couldn't get rid of her business tactics and she said, "Son! You might take as many fruits as you want but in return you need to give me something". The Lord played his drama to perfection; he said, "Mother! I don't have anything, what do you want?" She said, "Can you give me some grains of rice in return"? The Lord said that they have a lot of grains in their granary and ran inside to get a handful of grains in his little hands in return for the many *jambul* fruits that he would get. As he ran across the veranda, through the gaps in the little fingers some grains escaped and

finally when he reached the fruit seller there were only a few grains sticking to his beautiful pink palms. The Lord said with excitement, “Look mother! How many grains I got for you” and dusted those few grains sticking to his hands.

Bewitched by the beauty and innocence, the fruit seller decided to be God’s pauper, not knowing that God’s pauper is the richest man, for he gets the riches not only of this world but beyond, and as Swami beautifully said, “*nannu nammina vadiki anname kadu anandamu kooda esthanu* (I will give not only food but bliss also to those who have faith in me)”. When she returned to her abode, she found her basket heavy, not with few grains of rice but precious jewels. At that point in time, what would she think about the deal she struck with God? Our life is often very similar; knowingly or unknowingly we strike a deal with God, but at the end of it, it is we who are victorious always, for God wants us to learn the most important lesson in every or any deal struck. What he teaches is the greatest lesson of life, i.e., Love.

In the first part, we too have desires and we too go to the balcony of the Lord to strike a deal. It was in Banares, when Bhagawan had gone to bless his devotees in his trip to north India. Kasturi garu had also accompanied Bhagawan. Since it was the holy city of Banares, he had in his mind, to get initiated into a mantra by Bhagawan himself. So he had a bath early in the morning, fasted throughout the day in expectation of one mantra from Swami. The day passed, excitement gave way to despair and finally to dejection. Lunchtime that day had a very interesting prospect; he found himself sitting right next to Bhagawan, and Bhagawan in his ‘divinely down to earth’ way questioned him, “Kasturi, why aren’t you eating anything”? In a sorrowful swallowing of sobs, Kasturi garu said, “Swami, the mantra.”

Swami again innocently asked, “What will happen with the mantra, Kasturi? Kasturi replied, “I will go closer to the Lord.”

Swami, pointing towards his hand, which was touching Kasturi's said, "Kasturi, how much more closer can you get to God?" It was a revelation. Not that he didn't know whom he was with; but what separated him from that knowledge, was a veil of ignorance. What joy, what thrill, what energy filled Kasturiji's heart can be experienced by all of us, when we say with pride that we lived with God. We strike a deal and get much more; Kasturiji struck a deal for a mantra and got Mahadeva himself.

Coming to the next part; we strike a deal, we move ahead and we think that we have something to offer to God, like the fruit seller thought that she had the jambul fruits to offer to Lord Krishna. The beauty with God is that when try to see at the superficial level, we feel that it is we who are giving, but if you observe carefully with the eyes of wisdom, we will notice that even when the Lord is receiving, it is his hand which is on top. It is said very beautifully by Acharya Vishnu Das:

*Kaithabha so narkasura so pal mein madhu so mura so jinha maariyo
Loka chaturdasa rakshaka keshava poorna veda puraana vichariyo
Sri kamala kuja kumkuma mandana pandit devaadeva nihariyo
So kar mangan ko bali pey kartarahune kartar pasariyo*

The one who can kill demons like Madhu and Kaithabha in seconds, who is worshipped by Goddess Laxmi herself. For that supreme person, was it necessary to ask emperor Bali for three paces of land? But even when he stretched his hand to ask for asking three paces of land, it was the Lord who was conferring immortality on emperor Bali.

It was in the year 1999; Bhagawan was directing the convocation drama and there was a role of pandavas being played in it. Bhagawan appeared to be very enthusiastic as he is always in such situations and said, "*Mana pillalu sakshatu pandavulu laaga undaali* (our students should look exactly like pandavas)."

So, the teacher in charge had the important responsibility of finding the best costumes for those roles. He searched day in and day out and found some costumes but there were not to the satisfaction of Bhagawan. Finally, they decided that these small towns and villages nearby would not have that which Bhagawan expected. After all, the director of the convocation drama was none other than the director of the cosmos and definitely His tastes would be ethereal. The teacher in charge went to Bangalore and found a person who used to supply costumes to the film industry and big drama groups. He got a gorgeous pair of costumes and showed it to Bhagawan. Bhagawan's eyes lit up and He said that these were the best costumes and boys would look really good in them. But as the director was God and the drama ethereal, the price too was astronomical. When the price was mentioned, Bhagawan said that it was too much.

It was not that he could not afford it but he had a very beautiful lesson in store for us. In the end, when there was silence in the interview room, Swami asked the teacher, "Did you mention to that person that these costumes are being asked by Sai Baba?" So much we get attached to the physical form that we forget who He is. We think that they are few grains of rice like the fruit seller but they are actually pearls. It is that name which made the monkeys cross the ocean, it is that name which is the taraka mantra which the same as Sai. The teacher realized that in the entire conversation with the dealer about the costume he never for once mentioned the name of Bhagawan.

On the following day, the teacher went to Bangalore and mentioned that these clothes were actually for Sri Sathya Sai Baba's University, as they were performing a drama. The moment the person heard the name Sai Baba, the very next day he wound up his entire shop and was found in Puttaparthi saying that he was searching for one opportunity to serve Swami. This time the teacher was very excited when he came and reported this to

Swami, but Swami was waiting for a very important message to be conveyed. Sitting at ease, He said that take the name of Sai once and everything will be achieved. That is the power of the name of the Lord. What we achieve in our lives is not what we do but what he wills. Only by the power of His name, His presence and His Divine Will confers everything unto us. Finally, the fruit seller receives the grains and finds that they are the precious diamonds. Should she rejoice for those diamonds or should she rejoice for the purity of love that she could experience in the presence of Lord Krishna?

Who wins in this deal is a question for each one of us to answer. If we find out for ourselves and try to ask a question, why does God incarnate? Is it *yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya*, is it *yogakshemam vahaamyham*, is it *Manmana bhava madbhaktaha*? Is it on account of the decline of dharma? Is it in order to ensure welfare of humanity? Is it in order to help man to focus on God and merge in Him? I possibly do not have an answer or rather, I don't have the capacity to answer. I don't know when or why the supreme or the omniscient decides to confine himself to a body comprising the five elements. But something that I have felt and seen and I am sure each one of us has felt here is, what we learnt because of the God we saw here. He is with us even today. If not for him, I wouldn't have known what compassion is. If not for the caress on my cheeks, even after knowing the follies I committed, I would have never known what forgiveness was. If he wouldn't have given that one extra opportunity to kiss his feet, in spite of feeling miserable about the blunders that I committed; in spite of doing all that was wrong, his one look that fell on me and told me 'I love you', possibly I couldn't have understood what love is.

To be precise, I wouldn't have understood what I was, unless and until I was in His presence. With that prayer we all strike our deals, for we are sure to be the winners as he is on our side wherever we are, whatever we do and can be with him always.

Significance of Navaratri Festival and Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna

G. Nagarjuna

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Long time ago when God created man, man constantly pestered God with trivial problems out of his innocence. Every day, man went to God and asked him to solve his problems, give him peace and so on. God; perfect and omniscient as He was, knew that He has created man, the pinnacle of his creation, in His true image, perfect and full as godhead himself. God wanted to distance himself away from man, physically, so that man could connect to God within.

To make this attempt practical, God first moved to forest. Man, clever as he was, went to forest. Then, God went under water, and man again went and found him there. He went to hills, hillocks and even reached Mount Kailasha, and there too man reached him. Now God was facing a pertinent problem. Wherever he goes man comes finds him. But alas! He doesn't seem to be happy. To answer this very question of God, Narada came to him and said, "There is one place where you go and abide, and all would come and meet you there". God was eager to know what place was. Narada said that this place is everywhere but very few can come and meet you there. The place is the innermost

recess of the heart of the universe, the innermost recess of the heart of each one of us.

The story doesn't end here. Time passed, and God found out that very few people are able to make contact with him. Compassionate as he was, he beckoned Narada and asked him again to ensure that man do not face the problem of being away from God. Narada sat, contemplated and pondered on this problem for a while and came upon a solution. He said to God, "God, you are in everyone's heart, but we can create symbols and spaces in time where man can devote and dedicate himself in your memory and contemplation."

In this regard, the holy land of Bharat celebrates festivals throughout the year. Navaratri is one such festival where we take time out from our mundane schedule and move within to seek the divinity that is within all of us.

This auspicious festival of Navaratri is an attempt to tap the divinity embodied as mother in the three forms of Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati, and worshipping in both principle and form. What is this principle of Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati? The very fact that each one of us is alive and breathing is the principle of goddess Durga. The very fact that our limbs move and our mind thinks is the blessings of goddess Mahalaxmi. With these two facets of divinity giving meaning to our thoughts, words and actions is the aspect of goddess Saraswati. These forms of divinity have been worshipped in the holy land of Bharat from time immemorial for God is not at a place far away from us but very close to us. Let us look at the form of goddess Durga, sitting on the majestic lion, having the trident with her and destroying demon Mahishasura; giving her the name Mahishasura mardini. The lion on which the goddess sits, symbolizes our confidence based on arrogance. The trident shows the control of the goddess on the three *gunas* of sattva, rajas and tamas. The demon

mahishasura symbolizes the desires that constantly multiply and makes it insatiable. If one worships goddess Durga, she ends the endless agitations of our mind paving the way for goddess Laxmi to fill with wealth and prosperity.

Let us look at the lotus on which goddess Laxmi is seated. The Sanathana Dharma has worshipped the lotus as the supreme principle, for it is not an ordinary one, but a thousand petalled one symbolizing all forms of knowledge and wealth. Seated on the lotus, goddess Laxmi fills us with wealth. Subsequently, goddess Saraswati plays the melody of the veena, the cosmic sound 'Aum', which is the source and substance of all forms of knowledge. In our lives, it is mother who tells us about our father, likewise goddesses in the form of Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati have the sole authority to show us the source, who is the *Vedapurusha*.

Swami, in the form of Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati, has blessed us with the courage of goddess Durga, the wealth of goddess Laxmi, and the knowledge of goddess Saraswati. He started this *Veda Purusha Jnana Saptaha Yagna* to make us understand who we really are, i.e., *amruthasya putraha*. What is this yagna all about? The meaning of renunciation is offering or sacrifice. What is that which we need to offer or sacrifice? If we look closely, is there anything on this earth that we can call ours? If that is the case then what is the meaning of renunciation? What is there with us that we can say we have renounced to God? To be honest, each one of us will agree that there is nothing that we can renounce to God.

If we examine our lives closely, there is one factor, which is common to us all, and that is indecisiveness. Filled with so many choices, we are always at crossroads, thinking whether to do this or that. This is the root of confusion and in this confusion all are lost. We may pretend to be happy by putting up a smile but upon

introspection, we know that we don't have the joy. Renunciation is an attempt to move within, understand and give up what was never ours.

To elaborate, I am reminded of an anecdote that Swami always narrated. A man wanted to go from one town to another and he chose a train to do the travel. For his journey, he carried his luggage on his head. When he entered the train and took his seat, he still carried his luggage on his head. His fellow passengers too did the same thing. After a while, the man starting feeling immense pain in his neck, and not knowing what to do, he asked his fellow passengers for help. The fellow passengers casually dismissed his appeal saying that this is the way of life; you need to put up with it. However, this man not able to bear the pain in his neck, and wanted to know about a solution to the problem. He was agonized, but waited patiently. A wise man then came to him and said, "Son! If you want to get rid of the pain, take the luggage from the head and put it down". This man immediately put his luggage down and the pain left him. He bubbled with curiosity in a quest to know what had helped him release the pain. The answer was quite simple; he removed the bag from his head and put it down on the train. In this context, the wise man gave two important points which we all should remember and follow in our everyday life. Firstly, you asked your fellow passengers to give solace and succour, but weren't you wise enough to see that they themselves were in the pain and agony of life, for they have not yet kept their luggage down. So when you come across difficult situations in your life, if you ask people who themselves are foolish, know that they can't provide everlasting solution.

The second point, which is very important, is that the train that can carry you can also carry your luggage and requires only your trust to transport your luggage, based on which you put the luggage on the train. If we pause here for a moment and try to

understand this story in our lives, would we not be convinced of the fact that what is required from us is trust?

If we ponder for a while, we will understand that we breathe spontaneously; our food is digested without our conscious effort; the sun rises in the east and sets in the west without any effort; the earth moves on its axis without causing trouble to any other planets; the breeze gently wafts and fills everyone with joy. When all these things happen without our slightest intervention then why do we have this disease of distrust in God? If the blood flows in our body and I am able to talk and you are able to listen, what is this power that is enabling us to do this activity? If that power is beyond us and taking care of us every moment, then why is it that we are not able to trust that power to take care of our day-to-day activities? We should sit silently and ponder over this point and once we get an answer, our lives will be filled with peace.

The other aspect of renunciation is sacrifice. The Vedas proclaim: *Na karmana na prajaya dhanena tyagenyake amruthatwa manashubhu*; meaning neither by action, progeny or wealth you attain immortality, it is achieved only through sacrifice or renunciation. If the question arises that what has to be given up, we will consider the story of Michelangelo. He was a great sculpture during the period of the Renaissance (European cultural movement spanning roughly the 14th to the 17th century). Amidst others, one of his masterpieces was David, a seventeen feet tall marble statue depicting the Biblical hero. Passersby would often be intrigued and filled with curiosity as to how this man could craft such a beautiful masterpiece. Unable to overcome their curiosity, people approached him asked him about the statue. Michelangelo said, “When I looked at the rock, I saw David and whatever was not; so I felt free to chisel and having done that, I present to you my masterpiece.” After listening to this anecdote, I was reminded of my childhood when my mother often chided me.

She scolded me for my own well being. She wanted my life to be filled with virtue and happiness.

If that is the case with all of us, then Bhagawan, the master sculpture has a greater role to play in our lives. He chisels all that is not required in our day-to-day life. He constantly removes so that we are left with what we really are, i.e., the undiluted form of conscience.

Having spoken about goddess Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati, and the true spirit of renunciation, we would perhaps admit that we are seated here because all of us seek one thing – peace and contentment in our daily lives. From the moment we wake up till we go to bed at night, all our toil and labour is towards this end – for peace and contentment. We fill our minds with the noble intention of transforming the world and the community around us to attain peace. The great Sufi saint *bayazi* says, “I was revolutionary when I was young and all my prayer to God was that he should give me the energy to change the world. As I approached middle age, I realized that half of my life was gone, without my changing a single soul. My prayer changed to, “O! Lord, give me the strength to change all those who come in contact with me”. Now I am an old man and my days are numbered, my only prayer is, “O! Lord, give me the grace to change myself”. As soon as I prayed thus, the grace was showered on me and I was instantly transformed.

Having transformed, I looked at my community, my friends and my fellowmen and what I saw was completely different. My perspective of things and people completely changed. I saw them as perfect as God himself. On this holy occasion of Navaratri and the beginning of *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna*, we have to ask ourselves: are we happy, are we peaceful are we contented and know where they stand? The greatest problem in the world today is the lack of trust in God. We neither trust him nor distrust him.

We say that we trust him 50% or 70%. If we get some more experience, we say that we trust him 80% and no experience results in fall of my faith. Our trust in God depends upon our experience.

We might give the excuse that we are mortal beings but we must question our own notions and beliefs. If something has occurred in our life that has fulfilled our sense of identity, we feel happy; and on the other hand, if something has happened which has nulled our identity, we feel bad. But if we look closely, we come to one conclusion, and that is, whatever happens to us is the gift and benediction of God. *Navaratri* and *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* is an endeavour by our Bhagawan to make us increase our trust in him. If we were faced with difficulties, our reaction would be, “O! Bhagawan, why have you given this to me?” But very few people see it as an opportunity to test their trust in Bhagawan. If this is the lesson we take away and apply in our daily life, our lives will be filled with peace and contentment.

Excerpt from Divine Discourse

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Our ancients have prescribed the worship of Mahakali, Mahadurga and Mahasaraswati during these *Navaratri* (nine nights). Durga is the embodiment of all powers. Durga represents the combination of all the powers of body, mind and soul. Mahakali symbolises destruction of evil with the help of these powers. Mahakali and Mahadurga are not elsewhere. They reside in every man. When the mind and the senses, instead of following the dictates of conscience, follow wicked qualities, man becomes a slave to evil habits and turns wicked. The main purpose of celebration of *Navaratri* is to annihilate cruelty and wickedness in man to bring forth the principle of the Atma in pristine form. When man reads, hears and does wicked things, how can he expect to foster goodness? It is nothing short of *Brama* (delusion) if he thinks that he is leading a good life. Brahma (Divinity) eludes one who is under the influence of *Brama*.

Divinity is present in all. It has to be manifested. Just as man extracts various metals like copper, silver, etc., from mines, one should manifest sacred qualities from the mine of divinity, i.e., heart. On listening to the teachings of Jesus, the people of Rome realised that divinity is present in every human being in a hidden way. Not merely that, divinity is all pervasive in the form of *Chaitanya* (consciousness). There is no place where this *Chaitanya* is not present. But man denies the existence of

consciousness, as it is not visible to the naked eye. One should have the firm conviction that divinity is immanent in everything. The mind is not like a white cloth, it bears the impressions of all that is seen and experienced by man in this world. The effects and acts of previous lives are imprinted on it. The mind is a conglomeration of conflicts, disturbances and desires. The desires make man forget his true nature. One who forgets his humanness is no human at all. Purification of the mind is the main spiritual practice that one has to undertake. You will have the right to call yourself a human being only when you have a pure mind. Out of infinite love, kindness and compassion when Swami tells good words, people are not prepared to listen to them. But they all have ears to hear evil talks.

"Today people are prepared to listen to vain gossip. But when the sacred stories of the Lord are narrated, their ears get clogged. People are never tired of going to cinemas. But their eyes find it very difficult to concentrate on the beautiful form of the Lord even for a minute."

(Telugu Poem)

Vinaashakaale Vipareetha Buddhi (the mind gets perverted in bad times). One should listen only to sacred words which are beneficial to one and all. The words you utter should not cause pain to others. They should be suffused with love.

Today is the first day of the *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna*. *Purusha* does not mean one who wears pant and shirt. God alone is *Purusha*. One with *Pourusha* is *Purusha*. Understand that all worldly feelings are negative in nature. Divinity alone is positive. It is within you. It is not subjected to change.

Embodiments of Love!

Modern students are not making any effort to cultivate moral values. One who lacks morality is no human being at all. True education is that which inculcates moral values. All your worldly

achievements are of no avail, if you lack moral values. You may amass wealth, build mansions and hold positions of authority, but without morality, all these are of little consequence. Morality is latent in human heart. Man has to make every effort to manifest the same, but he is enamoured by worldly propensities.

God cannot be attained by money, position and power. He submits Himself only to morality and integrity. So, men and women should uphold morality and integrity. They should have *Daiva Preethi*, *Paapa Bheethi* and *Sangha Neethi* (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). Unfortunately, man is cultivating *Paapa Preethi* and *Daiva Dvesham* (love for sin and hatred towards God). *Daiva Dvesham* is the worst of all sins. Love all. Understand the fundamental principle, *Ekatma Sarvabhutantaratma* (one *Atma* is present in all beings). Love is the common principle to all. One bereft of love is like a corpse. So, cultivate love. Only through love can you realise your true nature. Just as one strives hard to earn money through various means, one should spare no efforts to cultivate love by treading along the spiritual path. Just as anicuts are built across the rivers for irrigation purposes, man should have the anicut of sense control across the river of his life and direct his love for the benefit of society. He should conduct himself keeping the welfare of society in mind, as his welfare is linked to the welfare of society.

Students!

As today is the first day of the Yagna, I have given you guidelines for the future course of action in a simple manner. First of all, develop morality and purify your mind. The mind by nature is sacred, but it is being polluted because of its association with evil qualities. Repent wholeheartedly for the mistakes committed knowingly or unknowingly. That would atone for your sins and purify your mind. Once you realise your mistake, repent wholeheartedly and see that you do not repeat it.

Embodiments of Love!

Your life is truly sacred. You are fortunate in the sense that you have chosen the spiritual path. Do not squander this opportunity by associating yourselves with evil company. Tell me your company I shall tell what you are. Your thoughts and actions are decided by the company you join. As is your company, so you become. The good and bad of the world are based on man's conduct. Man's conduct is based on his thoughts. Thoughts are based on desires. Desires depend on the company you associate yourselves with. So, join good company. Good company gives rise to noble thoughts. Noble thoughts are the royal road to divinity.

20 October 2001, Prasanthi Nilayam

Day 2 | 1 October 2011

Introduction

Aman Jhaveri

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*Sarva vedanta siddhanta gocharam tam agocharam
Sai govidam paramanandam sadguram pranatosmyaham*

I offer my entire being at the lotus feet of our most beloved Lord, whose nature is bliss-infinite, and who is known through the imports of Vedanta. Swami, I pray to you: let our minds be rooted in our speech; let our speech be rooted in our minds; let us never ever forsake whatever we have heard; may the teacher and the taught be always protected.

In these auspicious days of Navaratri, as each one of us extol the supreme mother, I too invoke her divine grace and blessings to bestow upon each one us the highest form of wealth that any individual can ever possess. I pray to mother *Sraddha* for *Sraddha*.

What is *Sraddha*? Very often we think that *Sraddha* is faith. Yes, *Sraddha* is faith. But it is much more than faith. *Sraddha* is the ability to put faith into action. The scriptures declare, '*srad dadhati iti shraddha*', that which makes you work towards the truth so that you may know what the truth is – that work is *Sraddha*. The effort that each one of us puts into knowing the

ultimate goal of life, that effort is *Sraddha*. In our daily life, the cheerfulness born out of the assurance that my master is with me amidst all the apparent adversities, that cheerfulness is *Sraddha*. The enthusiasm to put into practice every word of the master despite all the apparent difficulties, that enthusiasim is *Sraddha*.

The joy and happiness we get by living life of supreme sacrifice, that joy and that happiness is *Sraddha*. The fire of renunciation born out of pure love for God, that fire is *Sraddha*. And finally, the eagerness to dedicate our entire life to the Lord, just to see that one smile on his face, that eagerness is *Sraddha*. Indeed, the supreme power that propels the motivation for individual transformation in our hearts, that supreme power is the one to whom we worship in the form of mother *Sraddha*.

Not only today, but day after day, as we listen to the inspiring talks and retire from *Sai Sannidhi* with this divine inspiration in our hearts, let us also in our hearts and in our intellects nurture the catalyst which translates inspiration into action. I pray to Swami that we live in the awareness of who He is, of who we are, and that he gives each one of us the strength to manifest that awareness in our thoughts, words and actions.

Nine types of Devotion

Saurabh Kumar

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It was Socrates who said that there is only one Good and that is knowledge and only one Evil and that is ignorance. Navaratri marks the celebration of victory of good over evil where the conflict between the two is not external but internal. To wipe out this ignorance and enlighten the soul, Navaratri offers us all a great opportunity. The goal of life is very clear. From him we have come and to him shall we go. But this journey of life is peppered with roadblocks and deception points waiting to hoodwink our fickle mind. Therefore, to guide mankind in its quest, the munificent Lord has enumerated as many as nine paths of devotion – popularly known as the *nava vidha bhakti* – as a means to achieve our goal. They are: *sravanam*, *kirtanam*, *vishnu smaranam*, *padasevanam*, *vandanam*, *archanam*, *dasyam*, *sakhyam* and *atma nivedanam*.

All of them He has elaborated upon and illustrated with glorious incidents from the past. For instance, Swami said that Parikshit was a classic example of how someone could attain liberation by merely listening to the divine leelas or *sravanam*. He hailed Hanuman as the epitome of *dasya bhakti*. But today when I stand here, I want to state how Swami has taught each one of us how to not only choose a path but also walk the path till we reach him.

In our case, we are doubly fortunate, for He is not only the guide but also the goal. We begin with the first path, *sraavanam*. When people all over the world listen to his leelas and mahimas, not only are they transformed but also redeemed for a lifetime. Be it the mellifluous bhajans, the sacred Vedas, the speeches or the dramas, they all have struck a divine chord with those who have been an audience to the same. Millions have been inspired, touched and purified by soaking themselves in the nectarine flow of experiences.

The second path of devotion is *Kirtanam*, singing the divine glory. He revealed that music is the shortcut to God and bhajans, the purest form of music, a treat for the Lord, has become a popular form of expression of a devotee's love and surrender. But for the consummation of bhajans, the *bhava* (feeling), the *raga* (tune) and the *tala* (rhythm) have to be in perfect sync with each other. Similarly, for our life to be a melody, unison of thought, word and deed is a prerequisite.

Let me recall an incident at this point of time where Swami emphatically responded to a student's prayer while he was singing bhajans. A few decades ago, the mother of a student fell seriously ill. The doctors had given up and said that it was only a matter of time for her inevitable departure. This tenacious student however hoping against hope that Swami would respond to his call, earnestly prayed for her recovery. As time was running out he found himself sitting right in front of Swami, pouring his heart out through his blissful bhajans. The intensity of his feelings and sentiments peaked when he sang the bhajan '*Sai pita aur mata Sai*'.

Touched by the supplication and surrender of the student, Swami decided to intervene for here was a student whose physical mother lay on her death bed and yet he was calling to the Lord as his divine mother and father. Swami immediately walked out of the bhajan hall, went straight to a corner room of the East

Prasanthi building where the mother of the student was lying down, comforted her lovingly, poured in her mouth a glass of water, granting her a new lease of life. This student, meanwhile, prepared to swallow the bitter pill (of the inevitable), was deeply moved when he came to know that Swami had reciprocated his love by curing his mother.

Right from its inception, when Swami taught the first bhajan '*Manasa bhajare guru charanam*', bhajans have come a long way in shaping the lives of millions of devotees, inspiring generations to connect with the divine.

The next path of devotion is *Vishnu smaranam*, that is, remembering the name of the Lord. It is said that the name of the Lord is mightier than the Lord himself.

Once, a learned scholar was narrating the story of *gajendra moksha* to a maharaja and his courtiers in a very pedantic manner. Suddenly the king interrupted and asked him, "O! Pandit, Tell me how far was the vaikunta from there?" The scholar had no answer to this question. He was perplexed. The scholars present in the court also didn't have an answer to this question. Finally, the servant of the king who was fanning him from behind the throne offered to furnish an answer if his impertinence were pardoned. The learned pandit was shocked at his impudence, but the maharaja allowed him to speak. The servant said, "Your majesty! Vaikunta was only as far as the cry of the elephant could be heard." In the same way, we say that Swami may be far away from us, but the truth is that he is only as far as our heart's call reaches out to him.

The next path is *Padasevanam*. Worshipping the feet of the Lord in Indian culture is considered as the quintessence of expressing humility. Pada namaskar and pada puja are the unique blessings conferred on mankind but they only relate to the physical aspect.

The Purusha Suktam describes it as '*padosya viswa bhootani tripadsyamrutham divi*', the pada here means the 'manifest universe' comprising one fourth of the divine being. Therefore, serving our fellow human beings is equivalent to serving the pada of the Lord.

The next path of devotion is *Vandanam*, saluting the Lord himself. Most of us seated here would have gone through it right from the suprabhatam to the night prayer. We all salute the Lord and his glory, but then it is not a question of what we do but how we do it; for success is not an end result of hard work alone but hard work supplemented with a sincere prayer.

Archanam or worshipping the Lord happens to be the sixth path laid down for devotion. Perennial materializations of Vibhuti, kumkum and manifestations of His divine form in flesh and blood are only a sample of how the Lord chooses to manifest his glory to those devotees who perform archana with full faith and devotion. Yagnas like the *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* or the *Athi Rudra Maha Yagna* and poojas like the *Satyanarayana pooja*, which are performed as per the injunction of the shastras, are nothing but an outpouring of man's love and humility.

The seventh form of expressing devotion is *Dasyam*. Serving the Lord with implicit obedience is the hallmark of men and women who chose this path, for they know that when the Lord ordains them to do something, he also gives them the strength to do it.

The penultimate form of expressing devotion is *Sneham* or *Sakhyam*, which is friendship with the Lord. It is probably the most intimate and endearing approach among all the forms.

Let me recall a very famous anecdote involving Swami and his student. Swami once asked this student, "How many brothers do you have?" The student promptly replied that he had two

brothers. Swami corrected him and said that all were his brothers and sisters. Swami posed another question, “How many friends do you have?” The boy taking a cue from what Swami had told earlier replied that all were his friends. Swami corrected him again and said, “You are wrong. There is only one friend, one true friend and he is God.”

No wonder, it is more important to be friendly to all than to just count the number of friends we have. A friend in need is a friend indeed. To illustrate this point, I wish to share a personal experience of mine that happened when I was studying in the primary school in the fourth standard. I vividly remember, it was 6th of January 2001. We had gone for our birthday blessings and after interacting with all of us for quite some time and signing our photographs, Swami finally created Vibhuti for all of us and placed it in our little palms. A senior student who was accompanying Swami gave each one of us a piece of paper so that we could pack the Vibhuti in it. Out of my childish innocence or ignorance, I simply stared at Swami’s face not knowing how to fold the paper into a packet.

Seeing my brothers around me do it so artfully, only made me feel a little more clueless. Then like a loving and caring friend, Swami extended his helping hand when I needed it the most and asked me to hand over to him the slip of paper and step by step, meticulously taught me how to fold the paper into a packet and placed it back in my hands. Even to this day, when I reflect upon it, I do feel nostalgic for missing such a friend but at the same time, I feel completely assured that someone is there to take care of us. Even now, whilst I might be clueless about folding the paper, I am definitely aware of His warmth and love.

Moving on, the final and perhaps the most awe-inspiring form of expressing devotion is *Atma nivedanam*, complete surrender of oneself to the Lord with nothing held back.

Once when a student was speaking in Swami's presence, he said, "Swami, I am ready to die for you." Swami called him and said, "Don't die for me, live for me." How do we live for him? The answer is to love him unconditionally, for love alone will kindle in our hearts, the desire to surrender ourselves; and once we do that, then our life is worth living.

I spoke about *nava vidha bhakti*, hoping that we choose one form or the other and follow it up with suitable action. All that we need to do is play well and play smart, for it is not a question of whether to be or not to be, but it is a question of how to be and how not to be.

A Simple Spiritual Curriculum

Dr. P. L. Rani

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I have had to make amendments to my talk overnight. I am compelled to add an unplanned preface to my talk due to a very small but significant episode that occurred this morning. It seems divinely ordained that I share it with all of you, due to its larger implications and universal message. Last night, after a particularly tiring day, I was planning this talk in my mind and putting my thoughts in order. At that point, there were two conflicting feelings that were filling my mind. On one side was the sense of gratitude, responsibility and loving duty that I owe to Swami, which is the motivation for this talk; and on the other hand lurked a tinge of sadness that this time, compared to every other time I have had an opportunity to be here. There is a 'shade of difference'.

I felt that it was very clever of me to think of the phrase 'shade of difference' because to me the shade of difference was the change from the vibrant orange to the sparkling white marble. Bhagawan, in His most inimitable manner decided to disprove it to me. I am not a person who gets frequent dreams of Swami or who works on a practical level based on some dreams. I haven't had one for so many months and I definitely haven't had any after April, in

particular. But suddenly when I woke up this morning, I woke up with a pleasant feeling and I quickly recalled that I had had a beautiful message.

In my dream, the scene was of those three painful days right here in the Mandir, when the Immortal One had decided to leave the mortal coil. In my mind, I was deciding that I was not going to see this because I can't bear to see the lost lustre on His face. My curiosity got the better of me and after a little while, I began to peep from a distance. I got a little closer and I saw that it was that same beautiful, effulgent, brilliant familiar face of Swami and I felt so relieved and satisfied. Just then Swami's eyelids opened so vividly and in a fit of panic and fear, I sprang backwards. It is unusual that someone springs backwards on seeing Swami. He then raised His palms and beckoned me, making me even more frightened. When He beckoned me the third time, I went near, and He placed His palm on mine, and the immediate tangible sensation that I felt was the warmth of His Hand. The message went home immediately, even in my sleep, and I knew that in those moments of weak faith, we tend to believe that 'the orange form' has entombed itself in the 'white marble'. Warmth is a sign of love and life and I thought, He was telling all of us today that God cannot be a memory; He is a living presence.

Let me now launch on this pleasant task of sharing my thoughts with you. When you are faced with the choice of a subject to speak on, you can sound scholarly, quoting from the Upanishads or chanting from the Vedas, reciting from the Bhagavad Gita, or quoting the commentaries of scriptures. However, when I was going through this exercise, one particular incident crossed my mind.

This happened in the early nineties, when I was an undergraduate student. We used to wait for the winter vacations, because, on the few of us who chose to stay on, Bhagawan would somehow

shower special blessings and grace. On one such occasion, Bhagawan decided to spend His time exclusively with students and staff in the Poornachandra auditorium. Around 2 to 2:30 in the afternoon, we would sneak in through the half-open shutters to avoid public attention. We would have approximately a two hours session with Swami, which would end with tea and snacks. On one such occasion, Bhagawan decided to talk about the art of public speaking. He wanted His students to become good speakers. A lot of points from that session, I still remember. The gist of what Bhagawan told that day was, “When you speak, you should be convincing. And that happens when you are yourself convinced. You are most convinced about your own experience; what you yourself have gone through.” When I recalled this dictum of Swami, I immediately knew that the singular experience that stands out, in all our lives, is the fact that we lived with God and God lived with us. So, the beautiful story of Sai is what I intend to share with you today. It is also nice to recollect in our minds, the vibrant orange form of Swami that so gently and gracefully came in, the beautiful smiles that showed approval, the meaningful nods and words that gave encouragement, the deliberate gestures that granted guidance, the not-so-pleasant grimaces that communicated disapproval – all of it is so live and fresh in our minds. But, other than charming us with His beautiful form, He always took special care to make, what He intended to teach us, palatable, interesting and memorable to us. That is why Swami came up with the 3 P’s¹, 4 F’s² or the 5 D’s.³

Today, I am inspired to speak on the 3S’s. Let us start with the very name of our Lord, Sri Sathya Sai – SSS. In the olden times, the old Mandir also had on its parapet, the initials SSS. If you just go one step higher and look at how Bhagawan liked to define Himself to us, He has said that He is just a reflection, reaction

¹ 3Ps: Purity, Patience, Perseverance

² 4 Fs: Follow the master, Face the devil, Fight till the end, Finish the game

³ 5 Ds: Dedication, Devotion, Discipline, Discrimination, Determination

and resound, and to make it understandable, He has said, “*Saiki sarvamu yes, yes, yes.*” Let us go still further and take the story of His life, which is *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (Truth, Goodness, Beauty), which is again SSS. There is a very beautiful incident that Prof. Kasturi narrates about how this title came up.

The Sanatana Sarathi press was near the Mandir in those early days, and one day, Prof. Kasturi, who was the editor, was standing just outside the press. One gentleman came to him and asked if any book on Swami was available. Prof. Kasturi said that there was no book on Swami except for a monthly magazine. Bhagawan was watching all this from the first floor, and immediately summoned Prof. Kasturi into His presence. Swami enquired, “What did the gentleman ask you?” Prof. Kasturi replied that the gentleman was asking whether there was any book on Swami. Swami paused for a second and then asked, “What did you reply?” Prof. Kasturi replied, “That there isn’t any.” Swami responded, “That is not the correct answer. You should have told him that this Swami cannot be understood through books.” Prof. Kasturi was taken aback. Although he liked the profundity of the message, he was a little disappointed because he was nurturing the hope of writing a book on Swami. But, after Swami made this statement, it seemed that such an occasion might never come.

Prof. Kasturi brooded over this for a little while, and in the meantime, Bhagawan made a visit to Madras and Venkatgiri and as soon as He came back, He called for Prof. Kasturi. Prof. Kasturi went to Swami shivering, wondering what he would be chastised for. Swami said, “You know, people everywhere are asking me if there is any literature on me. And you are sitting here doing nothing about it.” Prof. Kasturi thought that this was an opportune moment and he set out to writing the book. When the first draft was ready, he was thinking of a title for it, and went through the Puranas, Upanishads, scriptures etc., but didn’t get a

better phrase than ‘*Satyam Jnanam Anantam*’. He knew that the title had to be SSS as it is the life of Sri Sathya Sai and he also knew that *Satyam* could be one of the words because it is the story of Sathya’s life. But he did not know what the other two S’s would be; they could be *shubham*, *shantam*, *santosham* or anything else. One day, he was inspired by the phrase *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* and made a quick trip to Nandanavanam, the present Trayee Brindavan, where Swami was then staying, to get Swami’s approval for it. He asked Swami about it and Swami not only approved it, but went into the room, came out with an album, pulled out three of His own photographs – all of them clicked in quick succession, and asked Prof. Kasturi to use them on the cover page of the book that is to come. The first picture, which looked serious, Swami said, was *satyam*, the second one with a bud of smile, *shivam* and the one with the full smile, *sundaram*. Prof. Kasturi was more than happy that Swami not only endorsed but also emphasized that it was the best title. Two years later, on a Shivaratri day, when the Telugu translation of *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* was being published, and during the discourse Swami said to the public, “You all must be wondering why I am so excited about a book on my life. That is because the title is significant.” He went on to explain how *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* (Truth, Goodness and Beauty) is Swami immanent in all of us, and that our real nature is truth, and precisely for this reason, we don’t like it when someone calls us a liar. He also said that we are innately goodness, joy, happiness and auspiciousness i.e., *shivam*; not the inauspicious *shavam*. Also, we don’t like it when someone calls us ugly, as our innate nature is beauty i.e., *sundaram*.

Prof. Kasturi felt very elated and happy that he had struck at the right title. Nobody was able to trace the origin of the phrase, so he thought that he had discovered it anew, until Dr. Bhagawantam told him that he had come upon this phrase in a talk by Swami Vivekananda. Prof. Kasturi searched and found

that Swami Vivekananda had used the same phrase in the context of the coming of the lord of truth. Now, Prof. Kasturi was even more elated and his ego became a little more inflated as he had chosen a perfect title for the lord of truth, Sri Sathya Sai's biography. One day, he came across *Ramcharitmanas* where he found in the preface on the front page, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* written with a Shiva lingam drawn below it. He went on to find out details about it, and discovered that, when Tulsidas wrote this vernacular Ramayana, there was a debate among the pandits in Benares. They questioned the authenticity of this vernacular version and placed it in front of the Visweswara lingam in the temple and prayed for the Lord to endorse it or reject it. Next morning, when they opened the temple doors, they found on the palm leaves *Satyam Shivam Sundaram* written with a shiva lingam as the Lord's signature on it. So, Prof. Kasturi discovered that it was not his original title, but the one Lord Shiva used to endorse the biography of the Lord. His ego got completely deflated.

What is the relevance of all this for us? What are the 3 S's in our lives? Considering the relevance of this for these ten days of Navaratri, the 3S's signify service in the form of *Grama seva*, sacrifice in the form of *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* and satsang in the form of *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha*. The three S's form a beautiful part of our routine.

When we look at the Grama seva part of it, there is the external evident aspect of it, which are the human labour and the physical effort. The sevadals help with cooking, the girls keep awake at night and make the food packets, the boys carry heavy loads and walk considerable distances to reach a village, and so on. A lot of effort happens on the external level, but what is the inner significance of all this? Sleep is the biggest hurdle to a person's material as well as spiritual progress, and when the girls keep awake ungrudgingly the whole night, it is actually a beginning towards control of the senses. Secondly, the food that is being

cooked, packed and carried for distribution is for people whom you do not know. While distributing the prasadam, when you witness tears in the eyes of a neglected old lady who is ailing, or in the eyes of a family that had been starving, then you know that there is a greater fulfillment in serving someone other than yourself. That is the beginning of training in selflessness, and selflessness can be a royal road to self-realization.

Let us take the second part, which is the yagna. Yagnas, externally, are meant to purify. The fire and the smoke kill the germs and purify the atmosphere; the rhythmic chanting results in striking a kind of harmony and balance. We also believe that the highest knowledge is deposited with the Brahmins, and pleasing them can attract auspiciousness and blessings. All of this is externally achieved when the yagna takes place. The poor English translation of 'yagna' is 'sacrifice' and 'sacrifice' means 'giving up'. The action verb here is 'give', which is exactly what Bhagawan did for 85 years. This is the first clue. The second clue lies in 'give up'. What has to be given up? Swami says, "Bring all your soiled currency notes and take fresh notes; bring all your vices and let them get charred in this flame." A more striking interpretation is that the colour of the flame is orange and there is the symbolic significance of offering everything to the divine orange form that has inspired us all along. If we live our lives by making all our acts an offering to Swami, then our lives will be purified.

The third aspect is *satsang* (*holy company*); the gathering of *sajjana* (*noble people*) and listening to noble thoughts leads to *satsang*; but Swami has been kind enough to tell us that *satsang* can also be the company of good thoughts, good books, good activities and good ideals. This *satsang* is very important because *sravanam* (listening to the glory of God) leads to *mananam* (*self enquiry*), which in turn leads to *nidhidhyanam* (*assimilation*). When we listen continuously to noble thoughts like we do in this Prasanthi

Vidwan Mahasabha, it will consciously or unconsciously help us to focus on Swami, on the essence of things. *Satsang* is quite important to help us blend love with service during the Grama Seva, to respect and revere our rituals during the *yajna*. Thus, it is through *satsang* that we understand the essence of service and sacrifice.

When I thought of all this, I realized that we are like the distance education learners and these nine days seemed to me like the contact program. In contact programs, the curriculum is dealt with without leaving out anything, to ensure that you pass the course. Swami does the same thing; He has marvelously packaged the course; He doesn't use spiritual jargons to put us off. He calls them simply *Grama seva*, *Yagna* and *Mahasabha*.

If we look at it holistically, the body, mind and soul – all the three are catered to by service, sacrifice and *satsang* respectively. We say that we have to go step by step from being a karma yogi to a bhakti yogi to a jnana yogi. However, here we have exceptional circumstances, where in the morning we are part of karma yoga, in the afternoon we are part of bhakti yoga and in the evening we are part of jnana yoga. We go through all the three stages within the span of a day. He hastens our spiritual progress in such a simple manner and we often fail to realize this. The Chandogya Upanishad says that dharma rests on three pillars, which are *yagna*, *adhyayana* and *dana* (sacrifice, worship and charity) which is precisely what we are doing in the yagna, the satsang and the Grama seva during the Navaratri festival.

All these thoughts overwhelmed me because, in the history of the pagan of gods, goddesses, demigods, saints and anybody whosoever, we have never had a God who is such a master planner. He ensures that every individual goes through the curriculum without his knowing that he is going through it. Students know the pain of sitting through the classes to go

through the curriculum, but we never feel the tedium of this otherwise tedious spiritual course. All we have to do is: take the legacy of the Lord seriously, earnestly and intensely.

I conclude with a prayer that is uppermost in my mind, using the poetic lines of George Herbert:

*Thou who hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more--a grateful heart;
Not thankful when it pleaseth me,
As if Thy blessings had spare days,
But such a heart whose pulse is thy praise...*

Swami, bestow on all of us a heart whose pulse is thy praise.

Excerpt from Divine Discourse

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

We have to pay tax to God. What is this tax? Expressing ones' own gratitude is tax payment. How do we express this gratitude? We should express gratitude by praying. The bliss that you enjoy in your heart should be conveyed in prayer. We should tell only the truth and pay tax to God. Body is like a water bubble, mind is like a mad monkey, don't follow the body, don't follow the mind; follow the conscience. We should follow the conscience which is the *hrudayam*, the heart. We should be true exponents to offer our hearts not flower or fruit. You don't have anything, that doesn't belong to God, everything belongs to God. What all things that God has no one knows. Things of great value are with God. We try to pay the tax by offering the flowers that are bound to fade away some day or the other.

Body is a leaf, heart is the flower, mind is the fruit and tears of joy should be offered to God and we should not offer the tears of sorrow. We are not trying to make an attempt to know these eternal truths. We offer only those things that are seen by our naked eyes. All that exist in this world are all temporary.

People tell thanks to one who comes to play cards, they tell thanks to friends who come to their table with the bottles in cocktail parties; they touch bottle-to-bottle say cheers and tell thanks. One can understand, to what type of plight this can take man. This is not the quality of education. When we are in a village and someone comes and helps us or come and talk to you

and asks, "How are you?" we say thanks. When we drop our handkerchief and someone comes and picks it up we say thanks to him. If water which is there in the tank is supplied to us through taps we pay water tax. If the electricity connection, attached to a pole is supplied to our house, we pay electricity tax. When we construct a house on our own land we give house tax to the corporation. What are the gifts conferred by God on us? If we run a fan, we pay the electricity bill. If we use water drawing it out of the tap we pay water tax.

For the wonderful gifts given by God what is the tax we are paying him. Sun is shining brilliantly and giving us light, what is the tax which we are paying him. Because of the downpour of rains we have the rivers and the tanks full of water, which is much more than the water one draws from the pumpset, what is the tax which we are paying God for this. We pay tax for all selfish purposes but what God gives is completely free; air is free, water is free, light is free, sound is free, everything which God gives is free. This earth is the gift of God, on this earth we put certain boundaries like 40/30 and pay tax for it. Who gave us this land? It is only God. The five elements are the forms of divine which we enjoy and experience, what tax we pay to God? Is this being investigated by any man or educated person? We pay tax for all the ephemeral and transient things and show gratitude, God has given us the most essential, eternal, permanent things in life, what kind of tax we are paying him. On the contrary, we blame God for giving us what we deserve. Instead of help, we are harming. We don't pay tax or express gratitude for what we have received; yet we want more which is very selfish.

Truth is the real jewel to the neck; charity is the precious ornament to the hand. We should worship the Lord with the hands as Pothana says, "O! Rama, why we don't pray to God with both the hands and why we don't sing his glory with full throat? Without any attachments or possessiveness, not mindful of what

others say, we should sing the glory of the Lord. Though they have good voices they don't sing well. Why the tongue is given, is it only for eating. Though they have tongue, they don't sing God's glory; it is their fate and the tongue is like the tongue of a frog. Why the tongue is given? It is given to remember God. Sing the glory of God and pay the tax otherwise you will be indebted. If you can't do bhajan with both the hands what is the use of the hands. Join both the hands that are the unification of the ten senses. So we have to pay certain taxes to the Lord and if we don't do it we become indebted to God. It only means that we are against God.

1 July 1996, Prasanthi Nilayam

Day 3 | 2 October 2011

Introduction

Dr. Shashank Shah

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Today, the whole world is celebrating the international non-violence day. In India, we are celebrating the 142nd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, in memory of the one who gave the philosophy of *Satyagraha*, *Swadeshi* and *Swarajya* (adherence to truth, self-sufficiency and Self-rule) to every Bharatiya. He was the epitome of truth and non-violence. But, who was responsible for making Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi into a Mahatma?

There is a beautiful story that dates back to his childhood, when the mother of Gandhiji, Smt. Putlibai, a devout *Vaishnavite* from Gujarat, would follow a particular *Vratam* wherein she would not partake of her lunch until she heard the cooing of a koel. Young Mohandas was observing this and on a particular day, it took a long time for the koel to coo, and he was getting agitated, as he could not have food unless his mother partook hers. So, he went and hid behind the kitchen window and started imitating the sound of the koel. He thought that his mother would be very happy and would break her fast. However, when he came back from the front door into the house, the mother called him and with tears in her eyes said, 'My dear Mohandas, I didn't expect this from you. You are my son and when I am undertaking a

Vratam to fulfil the vow of truth, how can my son follow the path of untruth and imitate the voice of the koel, so that I can have my food? You have disappointed me; please don't do this again in your life. Truth should be your life breath.' That was the turning point in the life Mahatma Gandhi and he went on to become the Mahatma, adhering to truth in his entire career and the Indian freedom movement.

Bhagawan glorifies the mother when he says, 'It is because of Kaushalya, who bore Rama in her womb that Rama shone forth as the Avatar of the Treta Yuga; it is because of the chaste Sita, who brought them up, that Luva and Kusha blossomed into great heroes; it is because Jijabai reared him with care that the valourous Shivaji became a great warrior; it is because Putlibai fostered him, Gandhiji became famous as the Mahatma; and it is because the chaste Easwaramma brought him up with love and affection that Sathyanarayana Raju earned name and fame across the globe. Is there anyone more loving than the mother who takes care of her child day and night? She is the alpha and the omega, the first and the last letter of one's life.' The mother is the life of all living beings. To this poem of Bhagawan, I would like to add one sentence and that would be: It is because of the divine love of our most beloved Mother Sai that each and every one of us present today are, what we are.

In the fond and loving memory of our Beloved Mother Sai, who is always giving and giving, I would like to share two anecdotes. The first one depicts the love of Bhagawan. The incident dates back two decades. We know that the festival of Janmashtami is celebrated in the Divine presence with great fanfare. The cow procession in the morning is an integral part of this festival and during one of these processions way back in the early 1990s, there was a student who got injured during this procession and developed a fracture on one of his feet. Very lovingly Swami used to enquire about this student's health while he was unwell. On a

particular day, Swami ushered him into the interview room and asked him how his foot was. The student expressed his feelings saying that it is all because of Swami's love and concern that he is recovering very fast and very well. At that time, Swami materialised a medicine and was lovingly applying it on the foot of this student. The student was aghast that the Lord on whose feet, Lord Brahma offered water as Abhishekam, was applying medicine on the foot of His own student. Immediately, the student requested Swami to give the medicine to him so that he can apply it himself. Pat came the reply from Swami, "*If you would have been at your home, wouldn't your own mother apply medicine on your foot. I am your mother Bangaru, why do you distinguish between your physical mother and this Divine Mother Sai*". Can we ever express our gratitude to our most beloved Swami? We have no words to express how much Bhagawan has done for each one of us in His infinite love and compassion.

Another incident dates back to the time when Swami used to spend a lot of time and interact with His students here in the verandah. There was a student whom Swami used to address as naughty boy, as he used to indulge in lot of mischief and a number of reprimands and corrective measures by the teachers had not yet driven the lesson into his mind that he should improve his behaviour. So, on one occasion Swami ushered him and his parents into the interview room. There, in the presence of his parents Swami said, "*You know, your son is such a good boy, he is so disciplined, follows the regular schedule of the hostel, he does wonderful things in the hostel, he is such a golden boy of this Institute.*" The boy alone knew what all mischief he had done and also knew that Bhagawan physically and in His omnipresence, knew about it. He was thoroughly embarrassed and guilty for what he had done. He didn't say anything during the interview, but when Swami came out after the interview, he went near Swami and told Him, "*Swami, you know what mischief I have done; you know that I have been a bad boy. Why did you praise me in front of my parents?*"

Swami gave a loving reply, “*My dear child, I did not tell your parents, what you are, but, I told them what I want you to be, I told them what you are capable of becoming. This is my expectation from you and that is why I extolled you in front of your parents.*” This has been the loving nature of Bhagawan. With His grace and blessings, He has perfectly chiselled us into wonderful instruments in His Divine Mission.

To conclude, I want to narrate an incident that occurred in 1961. *Sanatana Sarathi*, the monthly magazine commenced during the Shivaratri of 1958 and this was the third year since it had gone into regular circulation. On the cover page of *Sanathana Sarathi* there was a photograph of Swami, very lovingly patting the head of a small baby and the caption was ‘*Sri Sathya Sai Mata*’. According to the tradition, before the magazine was sent for print, Prof. Kasturi, Founder Editor of *Santhana Sarathi*, would take it to Bhagawan for His blessings and show it to Him. When Swami saw the magazine and the photograph, He smiled and said, “*What is it that you have written below the photo?*” Prof. Kasturi replied, that he had written ‘*Sri Sathya Sai Mata*’ as the photo depicts the motherly nature of Swami. Swami said something that was so pregnant with meaning. He said, “*Why is Sai written here?*” Prof. Kasturi was at a loss of words to express an answer to that question. Swami then said, “*Sathya Mata will be adequate. The mothers who bear and rear babies are all unreal. I alone am the only eternal true mother, the Sathya Mata.*” Prof. Kasturi was taken aback by the declaration that Swami is the only true mother, because from the time of creation till now, it is from the womb of the Supreme Cosmic Mother that creations have emerged and into Her they have merged back.

Bhagawan used to say very often, “*Sanna Jajji Kanna, Sampangi Latha Kanna, Junnu Gadda Kanna, Venna Kanna, Nemali Kannu Kanna, Nindu Vennela Kanna, Sai Talli Prema Sunnithambu*”. The love of Mother Sai is more beautiful than the eye of a peacock, it is softer than cheese and butter, and it is more fragrant than

Jasmine and Champak flowers. This is the uniqueness of the nature of Mother Sai, which we have gathered to extol and glorify.

Learning at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan

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*Shivasshaktyayukto yadi bhavati shaktaha prabhavitum
Nached evam devo na khalu kushala spanditumapi
Atastvam aradhyam hariharavirinchedibhirapi
Pranantum stotum va kathamakruta punyaha prabhavati*

Dearest Swami, with love, humility and reverence, I offer myself and all that I mistook to be mine at Your Lotus Feet. Respected elders and teachers, Dear brothers and sisters, please accept my hearty Navaratri greetings and loving Sairam.

Navaratri is celebrated countrywide as a ten-day celebration, to mark the victory of good over evil and it has got manifold significance, as it encompasses all aspects of human life; the body, mind and soul. The Divine Mother has been hailed as *Ichhashakti Jnanashakti Kriyashakti Swaroopini* and it is the Divine will, the *icchashakti* that is suffused with selfless love and got transformed into *jnanashakti* and *kriyashakti*, resulting in the Vedapurusha Saptaha Jnana Yajnam and the Grama Seva Program. In many of His discourses, Bhagawan has told that 'yaga' is *tyaga* or sacrifice. Every oblation that is made into the sacrificial pit is stamped with

the mantra ‘*Idam na mama*’, which means, “This is not mine.” The ritwik chants it. Similarly, the *jataavedas* or the fire God, who takes our offering to the intended deity also says ‘*idam na mama*,’ this is not mine. The *yagnapurusha*, for whom it is intended, also says ‘*idam na mama*’. Therefore, the merit that accrues from this ritual is for the benefit of the entire mankind; it is for *loka kalyanam*. And it is this very same selfless sacrifice and pure love that is seen in the *Grama seva* program also. If the agony of a starving child drove a human mother to death, the agony of the hungry humanity drove the Divine Mother to become a life-giving *Annapurna*.

There is a story in the *Srimad Bhagavata Mahatmyam*, which is reminiscent of the *Grama seva* program. Once when the celestial Sage *Narada* comes down to earth in the *Kali* age, he finds a young woman and two aged men beside her; the woman is wailing. Seeing this, *Narada* enquires after the reason and finds out that the two aged men are the sons of the young mother. Perplexed by this dichotomy, Sage *Narada* enquires about their identity and finds out that the young woman is *Bhakti* and her two aged and diseased sons are *Jnana* and *Vairagya*. She says that she herself was afflicted by old age and disease once upon a time, but when she went to *Brindavan*, the summit of spiritual love, she regained her youth, but still, her sons, *jnana* and *vairagya* are invalid. She pleads to *Narada* to find out some panacea that can rescue them out of their current predicament. Moved into compassion, Sage *Narada* goes to *Haridwar* and meets the *Sanakadi maharishis* and they tell him that listening to the *Srimad Bhagavatam* will confer youth back on knowledge and detachment. Once the narration of the story of the Lord begins at *Haridwar*, both *Jnana* and *Vairagya* win back their lost vitality and life. This story has got great significance; it is only listening to the saga of love of Bhagawan’s life that will confer on us the highest wisdom. It is only attachment to the Lotus Feet that can create detachment from the world in our hearts. Sai Maa is that

supreme mother who not only satiates the material hunger of starving millions, but also satiates the spiritual hunger of every aspirant.

At this juncture, I would like to remind us about an astoundingly beautiful speech that Bhagawan once gave, titled 'Why I Incarnate'. In the speech, Swami says that the revival of Vedic learning and the revitalization of dharma is an integral part of His avatic mission. We cannot really fathom the extent of this contemporary renaissance. Swami has flung open the doors of Vedic wisdom for everyone; for women and men of all castes and creeds. In the past, obsolete interpolations of tradition have barred women from accessing the ancient Vedic knowledge. Though we have powerful women seekers and seers like *Ghosha*, *Vagambhrini*, *Gargi* and *Maitreyi* studying the Vedic texts and Upanishads, tradition usually bars women from learning Vedas. It is the supreme mother Sai who has opened this new and vast arena of Vedic knowledge for women. And it is one of the most precious legacies, Swami, that I have inherited at your lotus feet.

At this crucial juncture, when each Sai devotee is faced with a unique and sad predicament of connecting to Bhagawan at a newer level, I would say, that all of us we are searching to see where we stand and work out what our role is.

Here, I am reminded of a beautiful anecdote that I heard. Once, a senior devotee asked Bhagawan about our role in His mission. Swami nonchalantly replied, "Nothing, absolutely nothing"; and after a meaningful pause, He added, "Instead ask me, what is the role of My mission in your life." Swami said, all this effort, all this endeavour is for *chitta suddhi*, to inch toward that Sai Consciousness that is resplendent and splendid in our hearts. The *namasmarana*, the spirit of selfless sacrifice, the *Sadhana*, everything is to aid in realizing Him as the Indweller of our hearts. All the efforts that we undertake at the Lotus Feet should

be and effort towards purifying our volition and mental modifications towards *chitta shuddhi*.

Vidyaranya, the author of *Panchadashi*, speaks of *upasana* as a crucial method towards attaining the supreme knowledge that Swami is within us. During my stay at Bhagawan's Lotus Feet, it has been a learning experience for me to know how the *Ganeshatharvasheersham*, which is chanted at the lotus feet so frequently, especially shows us the path of *upasana*. First and foremost, the *Ganeshatharvasheersham* has been hailed as an Upanishad; it has got a shanti mantra and it has a holistic nature and a system of progress of tutelage that is so characteristic of Vedanta.

The invocation mantra or the shanti mantra that begins with '*bhadram karnebhihi srunuyama devaha*' is a prayer to purify all sensory impulses: may I hear only holy tidings; may all that I see be auspiciousness; may my organs be stabilized and established in the pursuit of Brahman knowledge. Let us see what benefits we will accrue by chanting this Upanishad. At the first instance, the *phalasaruti* says that all material prosperity, intellectual prowess and removal of all obstacles would happen to the one who chants this Upanishad. At the psychic level it says '*na bhideti kadachneti*' – the one who recites will be free from all sorrows and fear. It also assures that we will be taken across the whirlpool of metempsychosis¹. At the third and the highest level, it ushers in spiritual knowledge that my Lord and I are one and the same.

Coming to the text proper, it begins by telling that Ganesha is the supreme principle or *tattwa* concretized. It tells us that the object of our worship is '*satchitananda adwitiyosi*,' pure existence, consciousness and bliss – the One without the second. It also asks us to visualize this Lord as being present in all directions and

¹ the transmigration at death of the soul of a human being or animal into a new body of the same or a different species.

protecting us from all sides. It further says that Ganesha is the abiding substratum of this ephemeral universe. Language being the only medium with which we can grapple Reality and the world, the Upanishad tells us that Ganesha is also the word. But as the Taittiriya Upanishad says '*yatho vacho nivaranta aprapya manasa saba*': From whence mind, along with words, return unaccomplished, Brahman is such, Lord Sai is such, that no words can adequately describe Him. Therefore, knowing our limitations, the Upanishad further tells us to visualize this beautiful principle as residing within us, *mooladharasthitosi*. Knowing that even such visualizations can be very inaccessible to some of us, it tells us the *Ganesha vidya*, the *Ganesha Gayatri* as well as the *moolamantra* and asks us to recite them and acquire the benefits. Knowing all too well that even this can be difficult, *Ganeshatharvasheersham* then gives us the *saakara* mode of worship, i.e. to see our Lord in His most benign, benedictory and beautiful form.

The task that we are faced with now is to go the reverse from the last phase of the *saakara* mode toward Sai consciousness, which is present within each of us. Once we realize that Sai is within us, like the seer poet *Vagambrini* of *Devi suktam*, we can rejoice in pure ecstasy that I am all, I am One. I am the Sun and the planets. I am all pervasive and limitless joy. This is the training that Swami has given each of us at His Lotus Feet. He has taught us alongside the primal spirituality of the Vedas, the spirituality of the matter as well as the inherent and transcendence of the spirit. Swami has trained us in the expansion of consciousness.

In the *Sutra Vahini*, expatiating on the ninth aphorism '*shrutatwat cha*', Swami speaks of sweetness as the all-pervasive consciousness. Swami uses the epigram '*pishtadi gudasamparkat*', just as the flour gets sweetened by the sugar; the entire creation acquires its splendour and beauty, its charm and attraction because of the Sai present.

Swami, in the ochre petals of the *gulmohar* flowers that shower near our library, in the beautiful sunrise from amidst the lion hill, in the yellow flame that adorns our altars, we seek and search for your form.

The sweetness of honey and the fragrance of flowers remind us only of you for You are the '*sugbandim*,' the fragrant one and You are '*madburyam*,' the only sweetness that permeates our lives. Bless us, dear Swami, that we live moment by moment in Your auspicious presence and remembrance. Here I am reminded of a beautiful poem of Rabindranath Tagore from Gitanjali:

"On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands. Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness. I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers."

This has been my stay with You, Swami.

Let me now relate to the erudite audience a small incident which happened a few years back during the delightful Dasara celebrations. I was fortunate to be the part of *nadaswaram* group and we used to get opportunities to play repeatedly for Him. But this particular year it was already the *ayudha pooja* and Swami had not looked at us, Swami had not smiled at us. Swami seemed not be listening and we were all very worried. To lighten the situation just before playing, one sister rather facetiously remarked: our Lord has got a sound proof residence and a prayer proof heart! Little did we know that the all-knowing, compassionate Lord is unseen, but listening. We were sitting in the verandah in mandir to invoke auspiciousness for the next day and began to play. Hardly a few minutes had elapsed, when from the very same sound proof residence, the all knowing one sent message, that He

has come down and He is listening and we should play more for Him. That is the love of the mother who responds to the slightest and the minutest desire of each of our hearts. Sai Maa has been such a mother who taught us how to pray. How many times has she sung for us ‘*Prem Mudita Man Se Kaho!*’ Sing with love! She has been the one who has fed us and clothed us, showered gifts galore on us. She is the one who has taught us to speak and sing, to act; the parts that we receive in His drama are all a gift from him. All we need to do is to play well enough so to get her approval and praise. The mother is the happiest when the child performs the best. Let us strive in unison in our effort and enthusiasm to please Mother Sai so that we can play higher and closer roles to Her.

At this instance, let me tell you that every time we have fallen sick, She has been at our bedside nursing. But mind you, Sai Maa is an exceptional healer as she treats the cause of the disease rather than the symptoms. There is a beautiful shloka which the students of Ayurveda learn,

*ragaadi rogan satatan usbaktan
ashsha kaya prasrutau ashshan
outsukya moha aratitan jaghana
yoapoorva vaidyaya namastu tasmai*

Mother Sai is an exceptional healer who treats the cause of the disease.

It was October 5th 2005 and I was doing my 1st year B.A. program. Swami called all of us for an interview and we all ran into mandir. There Swami looked at all of us with eyes brimming with compassion and He told that He knows everything. He said, “I know that you have anger in you. But anger is a passing cloud. All troubles will vanish.” That is the assurance. She is aware of all our flaws and problems and She alone knows the cure and she

treats the cause – both *raga* and *dwesha*. In another instance, speaking to our teachers, Swami said, “Not knowing that Bhagawan knows everything is the greatest of ignorance.” Our mother knows everything and She alone has the cures for all our dis-eases. What shall we ask her who is willing to give Herself away? Could we ask her for paltry things when She is ready to come away with us wherever we go and be our greatest companion? Swami, as I conclude, may I sing a few lines for You:

*Jagamula chirunaguvula paripalinche janani
Anayamu mamu kanikarmuna kapade janani
Manase nee vashamai smarane jeevanamai
Mayani varamiyave parameshwari mangaladayini
Sri Lalitha Shivajyoti sarvakamada*

O! Merciful Mother who rules the entire universe with a beautiful smile, grant us these twin boons that You will save us from all afflictions and that your grace be showered on us and also another second boon that You will sanctify our lives by letting us to remember You moment by moment.

‘*Maam Anusmara*’ has been Her command. Let us live always in Her memory and Her presence, forever. Jai Sairam.

Significance of the number four

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*Akhandanda mandalakaram vyaptamyena characharam
Tat padam darshitamyena tasmay sri gurave namaha*

Bhagawan says: *mamaivamsho jeevaloke jeevabhootas sanatanaha*, meaning, all the beings in the entire cosmos are my own amshas. Loving Sai Ram to all the wonderful forms of Sathya Sai. One of the earlier speakers spoke about the 3 S's and as we stand at the horizon of the 4th day of the yagnam, I endeavour to speak about the significance of this number four. One of the reasons Dasara is celebrated is, Lord Rama defeated Ravana on the Vijayadashami day. However, he did not do it alone when He took His advent as Sri Rama. He came as *Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata* and *Shatrughna*, the four brothers.

These four brothers, Swami says, represent the four Vedas. The Vedas talk about the *purusarthas*, i.e. goals of human life that are four in number Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, and to fulfill these four goals of life one has to take a human birth. What differentiates a human birth from an animal are the four *antahkarnas* – *manas, buddhi, chitta* and *ahamkara*. The one who created the body, the *antahkarnas* and whole variety in the

creation, is Brahma himself, who is *chaturmukha*. The *chaturmukha* Brahma emerged from the *nabhi* of Vishnu who is *chaturbhuj*. Maha Vishnu says in Bhagavad Gita, *sarvasya caham hrudisanni vishaha* , I reside in the hearts of every being.

The heart is symbolized by the *anahata chakra*, which is the fourth chakra in the human body. The one, who resides in our hearts, is ready to confer upon us liberation in four steps. These four steps, Bhagawan says, are *saalokyam*, *saarupyam*, *saameepyam* and *saayujyam*. The four S's are the subject of my talk. These four S's in my humble opinion are the part of Sathyopanishad, for it came from truth itself. It is an Upanishad because what Upanishad means is *upa-* near, in His close proximity, *nishad-* sitting down at His lotus feet. Bhagawan Himself taught these four steps of liberation to me on one occasion, and as we find in many of the Upanishads like the Chandogya Upanishad, which begins with the story of Swetaketu, and Kathopanishad, that starts with the story of Nachiketas; this Sathyopanishad too begins with a story.

On 7th April 2005 we were seated in the Sai Kulwant hall in front of Bhagawan and as per His instructions, we had thoroughly prepared for a quiz program on Bhagawan's life. He came for darshan, beautifully walked and came towards us, saw the card prepared for the quiz program, and sat on the stage. Swami often says, 'love my uncertainty'. He calls out to Sri Narasimhamurthy garu and asks him to deliver a talk. After the talk, He looked at us and asked, 'Students! Will anyone speak?' and none of us were prepared for a talk that day. He looked at me and gave a gesture and I comfortably ignored it, hoping that it is for somebody else, because I was not at all prepared for a talk.

He then went around, asking some elders whether any students are ready with a talk, but eventually, He again looked at me and gestured. This time I said to myself that this was His divine call,

and so, I will not miss it. As He always says, “why fear when I am here.” I took courage, walked up to Bhagawan and He smiled and said, “Are you talking?” Normally, He would ask, “Will you give a speech?” but this time He said, “are ‘you’ talking?” and spontaneously I said, “I don’t know anything Swami, You only have to speak”. Swami said, “Go and say something.” I went onto the podium and thoughts began to flow perennially and words in harmony with it. For fifteen to twenty minutes a talk was delivered, the contents of which, only little of it I am aware today. I really don’t know what I spoke that day because there came a moment, when there was a big full stop in my mind. I didn’t know what to speak next and exactly at that moment, Bhagawan turns towards me and says, “*chalu chalu* (enough enough)”, indicating that it was He who was speaking and I was merely an instrument.

At this juncture, I want to place a humble request that it is indeed, He who is speaking and if there is any fallacy in the talk, it is attributed to the technical snag in this instrument only. Then, Bhagawan called me towards him and started waving his hand and materialized a ring, something that I did not expect.

He showed it to me and asked what it was. I stuttered and seeing snake-like four S’s made on it, I said, “Swami it is a ring, it is a snake.” Swami smiled and said, “This is *saalokyam*, *saarupyam*, *saameepyam* and *saayujyam*, always remember this.” That day, I didn’t know why Swami made that statement but today, Swami has revealed the significance of that moment to me. Let us start with the first step of liberation, i.e. *saalokyam*. Swami says that the word ‘*sa*’ represents divinity; *saalokyam* means to reside in the divine abode. I am reminded of an experience of Mr. Mandaley who hails from Indore. He runs a Sai Samithi in Indore where they do Bhajans and lots of service activities. For few weeks, he was observing that many new faces were coming for Bhajans.

He wanted to know the inspiration behind all this. How is it that so many new people have started to join for Bhajans and seva? He took courage and tactfully asked one person as to what really inspired him to join the Samithi. They said that the inspiration is a yogi sitting in the railway station, who is telling us to join these bhajans, which take place every Thursday.

The person even said that the yogi has said that one will accrue lot of merit by participating in this Bhajans and seva activities of Sathya Sai. He was wonderstruck as to who is this yogi and so, he rushed to the railway station in Indore and saw that this yogi was sitting in a corner. As he approached the yogi, the yogi told Mr. Mandaley to stop. The yogi said, "You can come near me on two conditions; condition number one: you should not fall at my feet and condition number two: I will fall at your feet." Mr Mandaley was stunned and said, "Master! You are a great yogi and tradition demands that we fall at your feet, why do you say so?" The yogi replied, "you think that I am great, let me tell you my story", and he started to tell his story, "when I was seven years old in the early 1960s, Bhagawan had visited the Shivananda ashram in Rishikesh and I saw my master Swami Shivananda himself falling at the feet of a young boy and I was wonderstruck as to who this person was?"

Eventually, the yogi found a guru as he had a thirst for spirituality and went to a Himalayan cave to do penance. In his meditation, he would see a person who would come and guide him constantly, but he did not know who that person was. One fine day, when he came down to the planes in Rishikesh to a grocery shop to purchase some provisions, to take it back to his cave, he saw a small photograph of the same person, who comes in his meditation and guides him. He asked the shopkeeper about the person in the photo and the shopkeeper replied "that is my God".

The yogi requested the shopkeeper, “Tell me, how can I meet him.” But in those days one had to take a train to Delhi and then a train to Chennai and from Chennai to Dharmavaram and eventually reach Puttaparthi.

The yogi took off on his journey and reached Dharmavaram late in the night and thought that he would sleep at the railway station and the following morning, he would start for Prasanthi Nilayam. In the morning, when he opened his eyes, he found himself back in his Himalayan cave and his guru chided him for proceeding to Prasanthi Nilayam, without asking him. That day in meditation, Bhagawan comes and tells him” Bangaru, it is not yet time for you to come to Prasanthi Nilayam”. Swami said, “even a particle of dust cannot enter Prasanthi Nilayam without my will.”

Then this great yogi asked Mr. Mandalay, “Who is great? Every year you go and participate in service directly to the Lord Himself; every Thursday you organize wonderful Bhajans and sing his glory and you are permitted to enter His divine abode; now tell me who is great you or I? To live in the abode of supreme peace, the abode of Sathya Sai itself is one level of liberation, the *saalokya mukti*, and my hearty congratulations to all of you present here, as all of us have already been granted this stage of mukti, i.e. the *saalokya mukti*.

The next level of mukti is called the *saaroopya mukti*. As the word suggests, this it is having the same form as divinity, hence, *saaroopyam*. Bhagawan says that the best example for *saaroopya mukti* is none other than Bharata. Let us go to the scene where Rama was going to the forest and Bharata rushes to prevent him in Chitrakoota. Bharata argues, “the king who has asked you to leave for exile is no longer in physical frame and if you say that I am the king of this land this land, then I have the right to hand the kingdom back to you, so O! Rama, please come back.” Rama

says, “the king who gave the word might not be there in the body, but his word still remains and I have not yet fulfilled his word.” In this way, the argument went on between Bharata and Rama; actually it was an argument between Bharata, representing love and Rama, who was the very embodiment of Dharma.

Who will preside over such an argument, other than Rajarishi Janaka, who was a great self realized master? He listened to cases presented by both the parties and then came up with his verdict. He said, “When there is a conflict between prema and dharma it is always prema that emerges victorious because prema is higher than dharma. So, the entire Ayodhya kinsmen erupted in joy, as they felt Rama is going to come back to Ayodhya. Rama said, “Indeed prema is greater than dharma, and I have lost in front of your prema, Bharata.” Then in his own wonderful benign fashion, as our beloved Bhagawan always does, he used his favourite word ‘*kaani*’, (but), and said “Prema has its own dharma”.

Rama asks, “What is the dharma of prema? You must ask your beloved what is best and where the happiness of your beloved lies and in that you must find joy. Bharata asked me what I want and find happiness in that, which is true prema.” Bharata did not have any more words; he fell at Rama’s feet and accepted Rama’s padukas as insignia, placed them in Nandigram. Thereafter, Bharata lived exactly like Rama, like a hermit; and in every single action in thought, word and deed, he would think what Rama would do in that situation and went on to do that. Constant thought of Sri Rama made him look like Sri Rama himself. After fourteen years when Rama returned, people were not able to distinguish between Rama and Bharata, as they looked exactly same, which is *saaroopya mukti*. In these fourteen years of separation, Bharata learnt to live exactly like Rama. His life became Rama’s message.

I was wondering, why Swami told me these four steps of liberation in this particular order. Generally Swami in His

discourses says *saalokyam* followed by *saameepyam*, which is close proximity, nearness and dearness to Lord followed by *saaroopyam*, which is to attain His physical form, and finally culminating in *saayujyam*, which is ultimate merger in Bhagawan. It was not until the 27th of April 2011 when it became clear to me why Swami put it in this order. On 27th of April after the Samadhi of our beloved Bhagawan's body, I asked Him a question, which troubled me the most, "Swami, what next? Our entire life was for you, now what?" A very powerful inner voice said, "It is time for *saaroopyam*." *Saaroopyam* is to follow His footsteps and live a life just as He did. The entire world throughout the month of March and April were like the *Ayodhya vasis*, pleading to Bhagawan to come back. Yes! Prema can never fail, but Bhagawan says that Prema too has its dharma.

We have to ask the Lord, in what lays His happiness, as Rama left Ayodhya only to fulfil his mission to come back and give *saameepyam* to all *Ayodhya vasis*. It is my firm conviction that though Bhagawan has physically left us for these few years, and we don't know the time period; these moments of physical separation are a testing period for us, so that we can evolve to live a life just like Him; so that our lives become His message. As a result, one day, He will confer *saameepya mukti*, nearness and dearness to Him in a wonderful fashion, which cannot be comprehended by the human mind. But how do we reach this stage of nearness and dearness to Him?

Swami explains this with the example of Hanuman. Swami says that Hanuman had four qualities and these four qualities are the hallmark of any devotee to attain *saameepya mukti*. Swami says, "*Shantudu gunavantudu balavantudu hanumantudu*. *Shantudu* means peaceful and Swami defines peace as being equanimous to whatever might be the situation. One of our brothers in Chennai asked Bhagawan what *sharanagati* is? Swami said, "There is nothing you can give in *sharanagati*, but remember that whatever

happens whether good or bad, accept it with firm conviction and faith that it is Swami, who is giving it to you; that is true *sharangati* and that is the sign of a true devotee.” Accept whatever happens in our life as His will and go on with joy and satisfaction; that is what pleases Bhagawan the most.

That is the quality of a devotee which He is looking out for, in order to confer *saameepya mukti*. The second quality is *gunavantudu*; Swami says that if one loses wealth nothing is lost, if one loses health something is lost and if one loses character everything is lost. Virtue or character is foremost in His list to give us all *saameepya mukti*. The next attribute which Bhagawan looks out for is *balavantudu*; it does not mean only physical strength, Swami says that each and every one of us is gifted with a talent which is a gift of God and just like Hanuman who was the lord of eight siddhis, but whatever He did, He did it as a service to Rama. *Balavantudu* means to surrender and offer our talents at His lotus feet in the service of humanity. The final quality is *hanumantudu*; what does this mean? We all know the spelling of Hanuman, where the capital ‘H’ Swami is Himself, which is He. The next three letters are anu, which means atom and the last three letters man. Hence, it means that all are His atomic forms, i.e., *mamaivamsho jeevaloke jeevabhootas sanatanaha*; whatever we do in our lives, we have to constantly remind ourselves that we are His own atomic forms or His *amshas*.

It has been beautifully described by Adi Shankara in *Shiva Manasa Pooja* as:

*Atma twam, Girija matih,
sahachara pranaha, sareeram grubham,
vishaayopa bhogaha prasadaha,
sancharapadayoh pradakshina vidhibhi,
nidra Samadhi sthithi,
yadyad karomi tad akhilam Shambho tavaradhanam*

Which means, “O! Lord Shiva, You are the atma and mother Parvati is my mind; the *karmendriyas*, *gnanendriyas* and the *panchapranas* are the *devaganas*, which are here to serve You. This body is your home, whatever I partake through my sense organs are like *nairvaidyam* to you, which I am partaking as Prasadam. My very walk itself is doing pradakshina to You, my sleep itself is Samadhi.

The last one is the icing on the cake where Adi Shankara says, “whatever I do in my daily life, whether breathing, eating or sleeping, everything is an act of worship to Thee”. If we are able to constantly remind ourselves that we are Hanuman, we are atomic forms of Him, we will be able to transform every single activity of ours as His worship. As Swami was explaining all this to me, a question was troubling my mind which I asked Him, “saalokyam, saaropyam and saameepyam I am able to understand, but what about saayujyam, which is complete merger in God and very difficult to attain due to the presence of our ego.”

Swami leaned back in his chair in a very beautiful way and asked me, “where is ego?”

I replied, “Swami, it is in the mind”.

Swami said, “Remove the mind and it will go away.”

I said, “Swami, how to remove the mind?”

Swami replied pointing towards His own body, “very simple, I am not this body, I am not this mind, then where is the place for the ‘I’. You are not one but three, the one you think you are, the body. I am not the body. The one others think you are, the mind. I am not this mind, then where is the place for this little I the ego?”

I then realized that the merger of the little ‘i’ with ‘sa’, which means divinity, makes it Sai.

Our real identity is ‘Sai’ and that in truth is *saayujyam*. *Saayujyam* is to merge this individual identity in the divine and saying that

whatever I do, You are the doer, I am just an instrument. In conclusion, I want to say that the prayer that I recited in the beginning contains the entire secret of all the four levels of liberation. If we have the firm faith and conviction, we believe. The word 'believe' can be divided into two parts 'be' which is to 'be' convinced and 'live', live that conviction – Be-Live. If we believe that – *akhandā mandalakaram*, i.e. the whole cosmos is His body, then we will automatically have *saalokya mukti*, i.e., *we will reside in His kingdom*.

If we have the conviction that *vyaptamyena characharam*, that He pervades the entire cosmos and is there in each and every strand of our hair, then we are indeed very close to Him and as Swami says, that I am as far as you are to yourself, which is *saameepya mukti*. The third phrase that Sri Adi Shankara said: *tat padam darshitamyena*, which means not just to have the darshan of His lotus feet but to see the path set for us by Him and have the courage and determination to follow that path. If we do that with conviction, then we get *saaroopya mukti*, and finally *tasmai srigurave namaha*. *Namaha* means ultimate surrender where the individual identity is surrendered at His lotus feet. *Sayeeshwara sayujyamavapnoti sayeeshwara sayujyamavapnoti*. You ultimately merge in Sayeeshwara and this is the learning which *Sathya* Himself gave to through the Sathyopanishad. *Ya evam Veda*; this is what is to be known through this Upanishad. *Ithyopanishad*, this was the learning that happened at His divine lotus feet.

Excerpt from Divine Discourse

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

We should get good name to the parents. They struggle hard and suffer a lot to bring you up. All parents desire that their children should come up in life and get a good name. We should also give peace to our parents; this is the culture of our country.

The present people don't study even if time is and participate in agitations. He wastes time, money and energy and gives lot of anxiety to the parents. Parents have anxiety thinking about the future of their children due to so many strikes. We should get good name to the parents as the blood, food, head and money are their gift to us. Our first duty is to show gratitude to our parents. In this way, we should be ideal students; Swami will call such students as '*bangaru*', i.e. gold. Swami wants everyone to become pure gold and not old gold.

Therefore, we should have such sacred thoughts to make our parents happy. If you cheat your parents and taking a wrong path, you are the worst of the worst fellow. This education is an utter waste and instead it is better if we go house to house and beg our food.

10 July 1996, Prasanthi Nilayam

Day 4 | 3 October 2011

Introduction

Aman Jhaveri

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*yat satyena jagat satyam
yat prakashena bhataayati
yadanadena nandanti
tasmaye Srigurave namaha*

I offer myself at the lotus feet of our most beloved master, because of whose truth there is existence, because of whose effulgence there is light, and because of whose bliss we all are happy. As each one of us participate in this jnana yagna, I pray to Swami that this supreme knowledge purifies each one of us, so that we become worthy of being called His devotees, His students.

Who is a student? The scriptures say '*shiksate iti shisyaha*', the one who learns alone can be called a true student. But what is learning? Many times we say, that we are Bhagawan's devotees or students, but when we say that, we must also know that as Bhagawan's students and devotees, in the world outside, we are His direct representatives. We are the mirrors in which the world is going to see His reflection. And that is why every thought, word and action emerging from us, must emerge from the awareness that

we are His representatives. That awareness, that constant awareness, is what is called learning.

When we are asked to follow rules and regulations we don't ask why, we do not ask how. We don't ask what good is it going to do to us. We just do it. Why? Because, Swami has told us to do it. That is enough for us. That implicit obedience, that is learning. When we see someone in distress, we neither wait for the *Grama seva* to come nor do we wait for *Samithi* members to join us to help that individual. Our heart spontaneously reaches out to such people because living with Him, compassion has become our nature and that is learning. Finally, when we are all by ourselves, there is no one to supervise us, no one to tell us what to do. When there are no rules, regulations, no guidelines and no mandates, and yet we lead our lives moment to moment in the awareness that I am living my life according to the dictates of my master, and this is what will make Swami happy; that character, that is learning.

Is it difficult to achieve these ideals? Yes. In fact, we can say that it is impossible to achieve them. But only as long as we do not have love for God. The moment we start perceiving God's love and start loving Him, even the impossible becomes extremely easy and possible and that is why a great master has said, "those who perceive the invisible are the ones who can accomplish the impossible." I pray to Swami that He gives us only pure love for His lotus feet so that our lives – our thoughts words and actions – become an expression of our love, faith, and gratitude for Him.

True Surrender

Rishabh Sachdeva

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When the Lord of the universe gave birth to His most complex creation, man, He instilled in man a fundamental desire. This fundamental desire is so much inherent in man, that it drives him to achieve everything in life. This fundamental desire is the desire to grow, the desire to expand, desire to explore and the desire to become better in whatever he takes up. Man is absolutely averse to stagnation; be it intellectual development, be it emotional development or be it academic development. Man, in this journey of life strives for growth and improvement. At the same time Bhagawan Baba says *'Life is a challenge, meet it'*. This journey, on which man has embarked, the journey of growth, the journey of betterment, is not a rosy path. God, in order to attract man, has filled up this path with various challenges and difficulties. But, the passion in man's belly makes him overcome so many difficulties that God puts forth.

At the end of the day when he is able to cross over a few obstacles, at that point of time, man plunges himself down the dark cliff of 'godlessness'. He thinks that it is 'I' whose is doing, and not God. It is then, when life decides to teach a lesson to man.

The challenges that man encounters at that point in time are insurmountable. At that point of time when man is not able to do

anything in life, he thinks, what next? His mind is blank and it hits a roadblock. Swami says 'Life is a challenge meet it', but how do we meet the challenge, is the question. We all are very lucky that Swami has gifted us all with a precious present that He says is an open secret. But we do not realize the value of this lofty spiritual ideal. Swami has gifted us with the power to *surrender*.

What is surrender? There was once a man who was a farmer. He used to work very sincerely in his field without any dissatisfaction or complaints. One day, he notices that a flash of light descends from the sky and God comes on to earth. God says, "My son! I have a job for you." This man falls on his knees and says, "God, whatever you say I will do it." God says, "Do you see the big boulder there? For the next thirty days, from morning till evening, go and push it. After thirty days, I will come back again and see what you have done." So the farmer, having no other option agrees to what God says. With utmost sincerity, leaving his farming work, for thirty days, pushes the rock eighteen hours a day with all effort and rigor. But, at the end of those hard work filled thirty days; the rock does not move even an inch.

At the end of thirty days, this man was crestfallen and was thinking, that he will ask God about this tricky test when He comes. At the end of the stipulated time, God comes down and this man to him and asks, "God, for the past thirty days I have been doing what you asked me to do and the end of it all, the rock has not moved a bit from its place. Why such a test? What have I gained by this?" God says, "Look at yourself, your muscles, are pounding out, your concentration has increased, your stamina has shot up and you have pleased me by doing what I told you to do. *I just told you to push the rock; I never told you that the rock should move. You have done what I have told you and now, I will move the rock for you.*" This is what Swami says 'Surrender' is; just do the job to your best and leave the rest to Him. Swami says, "why get agitated, leave all the problems to me, I am the one who has given

you these problems and it is my responsibility to take you out of them. Just close your eyes and say ‘*Thy will be done*’ and at that point of time, I *will* come and bail you out.” He says that, it is your reasoning that troubles you. What will happen if things don’t go my way? Don’t think of the result at all, it is contrary to the lofty spiritual ideal of surrender. He says that if we don’t have confidence in His love for us, then He will not intervene. But if we do, then Swami says that He will not only fulfil our needs, but also our desires.

A devotee’s life is never easy; God puts forth a lot of challenges before the devotee and tests his faith and power of surrender in multiple ways. My mother has not been in very good terms with destiny when it comes to her health. Ten years ago, my mother was suffering with a severe slip disc problem. One nerve was being completely pressed between two bones, and the pain was absolutely excruciating. This suffering was going on for nearly two years but she always kept silent. Swami says that if I give you a trouble; I also give you the strength to bear it. Yes, he did give all the strength that my mother required. But, one night, the pain become so excruciating that my mother caught my father’s hand and said in the most impulsive mood that I want to get the surgery done tomorrow itself. As far as my family history goes, Swami has always been against surgeries.

Tears were trickling down my mother’s eyes. I was in my 6th standard and my brother in his 1st standard and both of us were feeling extremely miserable. We thought to ourselves, that when we were in trouble, our mother saved us, but now, when she is in trouble we can’t do anything for her. There was an acute sense of helplessness throughout the house and my mother was crying the whole day as the pain was severe. At that point of time, when she realized that nobody could do anything, she just closed her eyes and said, “Swami! Whatever my karma is, I have to go through it but as I am your devotee and have love for you please guide me.”

My mother says that there was a kind of inexplicable force that made her sleep instantaneously. When she slept she got a dream. In the dream my mother finds herself walking through the corridors of a hospital to an operation theatre. As she opens the doors, she sees a patient lying down inverted on a cot and Swami was standing there in the attire of a doctor.

Swami gives a glance at my mother and says, "Wait, wait." At that point of time, He turns towards the patient and as if opening a cupboard, opens the patient's back. He takes an ointment and massages the back of the patient very gently. After five minutes, as if again closing a cupboard; Swami closes the two flaps of the patient's back. Immediately, Swami turned towards my mother and said, "*ho gaya* (it's over)". My mother was bemused and said, "Swami, tell the patient over there that it's over and not me, I am standing here." Swami gave a very cold stare, patted the patient and asked him to get up. As soon as the patient got up, my mother saw herself lying on the cot. It was she who was the patient treated by Swami. It was such a powerful dream that my mother immediately got up. It was morning 4:30, Brahma Muhurtam time and she found that when she got up there was absolutely no pain in her back. For the past six months, the pain that was torturing her, the pain that could have taken her life had completely vanished. She was running around the house thinking whether it is true.

She sat on the sofa and started wondering what had happened? and then wisdom dawned on her, that you cannot understand God, but can only experience Him. My mother throughout her life has been a recipient of all the deadly diseases we have heard of, be it tumour, cancer or haemorrhage, but each time she surrendered to Swami; Swami did not have the strength to remain unaffected. Swami came rushing and helped her always. In my life, my divine mother preached what surrender is and my physical mother practiced it. Swami, once told Prof. Kasturi Sir's

daughter, “Padmamma, during the challenging times in your life, only your prayers will help you. If you walk on a thorny path, I will provide you with slippers. If you walk under the scorching Sun, I will provide you with the umbrella, but it will be up to you to open the umbrella.” And then Swami said, “but if you surrender to me don’t worry; I will open the umbrella for you.” At this time, Swami asks, do you think about me only in times of trouble? True surrender goes one step deeper. Swami goes on to narrate a very beautiful anecdote in this regard. Swami says, there was once a great devotee of Lord Rama, he got a statue of Lord Rama, and kept the statue on the altar and everyday he would light incense sticks and offer garlands. This went on for months and years. He would always think, I have offered my prayers sincerely all these years, why does He not reveal Himself to me. He said please Lord, reveal yourself to me. Wisdom does not dawn on him. He then visits a friend’s home. His friend listens to his predicament and tells him that the choice of his deity is wrong. He tells him that Rama is a very harsh God, and instead he ought to worship Shiva. And he gives an example of Bhasmasura. He said, “See even a demon like Bhasmasura got a boon from Lord Shiva. So he goes to a shop and gets a statue of Lord Shiva, goes home puts it on the altar, then takes the statue of Lord Rama and puts it in a cupboard. His prayers turn from Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram to Om Namah Shivaya.

The day he started worshipping Lord Shiva, he sees that the incense smoke was going towards the cupboard. He said, “Lord Rama! You are feeling jealous of Lord Shiva, all these years you have been used to the incense and now you want it all for yourself. He then takes out the statue of Lord Rama from the cupboard, reprimands Him, wraps him in a blanket and puts him back in the cupboard.

Next day he comes again to worship lord Shiva. Again when he lights the incense sticks, he sees the smoke is going towards the

cupboard. He opens the cupboard and notices that the smoke is going through the blanket to the statue. He says, "Lord Rama, this is heights of jealousy. All these years you have been so used to the incense smell and you want it even now. This is for Lord Shiva." He unwraps the blanket, takes some cotton, and stuffs it inside the nostrils of Lord Rama's statue. He wraps the statue back in the blanket and closes the cupboard and thinks that it is over.

The following day, when he goes and worships Lord Shiva, he sees that once again, the smoke is inside the cupboard and when he sees the statue, he notices that the smoke is going through the cotton in the nostrils of Lord Rama. At that point in time, when he was about to reprimand the Lord, he sees a flash of radiant light emerging from the sky and as he turns back he sees Lord Rama in his full splendour and glory, with a bow and arrow, the *abhaya hasta* and a beautiful smile on his face. This person forgets about everything that transpired in the past few days, falls down on his knees and seeks forgiveness for whatever he had done.

The man has a doubt and says, "All these years when I worshipped you, you never revealed yourself to me but at a point of time when I worshipped Lord Shiva why did you come now." Lord Rama says, "All these years you worshipped me mechanically. The day you started scolding me, the day you started talking to me and when you started thinking that I am jealous of Lord Shiva, you treated me like a living God and not a mere statue. When a devotee treats me as a living God, I rush to reveal myself to him." Swami at this point of time with his physical absence is that Rama and that Shiva whom we need to realize as our living God. We need to realize that he is there and that the statue is God and that God is not a mere statue. Swami says about true surrender, "When you think that God is living, your thoughts, words and deeds will be in accordance with his

expectations and whatever task you carry out will be for the good of all. Feeling that the Lord is with you is true surrender.

People think that thinking of the Lord during difficulties is surrender, which is true according to Swami, but Swami goes one step deeper and says, “Feel me. When a photo is there, think that I am there, and when a statue is there think that I am present in it. When you think that I am present, then the unity of your thought, word and deed results in your attaining this lofty spiritual ideal of true surrender.

The Glory of Sai

Prof. A. Anantha Raman

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Having spoken at these forums several times before, however much I try, I find it difficult to reconcile to the fact that there is an empty chair to my left. I can rationalize it by saying that Bhagawan has repeatedly said that He is not the body.

But emptiness is emptiness, and a void is a void. For me this void can never be filled. For most of my life, as indeed for many of you, He has been the sheet anchor.

You had a problem, you left it to him. You had a question, you gave him a letter. You had a concern, you prayed to him. You felt distressed, you surrendered to him. And in that surrender you found a great sense of serenity. The problem no longer mattered. Post 24th April, the day we saw some of the most poignant scenes, the like of which have never ever been witnessed before, the world simply wept.

From over a hundred countries, men and women, some of them hearing about Swami for the first time, wept and prayed. The name of Sai filled every conceivable space as if it had been enshrined in a billion hearts. Devotional prayers pulsed throughout the world.

It was a Sadhana of unprecedented dimensions.

From a million tear ducts, tears flowed unbounded. They appeared to purify the ground on which they fell and sanctified the whole atmosphere. It was almost as if the whole universe was going through a process of catharsis, as if the earth was being cleansed of its sins.

And barely three months later, on the holy Guru Poornima day, devotees from varying faiths, cultures and countries held their breath and folded their hands in reverence as the Mahasamadhi, the pristine monument to Sai, was unveiled. From across the globe, millions were riveted to the divine saga that was unfolding in Prasanthi Nilayam.

The occasion symbolized renewal and continuity of the divine mission. It heralded a commitment to surge and serve, with greater love and deeper dedication befitting the hallowed memory of Sai.

What kind of a phenomenon was this?

Whenever I find myself having to speak on Swami, I feel a twofold sense of trepidation – Firstly, I feel it is presumptuous because I know that our explanations do not add anything to his Glory. Secondly, none of it does justice to His Truth, because His Reality is immensely and beyond our level of comprehension. His is a buoyant reality, which is beyond verbal definition. This living divinity cannot be explained in metaphors or examples. The limited cannot comprehend the unlimited. The wayward cannot measure the stable nor the now understand the ever.

Albert Einstein, the famous physicist was once asked whether he could explain Divinity in scientific terms. He replied that it would

not be possible because it would be like explaining Beethoven's ninth symphony in the form of an air pressure curve.

But there is one aspect of this reality that is crystal clear. That He descended to facilitate our Ascent. Swami himself announced once "Sadhus prayed and I came."

In the classic letter he wrote to his brother when he was 21, he declared that his task is to foster all mankind. And his vow is to lead back all who have strayed away. In ringing tones, He also pronounced "You can yourself see the full glory in the coming years"

And what a glorious vision it has been! The mansion of Sai is a multistoried splendor. Each story has a story to tell us.

The story of an educational system that runs in ninety countries transforming three quarters of a million young minds.

The story of a health care model that provides advanced tertiary care completely free of cost.

The story of the supply of that elixir of life – water – to a parched land hitherto ignored and condemned to drought and despair.

The story of new homes built for communities ravaged by floods and calamities.

The story of a spiritual and service organization which operates in 186 countries with 2,00,000 *Seva Dal* volunteers and 6,00,000 concerned citizens helping in all kinds of community activities – from washing a leper's wound to sweeping a slum – all done without any recompense and all done with complete Love.

And Prasanthi Nilayam itself, with all its structures, both human and mortar, has become a spiritual destination for millions across the world, belonging to every faith, who find in its draw the power to nourish the soul and calm the mind.

And all these drawing unsolicited acclaim.

While other universities are infected by anxiety, perplexity, discordance, indiscipline, and irreverence, the accreditation committee calls this university a crest jewel. The chief Secretary of Orissa is struck by the sense of compassion that was evident in providing houses to the afflicted unasked. Dr. Nobel is astounded at the state of art medical facility (the Super Specialty hospitals) that is free. Any visitor to Prasanthi Nilayam is struck by its sheer size and the clockwork precision with which it operates.

The schoolboy who threw away his history books has made history. Unto him were ushered poets and philosophers, princes and paupers, saints and sanyasis, musicians and merchants, politicians and police constables, the religious and the reformed.

“By their fruits ye shall know them,” says the scriptures. All these fruits point unerringly to this Avatar who once declared, “I will succeed. I will not be limited. My will shall prevail.”

Prof. Kasturi records that Swami Abhedananda (who spent a life time of sadhana with Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi), wrote to him and said that it would be a gross understatement if our Swami is designated as an Avatar, engaged in an adventure, undertaken to fulfill some particular project. According to him, He is nothing but Brahman itself come into human form. He, like Krishna, is the seed that has expanded into the cosmos.

At these forums we have heard several accounts of happenings – cures, transformations, changing events. I myself have shared some of these personal experiences; how Swami transformed an entire dictatorial African Government who were about to incarcerate me; how Swami, through a natural calamity saved an entire workforce from being rendered jobless; how Swami through a public discourse rendered advise on a personal issue.

For every happening that has been recounted here, there were probably hundred others that were not reported, about which even the beneficiaries were not aware, reminding us of the saying of Rabindranath Tagore who wrote:

*“Unbeknown to me, my King,
Thou didst press the signet of eternity
Upon many a fleeting moment”.*

Sir Arthur Eddington, the famous physicist, declared that the world is a wave of thought. Each law of nature, each action and reaction, each parable and miracle with Swami is a witness to the vital vibration of his Divinity in the gross, subtle and causal cosmos. Swami once wrote “I move in the outer space traversing inch by inch, from that cosmic height, I go to the Devotee first as fragrance, then as thought and then as light.” Each happening as described in these forums is a combination of that fragrance, of that thought and of that light.

It has been a trying time these last few months for many of the close devotees and many of the general public touched in some way by Bhagawan. First there was the tragedy of the Mahasamadhi itself. About this there are many theories. I do not want to add one more. But, in my forty years of being Swami’s devotee, there are two things about which I am absolutely certain. One is His cosmic will – *Vajra Sankalpa*, and the other is His capacity for total detachment – *Vairagya*.

I say this with the perfect responsibility of a rational human being and a student and teacher of Science and Management, that it is inconceivable for me that Swami will do anything that he does not intend to. If he wanted to walk out of that Hospital, He was perfectly capable of that action. And if he did not, no power, no medical expertise would have changed that. In addition, divine beings rarely make a *sankalpa* to heal their own body, except

when they want to establish a point. Sri Ramakrishna lived for a long time enduring the excruciating pain of cancer in His throat! In fact, Swami Vivekananda had to beg Sri Ramakrishna to let the disease subside to the extent that it would at the very least allow Him to eat occasional food.

Ramana Maharshi's left arm was affected by sarcoma, a painful cancer. He was operated upon, but the disease did not subside. When His sister Alamelu pleaded with Him to heal Himself, Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi said, "Yes, I have a body, which has a hand. The hand has a disease and that you want the disease to go away. You want me to resolve that in my mind. But where do I have the mind to make that resolution?"

Christ turned water to wine at the wedding feast of Cana. He brought dead Lazarus back to life. He had the majesty to reprimand the ocean. Yet, the son of God allowed himself to be nailed to the cross.

Swami has often reiterated that His students are His only property. Therefore, you, as his sole heirs, have a definite role to perform. You will be dealing with a world where the all pervading and all embracing physical reality of Swami is absent. It is a completely different world. In this world, we ourselves have had to deal with issues, which we never had to deal with before. It is a world in which there are words like stakeholders. In that world, in addition to devotees, there are others.

If we are just a spiritual organization focused only on devotional activities, we need not bother about these stakeholders. But, we are a service organization with multi-campus educational institutions, multi-location hospitals and performing service organizations all over the world.

We need to devise new dynamics to deal with them, to talk to them. We have not comprehended this real world yet. We were practically pushed into it without the overbearing protection of the Sai umbrella.

And even without comprehending it, we have had to take several new decisions in that world. Could we have taken different decisions? Certainly. Could we have acted differently? Of course, we could have. There are always choices available. We made some choices. We could as well have made some other choices. Were all of them correct? Perhaps not. It was all a matter of judgement.

But there is one thing I can categorically tell you – after all this – that all the choices that were taken by our management, all the judgements that were made, all the courses that were pursued and all the action that were taken, had one sole objective – that these institutions founded by Swami shall not diminish, particularly in the real world in which we operate today.

What then is the living legacy of this loving legend? Our action hereafter will be that legacy. So far, His Life was His Message. Now, our life will have to be His message.

What was the legacy of the Rama Avatar...what do we remember today when we think of Rama? We do not think Ayodhya. But We think of Hanuman, Jatayu, Vibhishana, even the tiny squirrel which wanted to help build the great bridge to Lanka, etc. They are all Rama's devotees. And the legacy is the fulfillment of Rama's divine mission through these devotees.

What was the legacy of the Krishna Avatar? Not Dwaraka or Brindavan. His legacy was His devotees, the Gopis and the Pandavas and even the thousands of soldiers who gave up their lives to fulfill Krishna's divine mission.

And so it was for Buddha, Christ, the Holy Prophet Mohamed, and Guru Nanak. It was the devotees who carried forth and fulfilled their mission and spread their message to all who needed to hear the call.

But now, what of the Sai Avatar? For almost this entire period, His life he has been perpetuating the Sanathana Dharma, the ancient wisdom of India.

Islam came from Mohammed. Christianity came from Jesus, Buddhism from Buddha and Jainism from Mahavir. All these religions owe their existence to the personal encounters of their prophet founders. Moses saw God in a burning bush. Elijah heard the shrill small voice. Jesus saw the baptism of John in Jordan. Socrates, Plato, Polonius, Augustus, Dante – all of them testify to the felt reality of God.

Sanathana Dharma alone has no author and no founder. Divine Truths and ageless wisdom revealed to ancient rishis were handed down from generation to generation. Many came to drink at this eternal spring and imbibe this esoteric knowledge. Jesus of Nazareth was one such. He took back large portions of this water of life to share with the God thirsty people of Israel. Several others came; Buddha, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, to share this eternal wisdom.

And then came Sai.

Almost the first thing He said was, “I have not come to start a new religion but to repair the ancient highway to God”.
How do we prove worthy of this legacy?

And how do we operate and succeed in furthering the value of whatever he has bequeathed to us in a world bereft of his mighty physical presence, in a world where we will be one of several

others. There is only one way. We need to eschew differences, we need to bury egos, and as Krishna advised in Bhagavad Gita:

Sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja

Surrender unto me giving all duties and obligations. There are already several efforts in this, what I would call the new AS era, the After Sai period.

Soon new sets of Sai devotees will emerge. They may not even be members of our organization, the same way all Krishna adherents are not members of Iskon. We would need to channelize their energies.

For example there is a group in Chembur, Bombay. They have started what they call *Vruddha Seva*. They collect Senior citizens, and plan an outing for a day, sharing divine love with Sai bhajan, study circles, yatra films, Bharat natyam, etc. And at the end of the day, they perform *Pada pooja* to all of them. They say that when they searched for the physical form of Swami, they realised that it has split into many myriad forms like these senior citizens in the world! In the AS period we will hear of many such efforts.

Swami once told the story of Paganini. Niccolo Paganini was a famous Italian violin virtuoso, well known in the Western world. He had a favourite violin. Once, Paganini was invited to the World Conference of Music, which was to be held in Paris at the Royal Opera House. Paris, at that time was considered as a centre of Western culture and music. In the audience were the crowned Heads of Europe and the greatest music critics of the era. Paganini was to play solo violin in that gathering. So he took his instrument and stepped on to the stage. He started to tune it in preparation for his play when suddenly one string broke. There was a complete silence in the audience. Undeterred Paganini continued to tune his instrument.

A violin has 4 strings. Paganini continued to tune with three strings. Then the second string broke. There was a hushed murmur among the members in the audience, who started teetering. He quietly went on tuning his instrument. And then the impossible happened. The third string broke. Paganini took his instrument, walked up to the centre of the stage, held the violin aloft and said, "Paganini and one string", and he played one of the most beautiful pieces of music that was ever played.

The one string in our Paganini violin is devotion and surrender to Swami. Let all other strings snap our support system, people, material resources...but as long as we keep that one string of devotion to Swami, surrender to Swami, service to Swami and commitment to Swami, our Paganini violin will continue to send forth the sweetest strains of rapturous music that ever thrilled the senses.

When Krishna said, "My devotee never perishes, take refuge in Me and never despair, I will protect you at all times, it is verily I that pervade the entire Universe", He was not referring to the embodied Krishna who was born to Vasudeva and Devaki.

If the Krishna of the Dwapara Yuga is still a living presence to us even after thousands of years of His leaving His body, what else is that Krishna but the eternal, changeless, ever pure Consciousness, the Absolute Truth? Sri Krishna said, "Men of small intellect cannot recognize the Ultimate Reality of my Self." So like Krishna cant Sai also continue to protect us!

I started by saying that there is an empty chair to my left. But how can that chair be empty when right next to that chair is the Mahasamadhi. In several faiths, the tomb or Mahasamadhi of an avatar or even a realized person is regarded by many as having an incorporeal presence.

In fact, the Upanishads state: *na tasya prana utkraamanti*, meaning that the *pranas* (life forces) do not leave their body to take up another, since the individual self has merged with the Totality.

Shirdi Sai Baba had reportedly said, "Believe me, though I pass away, My bones in my tomb would be speaking, moving and communicating with those who would surrender themselves whole-heartedly to Me. Do not be anxious that I would be absent from you. You will hear My bones speaking and discussing your welfare."

Thus, the remains of such persons is revered and given great importance by faiths all around the world. This is the living truth accepted by many devotees to this day. Therefore, we need to have little doubt that millions will throng to the Mahasamadhi at the Prasanthi Nilayam and continue to receive the grace of Sai.

I first came to the feet of Sai forty years ago. At that time, to quote the poet, What was I?

*An infant crying in the Night
An infant crying for the Light
And with no language but a cry
But in the process of Light,
The eyes opened,
Cries stopped silent
And the hopes of sight rose beyond.*

Suddenly the purpose and goal of life became clear. Mankind went through an evolutionary journey from the mineral to the vegetable to the animal kingdom and thence to the human level. Eons passed while that slow pilgrimage took place. But the journey never stopped. And suddenly we have this triple Sai avatar to help us navigate that path. And a Teacher to remind us

that we are not the body. That we have mistaken our temporary projection into the world of matter; namely, our bodies and minds, as our selves. That most of us live through our lives quite unaware of our true identity. That our real identity is the Atma, the universal spirit. That we are all part and parcel of God, images of God, children of God and as eternal as God himself. That we must use our life as a means to reach that goal and traverse the path from ignorance to Knowledge, from darkness to Light, from the transient to the Eternal.

Some of us are at the evening of our lives. We may not see the end of that path, if indeed there is an end, in this lifetime. All we can do then is to pray, in the words of Rabindranath Tagore,

*Let only that little be left of my Will
Whereby I may feel Thee on every side
And come to Thee in everything
And offer to Thee my Love every moment*

Excerpts from Divine Discourses

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Students, embodiments of love! Human life, no doubt very sacred, however, good and bad interchange depending on the company. When iron is in the company of mud it gets rusted, but the same iron if put in fire, will get rid of the rust, shine brilliantly and becomes soft. Dust in the company of air will rise to the sky, but the same dust, in the company of water will go down to the pit. Neither the dust has wings to fly high nor does it have legs to go down. It is the effect of company that makes it go up or come down. The company depends on the good and bad qualities of the people around you.

Iron in the company of dust gets rusted and gets busted. When it gets busted it has to be tested and then it gets rested which is a high position. So we should wipe out this dust. What is this dust? We have to remove the dust of bad feeling and bad company. All this is the result of the bad company. Therefore it is said, 'tell me your company and I will tell you what you are.' It doesn't matter if we take time and enquire but we should join good company. When we are in good position and when times are favourable people will gather around you. When situations and circumstances are negative, people turn away from you. This is not true friendship.

What is friendship? Who is a true friend? The one, who is with you and follows you like a shadow in times of difficulty, anxiety, troubles and problems, is a true friend. When tank is full of water, frogs gather in it but when the tank is dry not even one frog is

seen. Likewise, when you are in good position and authority, you will find people around you, which is not true friendship. A friend should be with you at all times, in profit or loss, pleasure and pain. Therefore, we have to take time, recognize a true friend and then move with him. It is a mistake if we merely make friendship saying 'hello'. Before you make a friend know about his background and enquire about his habits, behaviour and discipline. One should also try to find out the company of one's friend. The one whom you want to be your friend, is in a bad company, don't look at his face. If he says hello, you say goodbye and leave because that sort of friendship is a danger for us. In modern education, the modern student considers everyone as his friend which is not true friendship. These are all passing clouds which can leave you in any moment. So such sort of friendship should be within the limits of hello, hello, how are you, how are you, good bye and good bye.

Our behaviour depends upon our thoughts and feelings. In vedantic parlance it is said, '*yad bhavam tad bhavati*'. If we consider a newspaper, we don't find good or foul smell, as the case may be. If the same newspaper is used to make a pack of jasmine flowers, the newspaper also gets the smell of jasmine flowers due to its association with the flowers. If the same newspaper is used to pack the *pakodas*, the newspaper will also smell like the *pakodas*. If the same newspaper is used to pack dry fish, it smells like that. Likewise human heart is sacred, without any foulness in it. Depending on the type of emotions and thoughts we carry in it, our character is formed.

8 July 1996 and 25 Dec 1999, Prasanthi Nilayam

Day 5 | 4 October 2011

Introduction

Dr. Shashank Shah

Post-Doctoral Fellow, Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL

On this auspicious day of Durgashtami, we performed the Ayudh Pooja. Ayudh Pooja is an act of gratitude to the tools and implements that help us in carrying out our daily work in our respective professions. Be it as a student, a teacher, a businessman, a farmer, an artist, a dancer, a musician or any field, we need instruments to work in our daily routine and schedule. However, what is the most important *Ayudham* (instrument) that we have been blessed with? The greatest instrument that we have been blessed with is the human body, which Bhagawan has given us to enable us to cross this ocean of life and death. On the inauguration of the water supply project on 18th November, 1995, in the Poornachandra Auditorium, Bhagawan said:

*“Paropakaaraya Phalanti Vrukshaha,
Paropakaaraya Vahanti Nadyaha,
Paropakaaraya Duhanti Gavaha,
Paropakaarartham Idam Shareeram”*

(It is for the sake of others that trees bear fruit; it is for the sake of others that the rivers flow; it is for the sake of others that the cows give milk; and it is for the sake of service to others that human beings have been endowed with this human body.)

Seva is the highest form of Sadhana. While in the other forms of Sadhana, the Sadhaka alone gets benefited, in Seva the doer and the recipient both are equally benefited. In an interview with Bhagawan, the youth of Hyderabad Sai Organisation were blessed with a question and answer session with Bhagawan. The youth asked Swami, “What form of Sadhana do you expect us to perform; should we do meditation, should we do Namasmarana?” Swami interrupted before even they finished and said, “Till your body is fit and fine, till it helps you to do things the way you want to do, undertake Seva activities and Seva activities alone. Service is the royal path to salvation.”

Few months later, this group of youth came from Hyderabad to Prasanthi Nilayam and with great enthusiasm they were sharing statistics and details of their service activities with Swami. After hearing this entire narration, Swami said, “I am happy that you undertook all these activities to benefit the poor. But what I want to know is whether you have bettered yourselves by undertaking these service activities. If you have been able to control your anger, if you have become more loving to your fellowmen, if you have been able to control your emotions and irritations, then the benefit of doing the Seva activities has been truly accrued by you. Else it is details and quantity, and not quality that I am looking for.”

Bhagawan’s unique definition has been that Seva is not an act of charity or favour to the recipient, but a means to better oneself by the act of service that one undertakes. On an occasion Bhagawan said, “Service is an expression of gratitude to the society, service should not be done with a spirit of condescension or to achieve some ulterior selfish objective. Not recognising sacredness of the purifying power of service, people hesitate to embark on social service. It should not be imagined that one is promoting the wellbeing of one’s nation by service. One should realise that one is bettering oneself by rendering service. Service should proceed

from the awareness of what one owes to society. Sheer gratitude demands that one should serve society which is the source of all benefits enjoyed by man.”

As I mentioned earlier, the human body is the greatest gift of Bhagawan to all of us and to use it in the best way possible, Bhagawan has also given us innumerable opportunities to serve in so many service institutions and thereby sanctify our human life. In the context of service organisations that Bhagawan started Himself, on the occasion of Vijayadashami in 1961, Bhagawan announced, “On this day, I am launching a Seva Samithi. The persons who become members of this Samithi and perform selfless service will be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. Not just them, but their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will also be liberated by the cycles of birth and death by undertaking these service activities.” But, Swami added a caveat and said, “However, when you undertake these service activities, the test will be severe. I will bear witness to the number of people who withstand these tests and emerge victorious.”

I am assured and convinced beyond doubt that Bhagawan has been not only the witness, but also our guide and guardian through each of these service activities that have been undertaken by innumerable devotees across the length and breadth of this globe. Let us express our heartfelt gratitude for this rare opportunity and unique benediction.

Gratitude

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I thanked him, the one who fetched me a glass of water but never the one who granted me water itself. I thanked him, the one who gave me all the medicines and cures but never the one who granted me health itself. I thanked him, the one who gave me all the knowledge I knew but never the one who granted me intellect itself. I thanked them all who made up my life but I never thanked the one who granted me life itself. On one hand, I could possess wholehearted gratitude to those who helped me from time to time and rightly so, yet, I would over and over again neglect the hand of Swami, which has given me everything in the first place.

I was in the tenth standard in the Higher Secondary School when we decided to put up a drama in Swami's presence. The drama was initially entitled 'Love is the pathway to God'. When we showed this to Swami he said, "How can love be a pathway to God? God and love are not different." He renamed our drama as 'Love is God. Live in Love'; and so with the permission of Swami, we put up the drama in His presence in the Sai Kulwant hall. The drama went off very smoothly and Swami was extremely happy.

All of us were expecting Him to call upon one actor and create a ring or chain for him. But what Swami did that day is something that will form an irreplaceable part of the memories of each and every one of us present there. Swami didn't call anyone forward but Himself came forward. He waved his hand in a circular motion and created Vibhuti. Then holding the Vibhuti in His palm next to His lips, He blew the Vibhuti over the heads of all of us. I cannot even begin to describe what went through our minds. But we all cried out in unison to Swami, "Thank you, Swami". Swami looked at us and said, "Why thank Swami? You and I are one." We all nodded and Swami returned to the interview room. But it raised a fundamental question in my mind: Why thank Swami? Why gratitude to God? Gratitude at the human level is when I thank others by giving them back something for what they have done for me. It is when I try to share my happiness with those who have given it to me. But what can I give to the one who has created the universe itself. What can I add to the happiness of the one who is eternal bliss itself?

Is gratitude to Swami then a redundant exercise? Is gratitude a human feeling that cannot be extended to the divine realm? Surely not, for as Swami has stated on numerous occasions, and as recently as just two days back, that gratitude to Swami is the ultimate form of gratitude. But it comes with a fundamental difference; gratitude to Swami is for my own good and benefit alone. What a tremendous benefit it is, for gratitude is a golden opportunity for me to take out time from my busy life to think of Him. It is an incredible incentive for me to be immersed in His thoughts as I am overcome by the feeling to thank Him.

It had barely been a week since I joined the primary school in the 6th standard. I was missing my parents, my home and I was a miserable wreck. Nobody could console me, neither my teachers nor my classmates. Finally, it was Thursday morning, time for my first darshan as a primary school student. I remember that

morning's breakfast was idli, vada, sambar and chutney. Among my many problems at the time, was my sudden induction into south Indian food, and I had an absolute aversion to chutney. I just had some idli, vada and sambar and with immense effort succeeded in avoiding chutney. We then went for darshan and as it was my first darshan, I was allowed to sit in the first row with five other new students.

I remember myself right there in the first row sulking to myself, praying to Swami for help. Just then the darshan music started and Swami came down gliding as He always does. He completed His round of darshan without even pausing to look at me and went inside the interview room, leaving me to brood over my loneliness all over again. After a little while, He went on rounds in His car. Later when He returned, he did stop right in front of the six of us and as the glass was lowered, He looked at us and asked, "What was the breakfast today?" We replied, "Swami, idli, vada and sambar." Swami nodded his head and looked ahead and just when the glass was about to rise he stopped and looking straight into my eyes said, "No chutney, paapam."

Many around me had puzzled looks, but I didn't, for in that moment I felt a blockade inside me dissolve and I knew, I was home. As I looked back upon this incident, it struck me that just as sorrow is God's mechanism to keep us in touch with him in times of pain and failure, so too, gratitude is his gift to man to think of him in times of joy and success, for in the days to follow, I was filled with thoughts of him and my heart was gushing in gratitude towards him. I was going on telling anyone was willing to listen the entire story.

Gratitude is God's excuse to allow us to think about Him in times of joy. It is gratitude that allows me to think of Him not only during the examinations but after them too. It is gratitude alone that allows me to think of Him not only during my troubles but

also when I am out of them. It is gratitude, which allows me to think of Him not only when I need something but also when I have it as well. Thus, I realized that gratitude to Swami was an invaluable possession for me.

The next question is, when do we have gratitude to Swami? Do I really need to thank Him over and over again for the skies and the oceans, for the smallest of helps and the tiniest of interventions? When I remember the moments when He casually placed His hand while moving by, and of all the handkerchiefs, He took my handkerchief to wipe His hands or when moving along, He made a sudden crucial movement in my direction, so that He could be in my reach and I could take his padanamaskar. As I think of all these moments, I find myself immersed in his thoughts, thinking of Him in gratitude. I find my mind rushing around to think of more such moments, and slowly I realize that every additional opportunity to think of Him is a boon. So the answer to my question is a resounding yes.

Gratitude to Swami for nature, for life, for the smallest of helps, for the tiniest of interventions, for anything and for everything; gratitude to Swami at the smallest excuse. How do we show gratitude to Swami? How can I even begin to thank the one who is solely responsible for what I am today? The one who decided to pick up, in his infinite compassion, this undeserving string of zeros and put Himself as the one before it, who has given me everything I ask for and more; when I asked for something and even if I didn't; whenever I expected it and even if I didn't; and all He asked for in return was that I should be happy.

The one who taught me to walk, talk, eat and play, to laugh, to cry, to love and to give, how can I express my gratitude to the one who loved me more than anyone else ever could? The one who taught me what no one else could, the one who has been with me even when everyone else left me, the one who is my mother,

father, guide, friend and my one and all, how do I thank him? I know that I can never ever pay my gratitude to Him, but for my part where do I begin? Yet again as all else fails, I look to Him like always for an answer, and as always, He gives an answer, “I don’t want any material objects which will ultimately fade away with time. The body is the leaf, the sweetened mind is the fruit, the blossomed heart is the flower and the tears of joy is the water and these are what I want you to give to me as gratitude. Pray to me and think of me in gratitude and share those feelings with ten others. This is the gratitude I want from you. Offer all your deeds to me and do them as I would want you to do them and finally, when the credit of all your deeds come back to you, offer those too back to me. That is the gratitude I want from you.” If we do this, gratitude will cease to be any other activity in life and becomes a way of life. As was once said, ‘to speak of gratitude is courteous and pleasant; to enact gratitude is noble and generous but to live gratitude is to touch the very heavens.’

I would like to conclude with a prayer:

O! Lord, take my love and let it flow in fullness of devotion of thee

O! Lord, take my hands and let them work incessantly for thee,

O! Lord, take my soul and let it merge in oneness with thee,

O! Lord, take my mind and thoughts and let them be in tune with thee,

O! Lord, take my everything and let me be an instrument of thee.

Love is my form, Truth is my name, Bliss is my food

Amey Deshpande

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It was in the month of May this year (2011) when few of us had been in the lap of Himalayas. We visited the most significant shrine of Badrinath and were trekking along the path leading to Mount Neelkanth, in the lap of the snowiest Himalayas. We were told that several maharishis, yogis, mahatmas and sadhakas were doing their penance and we happened to see the ashram of one of the yogis. We wanted to pay our respects to the yogi so we entered his ashram. The moment he saw us, he asked us, “Where do you come from?” When we replied that we are coming from Puttaparthi, he was overjoyed.

He made us sit next to him and gave us hot tea and the very first thing he said was, “are you feeling sad”? We didn’t have words to express and our response was silence. He said, “don’t be sad at all, Swami has not gone anywhere; he has moved from the embodied form to the disembodied form.” He went on in our conversation to tell us some beautiful experiences that he has had with Bhagawan. He even told us that Swami often comes and visits them. As I moved out of the ashram, a question arose in my mind. Swami, who are you? Are you that five feet personage that has

always enchanted us with a sublime smile, that which has walked amidst us showering on us your most beautiful benediction, or are you that cosmic principle that pervades every atom of this entire universe?

Here is a person who is sitting in the lap of Himalayas, almost at the very end of Bharat, telling me that Swami is very near to them. Swami I miss you, I seek you. Who are you, Swami? In the innermost recesses of my heart, I heard a voice which told me, “love is my form, truth is my breath, bliss is my food, my life is my message, expansion is my life, no reason for love, no season for love, no birth no death”. This was the answer that I got from within. I know that the lord can never be described but here is a Lord who is describing himself. Let us dive deep into these words and get their nectarine form.

Love is my form.

It was 1995, the water project was in full swing and Bhagawan had called a few of us for an interview and He was describing to us the entire water project. He was telling us about the kilometres and kilometres being laid and the amount of water to be pumped, the number of villages to be served, the number of people who are going to receive drinking water and so on. Swami said that He is hypothecating the entire ashram of Brindavan to see to it that this project is completed. He said that He will sell everything to see that this water project is completed. He then made the most amazing statement when He said that He would even sell Himself to make the water a success. We were all shocked as to why Swami was making such a statement. But He wanted to tell something else, “Do you know, what is my prize”? We were all silenced by that question and He said, “All I want is this much of pure love.”

The avatar had revealed his MRP, His maximum realizable prize. All He wants from each one of us is this much of pure love and in that moment I thought, “O! Lord, in this times of inflation and price rise, what else can you get as cheap and significant as Bhagawan’s love. It was Krishna who declared in the Bhagavad Gita, *sarvadharmā parityajya mamekaśharanam vṛajā, anāyāś chintayanto mam ye janāḥ paryuṣasate*; He put a very big price; if you give up all the other dharmas and surrender at my feet, I will take care of you. Think of me incessantly and I become yours and here was the Lord who was telling us that all He wants is a small amount of pure love. Can we give him that love? Often I feel that the only thing that has changed from then (when he was physically amidst us) to now, is His address. Earlier He was staying in Yajur Mandir; now He is staying in our Hrudaya Mandir. This Hrudaya has to be made ready and Bhagawan himself has told us how this heart has to be made ready. He says,

*prema rabati marubhoomulalo premankura pemponda,
premaवेशमृतो प्रेमसुधवारशमो वारशिमपा
प्रेमानदुलु प्रवहिमपा मुरालि गनमू सेयाग दे
Krishna ganamu seyaga de*

In this heart that is baron, O! Krishna, sow the seeds of love, so that we can reap the harvest of love. Let the torrential rains of love fall and rivers of love flow, O! Krishna fill my heart with that love.

Truth is my breath.

One of our brothers, who is a part of the Bhajan group, was narrating a very beautiful experience to us. He said that several years ago, it so happened that after Bhagawan’s discourse, as Bhagawan was singing a bhajan, he suddenly noticed that Bhagawan was looking at him as if asking him for something. When he looked at Bhagawan, he understood that Bhagawan was

actually asking him to prompt Him the next line of one of the bhajans. He was initially shocked but he was able to regroup and was able to signal to Swami, the next line of the bhajan.

After the bhajan got over, Bhagawan showered him with a beautiful smile as if saying thank you and retired. It so happened that on another occasion, about two months later, after a discourse, Bhagawan started singing another bhajan and the very same thing happened. Swami looked at this boy and asked him to prompt once more. The first time he was baffled but this time he was expecting it. He was once again able to help Bhagawan. The third time, when it happened again, he was able to prompt Bhagawan. This time he said that here was the Lord who has taken an incarnation to rescue devotees and here am I rescuing the Lord.

Three such incidents happened and one day he was sitting in the bhajan hall and Bhagawan walked into the bhajan hall and asked this boy, "What bhajan are you going to sing?" he said, "Swami, I am singing *sesha shaila vasa naarayana*." Swami asked him to sing the bhajan, and this boy just stared blankly at Bhagawan's face. He says that he couldn't recollect the tune of the bhajan that he is going to sing in about fifteen minutes time. So, Bhagawan asked him again to sing the bhajan. The boy told Swami that he is blank. Swami asked him to leave this bhajan and asked him to sing the bhajan that he sang yesterday. He was able to recollect the bhajan he had already sung. Swami then asked him to sing any one bhajan. This boy who was supposed to have prompted the Lord on three occasions was not able to sing a single bhajan. Just then, Bhagawan tapped his head and said, "You thought that I had forgotten on those three occasions. Remember that if I forget, the entire universe will come to a standstill. Truth is my breath, I cannot forget, for if I forget, the entire universe comes to a standstill."

*Surya Chandra tare apna dharma se na tal sakein
Insaan ki majaal kya jo uska kram badal sakein
Ek phool bhi khile nahin ek patta bhi hiley nahin
Sara jahana ka uske haath mein lagaam hai
Bada zordaar uska intzaam hai
Bada zabardast uska intzaam hai*

When even the stars, the moon and the sun cannot alter their positions, then what is the position of this insignificant man. Not even a flower can bloom, not even a leaf can move without His will, can that omnipresent and omnipotent Lord forget, He is truth himself.

Bliss is my food.

I am tempted to recollect a very beautiful experience that we have all heard many times.

It was in 1991, when the super speciality hospital was constructed and there was hectic activity going on. Even as Swami was interacting with students, giving them the updates of the wonderful work that was going on, there was a student who wished, "Swami so many people give you so much, what can I give you?" We knew that he washed his own clothes and saved and gave Swami a sum of one hundred rupees.

I happened to be there in the erstwhile mandir and I still remember how Swami walked out of the interview room with an envelope and enquired as to who has given the envelope. Nobody knew about the envelope, and Swami pulled out a letter and the hundred rupee note and called out this boy's name. This boy, who was in the tenth class, walked up to Swami. Swami pinched his cheeks, patted him and then said a very significant thing. Swami said, "This hundred rupee note is worth all the crores and crores

of rupees I have received ever. Today I am satisfied, I don't want anything else.”

Bliss is my food.

Several times we have seen that a lot of our programs in front of Bhagawan have not even reached the kind of expectations we ourselves had, but Bhagawan has been so kind and compassionate towards us.

I am reminded of an incident when in Kodaikanal, we wanted to sing some group songs in front of Bhagawan. We had practiced for the group songs for nearly five to six days and He gave us an opportunity. When we sang the songs, He was not satisfied with the five or six songs prepared by us and wanted more. We had to open our *Vandana* books and we rattled off another six to seven songs. One of the elders had to remind Bhagawan that it was dinnertime and Bhagawan said that He didn't want dinner, as He was satisfied. He said that He was touched by the way the boys had sung.

These three lines: love is my form, truth is my breath, bliss is my food, are contained in Bhagawan's own name, Baba (Being awareness bliss atma). His being is love, truth is awareness and the third B, which stands for bliss, is His food. Baba is love, truth and bliss. As I was pondering over these lines, each of these lines was giving me fantastic experiences. I pondered further and thought that Swami's life is His message and when I tried to understand about His life, the answer was 'expansion' is his life. I am reminded of another experience of the MBA batch in 1991. Swami called all the MBA boys into Trayee and He was giving them snacks, which were very sumptuous as always. Throughout the session, Bhagawan was not sitting down; he remained standing. The students were feeling very uncomfortable as they wanted Him to sit comfortably on the throne and they were

requesting Swami to sit down. Swami said that He was fine and He was interacting with the boys in this manner for forty-five minutes. The boys were feeling very uneasy as all the students were sitting on chairs. After forty-five minutes, the boys pleaded Bhagawan to sit, saying that they are not able to see Him stand. Swami said that they don't understand and asked the boys to pick up the pillow, which was there on Bhagawan's throne. As the boys lifted the cushion, they found that a small wasp was making a nest behind the pillow and Bhagawan said, "If I would have sat the wasp would have lost its life and also the little ones which exist in that nest."

Expansion is my life.

Are we capable of incorporating, embracing every single sentient and insentient beings in our life? Are we capable of giving love to everybody who enters our orbit? Even as I continue thinking on these lines, a very powerful thought hits me. How many times has Swami told us that He is God and so are we! I am always wonderstruck with this thought that when Swami says that He is God we all agree, but when our own Lord says that we all are also God, we are not ready to accept. We are not able to trust or put faith in those words when He himself tells us that we also are God. At this moment, I want to read out a very poignant message that is very relevant today. This was the message that Bhagawan gave to Charles Penn and it goes as follows:

"Your mission has begun; this is my message to my devotees. All of you have a unique and significant part to play in your lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve me. My mission has reached that point in time when each one of you has work to do. This planet has a great purpose in the galaxy in which it is held. That purpose is unfolding now before our eyes. I call upon you to radiate that bhakti within you so that its unseen power will envelope all who come into your orbit. To successfully perform

your part, always remain centred on me, allow yourself to impart that purity of heart within you towards all the human beings and all living creatures. This part of my mission is performed in absolute silence; you are my instruments from whom my love will pour. Be always aware that the moment your ego descends upon you, my work ceases. The multiplication of my love will be felt throughout the world. I have prepared you for this work over many incarnations. I have drawn you to me; I have made great steps in my mission over these past incarnations. My work is ceaseless so also is yours. Know that I am within you and there is no difference between you and me. My darshan will pour forth from me, to and through you and you may be unaware of this constant action. Be ever pure of heart and mankind in your lifetime will benefit from your unique qualities. The time is approaching when all of humanity will live in harmony.

That time will be here sooner than one expects. It is not what any one of us can imagine; it is beyond your comprehension. I can say that its beauty is magnificent beyond all dreams and as each of you perform your silent work; I embrace you to my heart. This, I say to all my devotees from the Lord's mountaintop, where all the universes become one. Perform my work, my beloved bhaktas and your breath will carry the scent of the blossoms of the heaven, your joy will be my joy.'

That is the need of the hour; that is the call of our heart to the one who is seated there. I am sure that if we embark on this beautiful mission that the Lord has given us, then we realize that love is my form, truth is my breath and bliss is my food. There will come a time when we say:

nayana nayana mein Sai Om
janam maran mein Sai Om
Sai Om Sai Om Sai Om

Excerpt from Divine Discourse

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

All the worldly pleasures are like passing clouds, they don't last for long. There are many devotees from overseas here today. They should be firm in their Devotion whatever changes in the situation they may face.

At birth the individual is called as a child, after ten years he is called as boy, after thirty years he is called as man, and after seventy-five years he is called as a grandfather. The person is one, only there is difference of ages and names. This is the fundamental truth; the same person is first a child, then a boy, then a man and finally a grandfather.

In the same way, you may begin worshipping God with specific form and name (saakaara). But when you are faced with difficulties you experience God as a helper (aarthi). When you have some desires, you pray to God for fulfilling them. You are then an artharthi (seeker of favors). In the next stage, he becomes an enquirer (jignasu) different ways the devotee has to develop his intimate relationship to God.

To illustrate how God responds to the prayers of devotees, Swami related the story of a rich man with four wives, who expressed what they wanted him to get for them during a trip to America. The first wife, who was spiritually enlightened, prayed for his safe

return. The second wife, who was ailing, wanted him to get some medicines. The third wife wanted him to bring some sacred books. The fourth wife, who was modern, asked him to get her fashionable sarees and jewelry. The merchant's work in America was not getting over, so he kept on postponing his return. He wrote to all the four wives that he will return the next week and asked them to tell him about the details of what they want him to get from America. He wanted them to send the message immediately by fax. The fourth wife, the modern girl, wanted him to get latest fashionable sarees and jewellery. The second wife wanted him to get biographies of noble people. The third wife said that she couldn't bear the sickness any longer so she requested him to get the latest medicine. The first wife said that she doesn't want anything and if the husband comes back home safe and sound.

The husband returned and gave the three wives what they wanted and stayed with the first wife because she had no other desire except to have him back. The remaining three wives were angry with him because he started staying with the first wife.

It is so difficult to lead a life with one wife and if there are two wives the difficulties are beyond measure. Three wives were responsible for Rama being sent to exile and with four wives the life is unbearable.

All the three started fighting and then the husband told that he gave whatever each of them desired. The fourth wife desired jewels, which were given to her. The second wife desired good books and the third wife desired medicines, which were duly supplied to them. The first wife desired only me so I am staying with her.

Drawing the lesson of this story, Swami said God responds to devotees in the same manner. To those who aspire for wealth, He

gives wealth. Those who seek knowledge, He will help them to acquire it. Those who are ailing and who pray to God will get the relief they pray for. God builds super specialty hospitals for their treatment. Those who pray to God for oneness with Him will realize Him and will become very close to Him.

This is the way God responds to the four kinds of devotees; *aarto*, *artharthi*, *jignasu* and *jnani*.

The devotees should consider God alone as important and not other mundane desires. If you have God with you, all other things are got easily. So, God is your real wealth. Real health is God. Men should strive for God-Realization because they came from God and should go back to Him.

Today there are devotees here from many countries – Germany, Japan Italy, France and others. Whatever happiness you may have experienced here, you will have to go back to your countries when your money is exhausted or your visa expires. Your aim must be to acquire a permanent visa to stay here permanently. That is got by God's grace. You can get it through love and love alone. When you have that love, your proximity to God is ensured forever.

Embodiments of Love! There is love in every one of you. Develop that love. Share it with others. This love is not one-way traffic, it has to be give and take. When you have this love there is no need for you to go in search of ashrams. There are some foolish persons who go on hopping from one ashram to another. This is sheer folly. There is no need to go anywhere. The Divine is in your heart. Adhere to one belief firmly. Do not change your faith from day to day. Follow one path with firm faith. That is the Love principle.

25 December 1996, Prasanthi Nilayam

Day 6 | 5 October 2011

Introduction

Aman Jhaveri

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Swami, we pray to you that you make us worthy that you may reveal yourself to us. You may reveal yourself to us as the essence of both the manifest and the unmanifest; that you may reveal yourself to us as the passion in dispassion, as the wisdom in knowledge, as the truth in the transient and as love in Love. A great master once said, “millions exist but only a few live. To live you must have an ideal.” That ideal for all of us is the ideal of devotion and the ideal of godhood.

The scriptures say that there are three kinds of devotees. The first type can be compared to a stone. A stone may be immersed in water for thousands and thousands of years but the moment you pick it out of water and crack it open it will be dry from within.

The second category of devotees can be compared to cotton. When cotton is immersed in water, it immediately soaks up all the water but once it is removed, the water slowly starts trickling away and after some time the cotton goes back to being what it was before it met water, absolutely dry.

There is also a third category of devotees who are compared to sugar. The moment we put sugar in water, it immediately dissolves losing its form and identity, never to regain it. These are the kind of devotees who once knowing God, lose their own petty self in the supreme self. And that is the ideal of devotion each one of us must pursue.

A great master was once asked, “what is the difference between man and God?” He replied, “Man is an infinite circle with no circumference, but with a centre in one place. God too is an infinite circle with no circumference but with a centre at every place.” And how then does man become God? Man can only become God by expanding his consciousness; by seeing himself in every being, until there is no ‘you’, there is no ‘me’, there is only One. Why do we have to do it? Not because it is our responsibility or duty, but because He himself has chosen us. Therefore being what He wants is our destiny.

I thank Swami for giving us a wonderful intellect where great ideas are born; for giving us beautiful words through which we express our gratitude to Him. But I also pray to Him to give us the action that complements the great ideas born out of our intellect and the beautiful words we utter. I pray to Swami to give us the action that befits His students and His devotees.

I am reminded of a story where a student goes and asks his master, “master we know that God loves us for no reason, but how do we love God so much and why is it that I don’t have love for God?” The master says, “There are various forms of devotion or *bhakti*. The first one is called *manda bhakti* where we love God as a means to achieve some goal. But as soon as we achieve the goal, we lose interest in the means and thereby we lose interest in God. There is a higher form of devotion which is called *madhyama bhakti* where God Himself is the goal of our lives and we love God not because He is the one who will get us to the goal, but

because He Himself is the final goal.” Listening to this the student is very happy and he says, “Yes, now I know how to love God. God is the goal of my life.” The master looks at him smiles and says, “No. There is even a higher form of devotion which is called the *uttama bhakti*.” The student is baffled and the master asks him, “Tell me one thing: do you love yourself?”

“Yes master, I love myself”, replies the student.

“Why do you love yourself, do you have any reason for loving yourself?” asks the master. “There is no reason master. I love myself because I love myself”, replies the student. Then the master tells him that this is the supreme form of devotion. Treat God as your own Self and only then supreme devotion will emerge in our hearts.

Listening to the various names of mother, I am also reminded of another beautiful verse. One of the speakers said, “Mother herself is the power of consciousness, and She herself is consciousness”. Yes indeed, there are different names and different forms, but at the end of the day, there is only One, and we know that One by a very specific name. Five thousand years ago, the author of Mahabharata wrote that the human body has two dimensions: the mortal and the immortal. *Mrutyurapadyate mohat satyen aapadyate amrutham*; you follow the world and you embrace the mortal; and you follow ‘*Sathya*’, and you will embrace the immortal. I pray to Swami to give us the power to embrace Him in the true sense.

The Divine Shakti

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*Sarva swaroope sarveshe sarvashakti samanvite
Bhayabhyastraahino devi durge devi namostute*

O Mother! Thou art in the form of all things, thou does control all, thou art the embodiment of all power, do thou protect us from all fear. O! Remover of all ills, salutations to thee.

The word Navaratri stands for ‘nava’- nine and ‘ratri’- night. Night refers to darkness or ignorance, and Navaratri represents coming out of ignorance by turning on the light within us. The 416th and 417th names of Lalitha Devi are chichakti (chit shakti) and *chetana roopa*, meaning ‘the power of consciousness’ and ‘the pure consciousness’ itself.

The ultimate focus of these nine days of festivities is to realize the pure consciousness through prajnaana, the awareness and latent wisdom with which we are born. What is awareness? In the Gita Vahini, our beloved Bhagawan has said, “See Him in every being, be aware of Him at every moment of existence, be immersed in that bliss of awareness, and be merged in the relationship of profound love and devotion to Him.”

Once, Bhagawan was conversing with Prof. Hanumanthappa garu, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University and a few elderly devotees, on a moonlit night. They were looking at the moon and commenting on its beauty. Swami told them that the moon has intrigued many people, and man has spent a lot of time, money and energy, learning to travel to it. Swami then remarked that the moon was not so important. He then went on to say pointing at the heart of one of the older devotees, “Everything is here; everything is inside; look for it in your heart.” To emphasize this, Bhagawan began to wave His hand and in one instant, the devotees were startled to see the moon was pulled out from its place in the sky and fall into Swami’s hands, in a miniature form. Swami asked them not to touch it as it had too much energy.

Indeed, every creature in this creation is a manifestation of that divine energy. The third verse of Purusha Suktam: *eta vanasya mahima, ato jyayaguschha purushaha*, means that the whole manifest universe is His splendour, the supreme person transcends it very much. We adore God as *koti surya samaprabha*, meaning: “O! Lord, You are equal to the light of a crore suns. Can we see the light of one sun? The answer is no; then how can we see the light of a crore suns? The divine energy has no form. It is impossible for anyone to comprehend it, it is impossible for anyone to estimate it, measure it or to confine that limitless divinity into a human form.

I am reminded of a beautiful poem composed by Bhagawan with reference to Devi Bhagawatam: the stars are divine, the sun is God, the moon is God, water is God, heaven is God, paradise is God, mother is God, father is God, posterity is God, fortune is God, time is God, living creatures are divine, the individual is divine, birth is divine, sustenance is divine, creation is divine, energy is divine. The whole thing is nothing but divine, the one without a second. There is only one God without a second. This divinity is worshipped as Sri Devi in the Navaratri festival. Sri is

auspiciousness; Sri is also prakriti or nature. Devi is light, effulgence, radiance, brilliance. Therefore, Sri Devi means the effulgence of divinity pervading the entire prakriti. The 130th verse of the Sri Lalitha Sahasranamastotra extols Devi as: *icchashakti, jnanashakti, kriyashakti swaroopini*. Icchashakti is the power of thought, the sankalpa shakti, the will power to accomplish tasks. The mammoth service projects undertaken by Bhagawan, be it the setting up of educational institutions, the water supply projects or the super speciality hospitals are all the reflections of His divine sankalpa. Iccha also means desire and our Sai mata is Kameshwari.

He fulfils all our desires, showering on us bountiful happiness. In the year 1997, I was blessed to enact the role of Smt. Parvatamma garu in the serial Shirdi Sai Parthi Sai Divyakatha. The first shooting was scheduled to be for nearly ten days and on the second day, child actors were made to sit in the first line for the afternoon darshan. Since I was the shortest and youngest of all, I was made to sit near the gate. Everybody had something or the other to say to Bhagawan, but what could a six year old girl say to Bhagawan? I am neither Dhruva nor Prahlada not even Nachiketa to ask for *sat chit ananda*. My parents had told me that whenever I got an opportunity to speak to Bhagawan, I should express my earnest desire to study in His educational institutions. Thus, I wrote a letter, “Dear Swami, please give me a seat in your school; I wish to study in your college too. All my classmates should score first rank in the second standard half yearly examinations, *loka samasta sukhino bhavantu*. Take care of my parents and my grandparents. Sai ram Swami.” The darshan music began and I waited with bated breath. Lo and behold! As Hanuman exclaimed when he met Mother Sita, *kanden kanden kanden sitaye kandane raghava*, my mind too sprang up in joy seeing the beautiful form of Sai Annapurna.

*Nityanandakari varabhayakari soundarya ratnakari
nirdhootakhila ghora paavanakari pratyaksha maaheswari
praleyachala vamsa pavana kari kashipuradheswari
bhiksham dehi kriparvalambana kari
mata annapoorneswari , mata cha sayeeswari*

I stood up and stretched the letter thinking that He was not able to see me due to my short stature. As Swami walked past, He slowly raised His hand signalling me to wait, and then came closer, stood right next to me and took the letter. The divine look fell upon me as though the all-knowing one had already read the contents of my letter. Tears rolled down my cheeks and I was in bliss.

This scene remained etched in my mind's canvas. I went back home, to hear the glad news that eight of us had scored the first rank; seven, the second rank; six, the third rank and there were no fourth, fifth, sixth ranks and there was no failure at all. There was a difference of just two marks between the first and the second rankers and a difference of again two marks between the second and third ranks. This might be the fulfilment of a small material desire, but it meant a lot. I realized that Sai Mata was Kameshwari. Next, coming to *jnana shakti*, the power of knowledge, the sixth verse of Devi Suktam: *aham rudraya dhanuratanomi brahmadwisha sharavehanta vavoo*. This means: I bend the bow and string it to strike the foe of knowledge, the violent and the tormentor. Indeed, the divine shakti is the destroyer of *ajanan*a. We students often forget that mere textual knowledge is not true wisdom. What we experience by realizing ourselves is the true knowledge or *jnana*.

I had applied for admission to the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School. Since I was from matriculation background, I thought that the examination would be tough, and hence spent days and night with CBSE text books. On the examination day, the standard of

the paper turned out to be as difficult as expected. My only saviour was Sai Gayatri and I chanted the mantra and ticked the options. I went back home and wept till noon. I even went to the extent of scolding Swami that He had made me a buddhu, a fool. I told my parents that I would not attend my interview session in the evening. My father somehow instilled hope and faith in me. He asked me to give it a try, as the results are already fixed by Bhagawan. I was the ninth person to be called in, and when I saw the photograph of Swami inside the room, a mysterious divine power energised me. The revered Headmistress asked me the reason for my joining the school, leaving out good educational institutions in Chennai. For the next few moments I did not know what I was speaking. Here, I am reminded of the first stanza of the Medha Suktam: *Tvaya Justa Nudamana Duruktaan Bruhadvadeva Vidhate Suveeraah*. It means, "O! Goddess, we who are delighting in futile conversation may now, after your visit, delight in experiencing the supreme truth in all its might."

I felt I was in the same state. I was being transported from Tamasa to Jyothi (*Tamasoma jyothir gamaya*).

After a while I realised that I had spoken elaborately. I saw that all the teachers were very happy with my answers. The kind Headmistress told me by that I would get a seat. The story does not end here. We humans may forget our one-liners, but God does not forget to give back His lines. That night, in a dream, I saw Swami conversing with my family in the interview room. He came straight to me and said, kyon, buddhu ko *Buddha bana diya na*, which means "O buddhu (fool), I have turned you into a Buddha." Indeed Sai Gyaneshwari had made me a Buddha.

Next, coming to the aspect of Kriyashakti, the power of action or activity, in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has stressed upon Nishkama karma i.e., performing work without expecting any fruits in return, in the famous shloka, *Karmanye Va Adhikaraste*,

Ma Phaleshu Kadachana. In the first semester examination, I had expected a 5-point GPA. I was so overconfident that I had forgotten an A grade in one of the practical examinations. The results were announced and I was shell shocked to find that my GPA was 4.96, 0.04 less than 5. That night, I saw Swami in my dream conversing with me. He said, “Aye murkha, why do you bother about marks? After all, it is because of your negligence and overconfidence. Never expect anything out of any action you perform. See your .04 in my hands. Then He slowly raised His hand and then I saw 0.04 shining in all its glory on His hasta. He then continued to say that this 0.04 would remind me of my actions. In the famous keertanam composed by Mutthuswami Dikshitar set to *devagaandhar raga*, “Panchashat peetarupini,” the poet adores the mother as the *Bhava Raga Tala Vishwashini, bhaktajana phala pradayini*. Indeed our Sai Mata sets the tune to our lives. Loved by His bhaktas, He bestows upon us the best of all gifts, but it is our duty to carry out His mission. We must remember that Swami is with us here and now, and is enjoying all the proceedings of this beautiful Navaratri festival. The more we acknowledge His presence, the more we become one with Him.

*Anyatha Saranam Naasti Tvameeva Saranam Mama
Tasmaat Kaarunya Bhavene Raksha Raksha Saaeshwara
Raksha Raksha Saaeshwara*

The Alchemy of God's Love

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Festivals come to remind us to align our lives to God. At this point of time when we are all making a transition from loving His physical form to loving His omnipresent form, the reminders are painful, strangely healing and extremely instructive. There is a fundamental difference between the way we love God and the way God loves us. Love is always an extension of the Self, love is always expansion, but when we love God, it is tethered to the small self. There is a degree of selfishness and we prefix our love with a 'my'. If it is an object then it is 'my iPod' or 'my car' and if it is relationships, then it is 'my father', 'my mother', 'my campus' and 'my country'. At a subtler level, what I call as 'the sticky my', is when we refer to what we consider as our self, like 'my attitude', 'my beliefs', 'my value system' or 'my sense of right and wrong.

In contrast to this, God's love has no 'my'. It is absolutely free of selfishness. Therefore it is all-pervasive, complete, and expansive. Love is the fundamental building block of the universe. It is also the very nature of our beautiful Sai. Interesting things begin to happen when this beautiful Love comes in contact with our small love. Khalil Gibran says, When Love comes into your life, it will caress your tenderest branches and shake your roots in their clinging to the earth. When God's love comes into our lives, it satiates us; it makes us feel complete but it also challenges our

boundaries. It shakes our premises and the narrow beliefs in which we try to contain ourselves. I would like to speak about how this process unfolds. I would like to quote four personal instances to prove my point.

The first instance happened in Sai Kulwant hall when I was sitting for security duty and a group of Russian devotees sat next to me. It was a big group and a flaxen haired lady walked up to me and in very halting English told me that they were from Russia and that this was their first trip. They wanted an audience with Bhagawan. I told them that this not something which we can choose, however they could certainly try their luck. I then coached them saying that most probably Swami will ask you, 'Where are you from?' Then you should say 'Russia' and when He asks you, 'How many?' tell Him about the number of members in your group. They practiced these responses with me for sometime. Swami uses these situations to teach us important lessons. He came to them, smiled sweetly and asked, 'How many?' They said, 'Russia'. I got the message immediately. I felt Swami was asking me 'Do you think you can predict Me, please change your presumption'. Swami didn't leave it there, He went for Darshan, finished it and on His way back, He again came to the Russian group and asked, 'Where are you from?' And these people replied in unison, 'Thirty five'. This is a small incident but the lesson is that we all live in survivor mode or predictive mode, we need to map things about what can happen and we feel much more in control when we do that. Subtly, Swami starts to question that very premise. Of course, the mind is a very clever entity; it has different ways of supporting our ego.

Another favourite game that our mind plays is the way in which we limit ourselves, the way in which we define ourselves. God made man in the image of Himself; man also makes God in the image of himself. Unfortunately it is a very limiting image of our God. God tolerates this restrictive definition for a long time, but then forces us to question it at one point. This happened to me

when I was a student. Swami gave us an interview and He looked at me very sternly and said, “Too much anger”, all the while He was shaking his head disapprovingly. My mother interceded for me and said, “She is not so bad Swami; anger is not her particular fault.” Swami immediately added, “What do you know about her, ask her what she does in Anantapur when she gets angry. She goes to prayer hall and mops it from one end to another. Don’t you do that?” I replied, “Yes Swami”. I was thinking in my mind that doesn’t Swami tell us that when we get angry we should drink a glass of cold water or watch our angry face in the mirror and the anger will come down; what I was doing was merely an extension of the same theory. It was socially useful productive work and excellent anger management, so why should Swami not be happy with this. I meekly said, “I can’t possibly shout at people, so I mop the prayer hall.” He looked at me evenly and asked, “Why get angry at all?” This question stumped me.

Let us look at this question, ‘Why get angry at all?’ We get angry because we have expectations and when things don’t fall in place according to our expectations, we get angry. If people don’t fall in line with our plans, we feel thwarted and if they don’t treat us the way we expect to be treated, we get angry. So, He was challenging the basic premise of our understanding. We think that getting angry is a very normal human quality, so we must try to mitigate its effect on others. But here is Swami saying, ‘Why get angry at all?’ The quality of equanimity is very essential to love God.

The next incident that I will narrate happened years ago, when my parents met with a major accident. The deluge of love that flowed from Bhagawan washed away everything that we would normally face with a mishap like that. The pain, the trauma, the loss, everything vanished in that deluge of love. When my mother was trying to express her gratitude to Swami, He said something, which I think we can all learn from. He said, “Notice that there is

joy in sorrow and there is sorrow in joy.” The truth is that when we get extremely happy, at the back of our mind we know that this is a passing thing. When we get extremely upset, we hit the bottom of our sorrow; then we slowly submit and in the dawn of submission, joy flows in. We all have this experience innumerable number of times, and yet we try to invest our life in garnering positive outcomes and try to push negative outcomes away. We refuse to let life flow; we refuse to accept life with open arms. We should understand how subtle and beautiful God’s love is, and how it will inevitably change us if it comes into our life.

This is the last incident I would like to quote. It happened when I was a precocious, sixteen year old student. I joined the University at the Anantapur Campus. I was sitting on the steps at the back of the college and watching the beautiful red sun sinking down in the horizon. In those days, we used to have eucalyptus trees and the white branches of the trees were stretching towards the sky and it felt like they were supplicating to the heavens. This beautiful sight brought some lofty thoughts in my mind and I thought that this is the relationship between man and God. It is like the sun and the earth. The sun is billions of miles away but the warmth is real and felt by all beings on the earth. Suddenly all these beautiful thoughts dwindled into some selfish refrain and I began to think, what is the use of all these musings, I am just one roll number in this college, Swami doesn’t even know me. That evening my father (Prof. U. S. Rao) was called for an interview in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Swami asked my father in the interview, ‘Do you have a daughter in Anantapur?’

Father: “Yes Swami.”

Swami: “Does she draw?”

Father: “Yes Swami”.

Swami: “Tell her that Anantapur is full of my presence. And if she keeps her heart open she will sense, feel and receive my

presence.” This is a very important message. It is not restricted to Anantapur and it is true for all of us.

I will conclude by quoting a few lines from Tagore. He talks about the hopeless dependent love of a child on its mother and compares it with his love for God. A mother holds her child to herself and the child is happy because the child derives its sustenance from the mother. In the mother’s arms, lies security and in the mother’s love is the definition of life itself. When the mother pulls the child away from her, the child cries in pain but for the first time through its tear dimmed eyes, it sees the beautiful countenance of its mother. Somewhere, our love to Swami can be compared to this, hopelessly dependent love. We need Swami to make all our decisions, big or small, important or trivial. ‘Should I go home for holidays?’, we need to ask Swami. ‘Should I study this course or that course?’, we have to ask Swami. ‘Should I let the dentist pull my tooth out?’, I have to ask Swami. Everything was referred to Him and He allowed us to do so – so graciously, and so beautifully. He used to allow us to bring to Him, our smallest and the biggest desires, and invariably they were mere excuses to speak to Him. His lotus feet formed the goal of every activity. Whatever we did, we did it for a smile from Him. His attention was the only trophy to be won. We were hopelessly dependent and now when the pure Presence is pulled away from us, there will be pain, but I pray that He allows us to see His beautiful countenance in the entire universe.

Excerpts from Divine Discourses

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

In all the sacred rituals, sacred thoughts are present. The yagnas are not done here in a routine way with a feeling to do them because others are doing them. This yagna is done with complete sacrifice and without any desires or expectations whatsoever. It is only for the welfare of the humanity. The purpose of this yagna is to make everybody happy and blissful. We don't go by the famine or drought because they come and go and Bhagawan doesn't give scope for such narrow mindedness. Whatever Bhagawan does has an everlasting effect and is full of sacredness.

These days, people speak according to the situation and call it Sathya. They speak to different people in different ways, which will be different from what is there in their hearts. In fact, truth is changeless in the three periods of past, present and future. Are you talking the same thing that you spoke two days ago? You said something two days ago, something yesterday, which was altogether different from what you spoke today. Truth should not change in the three periods of time. How many have recognized truth today? Are there anyone who have understood the worldly truth? You don't listen to Bhagawan carefully and repeat it and say that it is not the truth. What is truth? People say that they have not understood the truth. Speak the truth that you have known. You have to unify the past, present and future. It is said that there is a difference in the three periods of time and three states. Therefore, the three periods of time, the sound and the actions should become one. This is the form of truth. We cannot

change truth from place to place but if under some circumstances it changes, it cannot be truth.

Truth is one but not two. How it is so? It is truth when the form, sound and place are same. Upanishads extolled this principle of truth in different ways. How have they described? Truth is beyond description, has no form and, bliss is the only evidence of truth. As you close your eyes and contemplate on *Sathya*, unknowingly you start smiling. Where this smile has come? It has come from within you. What is the cause for this *ananda*? So long as you are dual minded you cannot be blissful. God is the source of *ananda*. You think that this bliss has come from within you but it is said that happiness is union with God. The happiness which one gets when one unites with God is permanent. But the happiness you get otherwise will last only for a moment. It cannot be called *ananda* if it goes on changing. Truth is always changeless.

Whether you have known it or not, Bhagawan is always happy, always smiling. Have you ever seen Him with castor oil face? No, Bhagawan is never serious but full of bliss. Where from this *ananda* comes? The source is the reflection of the inner feelings. Some people are blissful at some times and serious at other times. These changes in the people can be noticed very easily. You should be in such a way that no one can notice the changes in you; this is real truth.

Sathya cannot be changed and cannot be hidden even if one wants to hide it. One cannot catch hold of it; it cannot be kept at a place. One cannot even reach it or acquire it. This is true bliss or *ananda*.

11 and 14 October 2002, Prasanthi Nilayam

Day 7 | 6 October 2011

Introduction

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Vijayadashami is known to people across the length and breadth of this country by different names, but is celebrated by every single state of this great land. In north it is called as Dashahara, meaning remover (*Hara*) of bad fate (*Dasha*). This is the day according to the Ramayana, when Lord Rama vanquished the ten headed demon king Ravana. Different scholars have given different interpretations for these ten heads of Ravana. Some say that they symbolize the *Arishadvargas*, i.e. *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha*, *Mada* and *Matsarya* and the four aspects of mind namely *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chitta* and *Ahankara*. The destruction of the ten heads of Ravana is symbolic of the destruction of these ten negative tendencies. But Bhagawan has often said that the ten heads of Ravana are symbolic and they didn't exist in reality. Bhagawan said that these ten heads are symbolic of his mastery over the four Vedas and the six Shastras. Ravana, who was the master of the sixty-four forms of Vidya, gave in to the vice of lust. Though he had mastered the sixty-four Vidyas, he was not able to conquer this one evil tendency within him. On the other hand, Bhagawan says that Rama had mastered thirty-two forms of Vidya, but He practiced what he learnt which Ravana didn't do and succumbed to his negativities. Therefore, Ravana was a 'great'

man, but Rama was a 'good' man. Vijayadashami symbolizes the victory of goodness over evil for which Rama is a supreme example. In North India, this victory is celebrated by burning the effigies of Ravana, his brother Kumbhakarna and his son Meghanada Indrajeet.

The next aspect of this festival is celebrated in the eastern part of India. Goddess Adi Shakti is worshipped in the form of Durga and this day is celebrated as the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura. The demons in their ever-insatiable greed, had conquered the heavens and evicted the Devas from their abode. All the Devas then went to the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara and pleaded, "O Lord! If we are evicted from our residence, then how are we going to discharge our duties? Creation will lose its balance." At that time, from the triune principle, emerged the supreme form of Adi Shakti – Durga, the most effulgent and the unconquerable one. There was a war for nine nights and nine days between Goddess Durga and the demon Mahishasura. On the tenth day, the day of Vijayadashami, Durga killed Mahishasura. This festival is celebrated as Durgotsava in the eastern part of India. In fact, in Durga Saptashati, the seven hundred verses glorifying the Mother Goddess, extols in great detail the exploits of Goddess Durga, how She vanquished demons like *Dhoomralochana*, *Chanda*, *Munda*, *Raktabeeja*, *Shumbha* and *Nishumbha*. Durga Saptashati is studied by scholars and devotees across the country and is also as a part of *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* at Prasanthi Nilayam.

As per the Mahabharata, this day also symbolizes the end of *Agnyata Vaasa* of the Pandavas, which was to fulfill the wager as per the game of dice. The wager was that the losing side will go for twelve years of *Vana Vaasa*, i.e. living in the forest, and one year of *Agnyata Vaasa* which meant living incognito. After completion of twelve years in the forest, the Pandavas went to the kingdom of Virata for *Agnyata Vaasa*, and after completing one

year, it was on the Vijayadashami day that they took back their weapons from the tree, where they had hidden them, and started the preparations for the Mahabharata war – the *Dharma Yuddha* – the fight between righteousness (*Dharma*) and negative tendencies (*Adharma*).

What is the inner significance in all these three episodes from the scriptures? The culture of Bharat is highly sacred and its scriptures are a treasure house of wisdom. The story of the heroes in these epics has a message for each one of us in our lives. Each festival has a deeper inner significance like the Navaratri and the Vijayadashami festivals. While we celebrate these festivals for ten days, the actual war within each one of us, between the evil and negative tendencies, the *Vaasanas*, and our virtues and good tendencies, the *Samskaras*, goes on ceaselessly. Whenever the bad *Vaasana* raises its ugly hood, the good *Samskaras* help us to subdue them and move ahead on the path of righteousness. So, whether it is the war between Rama and Ravana, Durga and Mahishasura, Pandavas and Kauravas, or even the *Deva Asura Sangrama*; all of these are a reminder to us that we too have to fight this battle day after day and emerge victorious. The day we emerge victorious, righteous and pure after vanquishing our negative tendencies, that day will be the Vijayadashami day for each one of us.

Drawing an analogy between life and dramatics, Bhagawan says, “One has to retire behind the curtains sooner or later (symbolizing death), so while on the stage (symbolizing lifetime), win the esteem of the director (symbolizing God) by playing your role to His satisfaction, trying not to spoil His play by your lipping or the slipping of words. Be like the tortoise, which can live on water or land with equal comfort. That is to say, cultivate the inner calm which will help you to concentrate on God, whether you are in the midst of people or alone.”

On one occasion, a devotee asked Bhagawan, “Swami, there is so much negativity in this world, when will all this end?” After a poignant silence Bhagawan said, “Negative and positive are two sides of the same coin; they will always co-exist. But pray to God that you are always on the side of righteousness. If you are always on the side of righteousness, I assure you that you will always emerge victorious.” When the Lord is on our side, we should not have a doubt about our victory in this battle across lifetimes, as He has promised all of us now and even on the battlefield of Kurukshetra five thousand years ago:

*Yatra Yogeshwara Krishna Yatra Partho Dhanurdharaha
Tatra Shrivijayobhutir Dhruva Nitir Matirmama*

When the Lord is present and so is his devotee on the right path, then there is no doubt that the Goddess of victory (*Vijayashri*) will ever be present.

This is the message of the Lord to all of us on this auspicious day of Vijayadashami.

This day is highly blessed, as so many incarnations have used this day as a landmark event in their lives. This is the day known as the *Seemalonghan* (crossing the boundary) day; the day when the previous incarnation of Sai Baba at Shirdi gave up the physical form and became one with His Divine cosmic form. It was on this occasion, when Baba at Shirdi gave nine coins symbolizing the nine forms of devotion, the Nava Vidha Bhakti, to Laxmibai Shinde, an ideal devotee of Shirdi Baba. We have been blessed with the very first path of the nine forms of devotion through Shravanam for all the seven days of the *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna* and *Prasanthi Vidwan Maha Sabha*. We are grateful to Bhagawan for blessing us so and pray that we continue to be recipients of His boundless grace and bounteous blessings.

Gratitude to the Physical Mother, the Motherland and the Divine Mother

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“Ye! Divinities on earth! Sinners!” These were the most powerful words uttered by Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of World’s Religions that was held in the city of Chicago in the year 1893. The first four words ‘Ye! Divinities on earth!’ thundered into being new a gospel of fearlessness and joy and with the last word ‘sinners’, he struck a mighty blow to the soul degenerating philosophies that existed until then. Swami Vivekananda and many other personalities, who strived and sacrificed their life for the refinement of mankind, were all influenced by three factors and they are, love for the physical Mother, the Deha Mata; love for the Motherland, the Desha Mata; and the love for the Divine Mother, Dhaiva Mata.

Speaking about the love for Deha Mata, there is this exceptional case of Jagatguru Shankaracharya. He renounced his family and all the worldly relationships and led the life of a Sanyasi. But when his mother Aryamba was on her death bed, he broke all the vows of Sanyasa, rushed to her side and there sitting by her side,

he was no more the Jagatguru who attained the Sarvagna Peetha, no more the one who proclaimed the Advaita philosophy, he was but the little child of mother Aryamba. Looking lovingly into his mother's face he sings the Matru Panchakam, wherein he says:

*Aasthaam tavadeeyam prasoothi samaye durvara soola vyadha,
Nairuchyam thanu soshanam malamayee sayya cha samvatsaree,
Ekasyapi na garbha bara bharana klesasya yasya kshamo dhatum,
Nishkruthi runnathopi thanaya tasya janyai namaha.*

“Oh mother mine, with clenched teeth bore thou the excruciating pain, when I was born to you, shared thou the bed made dirty by me for a year, and thine body became thin and painful, during those nine months that you bore me, for all these in return, Oh! Mother dearest, I can never compensate, even by my becoming great, hence I bow down to feet.”

Love for the physical mother was the highlight and the central theme of Swami's life. Swami once said, “Food, head, and blood are gifts from parents. It is enough if you engage yourself in activities that would satisfy your mother, and that will confer great blessings on you.” During the Navaratri days, we worship the Divinity as Mother Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, but if we please our physical mother; our Deha Mata, it will please the Divine Mother, as our Deha Mata is verily the embodiment of the Divine Mother.

Love for one's own mother is akin to the love for one's motherland. This sacred land of Bharat is chosen by the Avatar Himself for His Divine mission. I am reminded of an incident which happened a few years ago.

Once, Swami gave an interview to a group of youth who had come from Hyderabad. One among them asked Swami, “Swami! In the past You have taken many Avatars in this land of Bharat, why is it that You take birth again and again only in this land”?

To this, Swami replied, “You said that I have taken birth in this land in the past, not only that, even in future also, I will take birth in this land of Bharat only.” These are the words uttered by the Lord Himself. What other reason do we need to love this sacred land of Bharat. I see my motherland walking with her own majestic steps to fulfil her glorious destiny i.e. the regeneration of man; the brute, to man; the God. Swami says that the devotion to the motherland is another form of devotion to God Himself. He even says that one should be ready to sacrifice even life for the sake of motherland.

I am reminded of another incident that happened in the pre-independence period. Under the British rule, it was illegal to carry any other flag other than the British flag. But a group of brave young men took out a rally with the Indian flag and the police shot down the man who was carrying the flag. As he fell down, he passed on the flag to the next man who also met with the same fate. In this way, all of them bared their chests to the bullets and as they fell, they kept passing on the flag. In the end, there stood a little girl holding the flagpole, facing the entire battalion of policemen. Even she was not spared and as the bullets pierced through her heart, she didn't want the honour of her country to succumb to the shameless conquest of bullets. So she struck the flagpole deep into her heart so that even as her body lay motionless on the ground, the flag; the honour of the sacred land of Bharat fluttered jubilantly in the air.

It is said that the one who doesn't know when to die, doesn't know how to live. But that girl knew how to live and that is why she sacrificed her life at the altar of her motherland. What is the first step in the worship of motherland? Sri Aurobindo says, “Do you feel that millions are starving today? Do you feel that millions have been starving for ages? Feel! Feel my countrymen, feel for the poor and the downtrodden, feel till your heart stops, feel till

your brain reels and till you think you will go mad. That is the first step to become a patriot.”

This first step was shown to us by none other than Yudhisthira himself in the story of Yaksha prashna in Mahabharata. He lost all his brothers as they didn't answer the questions asked by the Yaksha before taking water from his pond. The Yaksha was mighty pleased when Yudhisthira answered all the questions asked by the Yaksha and said that he will bring back to life any one of the four brothers of Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira had a choice and instead of choosing Bhima or Arjuna, who are his own brothers, the sons of mother Kunti, but he chose Nakula, his step brother and son of mother Madri. While making this choice, he said that Madri is equally his mother as Kunti, so let one of Madri's sons also live while he lives. Today we also have a choice to make, when we see thousands of half fed, half clothed men around us. The choice to be made is to reduce our luxuries and help the poor man sitting on the street, who is the very reflection of the Divinity that we worship here. Let us also like Yudhisthira make a choice and allow others to live, as all are the children of the same God. This is the true love for the motherland and this is how we have to worship our motherland. When we have this type of love for the Deha Mata and the Desha Mata, we receive the love and grace of the Divine Mother. Who can comprehend the love of the Divine Mother? Sri Adi Shankaracharya in his celebrated Soundarya Lahari says:

*Bhavani tvam daase mayi vitara drustim sa karunam
Yadi statum vanchan kathayate bhavani tvam idi
Tadeiva tvam tasmai dishase nija sayujya padavim*

“O! Mother, be pleased to have a compassionate glance on me, Your dear child,” he begins by saying ‘O! Mother’ and even before he finishes the sentence she confers on him the Sayujya Padavi. Such is the love that Mother Sai has for her children.

At this point I wish to narrate an incident that happened on 11th January 1999 during the Annual Sports & Cultural meet. That year students had planned to perform acrobatics stunts on huge scaffoldings placed on a moving truck. On the morning of January 11th, when Swami entered the stadium, He saw that one of the rods was not fitted properly and He knew that His students will suffer major head and spinal injuries if they were to perform on that day. But Swami, the loving Mother He is, decided to save His children, so He took upon Himself that injury. And this is how that Divine Leela unfolded.

He entered the stadium and asked the senior devotee, who was driving His chariot, to stop the chariot, apparently to speak to the vice-chancellor. But then the devotee, who was driving the chariot, accidentally lifted his foot from the accelerator that resulted in a violent jerk. As a result, Swami fell down in the chariot and suffered injuries to head, hands and spinal column. The cut on Swami's hand was deep like a gash produced by a knife. Without any delay, He got up and started blessing the devotees. He walked up to the dais without anyone noticing His injuries. Meanwhile, Swami's robe was getting drenched in blood, but He was concerned that devotees may get to know about this, so, He kept rushing to the bathroom to wash off the blood. With such an excruciating pain, He sat there on the stage for five long hours watching His children perform and He even came down to the ground many times to pose for photographs with the students. Nobody knew of this, until He revealed it on 14th of January during the prize distribution ceremony.

If the definition of God is infinite love, then Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is definitely, that almighty Lord for His students, because there is no rationale or logic behind His love. It is love just for the sake of Love. Can we compare this love to the Love of a thousand mothers? No! It will be like comparing Mount Everest to an ant hill.

Dear Swami, we cannot comprehend the love which you have for us because we are still the little children sitting on thy lap waiting to be fed lovingly by thy hands.

Let me conclude with prayer sung by of Swami Vivekananda:

*Like to the playing of a little child is every attitude of mine to Thee,
Even at times I dare be angered at Thee,
And yet there in the greyest gloom of the darkest night,
With speechless mouth and tearful eyes,
Thou standeth in front of me and Thy sweet face,
Stoops down with a loving look on the face of mine.
Then at Thy feet I fall on bended knee,
And I crave no pardon at Thy gentle hands,
as Thou art never angry with Thy son.
Who else with all my foolish freaks would bear!
Thou art my master, I am Thou and Thou my Lord, art I.*

His boundless Benediction

Sanjay Sahni

Director, Brindavan Campus, SSSIHL

*Saat samandh ki masi karoon, lekhani sab bana rayi
Dharti sab kagaz karoon, Sai gun likha na jayi*

This is the insight which the seers and saints of our country have given us. Even if we take the waters of the seven oceans and convert it into ink, even if we were to take the wood of all the forests of planet earth and make them the instruments of writing, even if we have to transform the entire face of earth into a sheet of paper, even then we will not be able to write the story of the Lord. *Yato vaccho nivartante aprapya mansa saba.* He who is beyond the grasp of human words; He who is beyond the ken of human mind; how can we even dare to speak about Him. Dr. Bhagavantam, former Director of Indian Institute of Science and translator of Bhagawan's discourses mentioned to Bhagawan, "Swami, I have lived so many years with you, yet I am not able to understand you." Pat came the reply from Bhagawan, "You have lived longer number of years with yourself. First understand yourself. Then you can hope to understand Me."

Vijayadashami has many connotations for all of us, but I would like to underline one connotation that was not mentioned. It was thirty years ago on this momentous Vijayadashami day that for

the first time Bhagawan made a public announcement that the colleges of Prasanthi Nilayam and Anantapur are being graduated to the status of a university. To the youth, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was a benevolent gift for which the students of the institutions and all the alumni shall be eternal grateful.

What was Bhagawan's most closely guarded secret? Is it that He is God? No, He publicly announced on any number of occasions that He is Divine. Is it that we are God? Every discourse of His would invariably begin with the exhortation, 'Divya atma swaroopulara'. Then what is his most closely guarded secret? The most closely guarded secret of Bhagawan is how much He loves each one of us. If you think that you knew how much He loved you, you have not seen even the tip of the iceberg. I was a personal witness on any number of occasions to His unfathomable and unconditional love.

Let me share one such experience with all of you. I had come on an official assignment to Prasanthi Nilayam from Brindavan, Bangalore. In the first few interactions, Bhagawan mentioned to me that He will give me something before I leave. I finished my work, took leave of Him and I was sitting there one morning near the first pillar, in front of the interview room in the mandir. He came, saw all of us and walked off towards the ladies side, moving over to the Poornachandra auditorium where He was residing. He crossed the length where the Primary school students sit, turned right towards the other side and suddenly took an about turn. All the devotees on the ladies side started laughing spontaneously. Bhagawan says, "Love My uncertainty." He walked all the way back to the mandir and even as He climbed up the slope, He called me by name and took me inside. He gave me an envelope that contained a letter written by Him to one of His students. Till today that student doesn't know that Bhagawan retraced His steps all the way just to send a letter to him at Brindavan. How can we describe that unfathomable love?

Many people ask me, “How are the students in Brindavan?” He who took care of the staff and students for the last forty years of the existence of Brindavan; even today is taking care of all of us. The way He is connecting to the students and teachers is something amazing. Let me share three instances to give you a glimpse of our daily experience.

The first experience is of a student who was just admitted into the campus. He was delighted to join Bhagawan’s blessed university but at the same time missing Him acutely. For a few days, the custodian of our ashram was keeping a huge photograph of Bhagawan in front of the Trayee mandir door. Every evening a lamp would be lit there. This student would compose poems and sit next to the photograph and sing his heart out, every time crying that he missed Bhagawan. Near the photograph there is a railing and on it there is a metal piece. One day on the metal piece he saw an orange reflection. Surprised, he looked to his right. On the metal piece on the railing, again he saw an orange reflection. He was curious to know its origin and this time he turned behind. Lo and behold! Standing right in front of him was Bhagawan with both His hands raised, blessing him. When the boy narrated to the warden of the hostel and myself this experience, we felt that our whole campus is blessed.

Let us go to the experience of the second student. One of the most beautiful experiences of students in Brindavan is to go around Bhagawan’s mandir, which is a unique privilege they have been enjoying for decades. One evening, this student was going around and thinking to himself that anyway Swami is not here, why he should go around Trayee. That night, Bhagawan came in his dream and gave him darshan in his own bedroom in Trayee mandir and said, “Fellow! You are saying that I am not here in Brindavan. Today at a particular time, you were going round and this is what you were thinking.” Even in a dream, Bhagawan gave

him a sound scolding. I said to myself that this is vintage Swami who has not changed even a bit.

The experience of the third student is as follows: On the third Sunday of every month, the alumni of our university who are residing in Bangalore organize in Brindavan ashram a beautiful programme named Sai Samarpan. It was with an inspiration that they should recreate a Trayee session for the current students. In the month of June, we had Prof. Anil Kumar addressing our students. As he was addressing, there was one student sitting in the assembly, looking at Swami's chair, fully focussed, visualizing that Swami is seated on the chair. Suddenly the feeling became very intense and he said, "Swami! If at this moment it is really true that you are sitting on this chair, the flower on the chair should fall." The next instant, all the three flowers on the chair fell down. That is Bhagawan's love for his children. Who are you Bhagawan? How can we know you except when you reveal yourself to us.

The last nine days have been an adoration of the divine mother; an adoration where we use the means of Vedic chanting to adore the Veda Purusha. I was telling the students that we adore the Veda Mata because she is the one who will lead you to Veda Purusha. Bhagawan used to say that there is nobody who can understand Him. Only those who study the Vedas and the shastras can get a glimpse into His reality.

It was a beautiful morning in Kodaikanal and after breakfast, Swami went upstairs and we were all seated around him. He was in a jovial mood; He picked up a student, asked the student to stand next to Him. Bhagawan's physical frame is 5 feet 3 inches and this boy was shorter than Swami. Swami asked the boy, "Who is bigger?" We were all amused at this leela of Bhagawan. The boy replied, "Swami you are taller." Swami immediately corrected and said, "No, I am smaller than you, Anoraneeyan

Mahatmaheyan, I am smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest.” In one sentence Bhagawan revealed Himself. How do you grasp somebody who is smaller than the smallest?

Recently in September, Dr. A.N. Safaya addressed the students in the Sai Samarpan function. He shared an experience, which I would like to reiterate lest our students forget its significance. Those were the early days and Dr. Safaya used to smoke a pipe. It was fashionable to do so in the elite society of Delhi at that point of time. One day, he went to his friend's house to attend the satsang of a holy person. The satsang bored Dr. Safaya as this person spoke for more than an hour. As he came out, he wanted to smoke his pipe. Before coming out of the room, this gentleman gave cashew nuts as prasadam to him. Dr. Safaya put them into the pocket and took out the pipe to smoke. To his utter dismay he found that he was not able to smoke because a cashew nut had gone into the pipe. He tried to extricate it but was unable to do so. He returned home, took a knife and tried to remove it. The cashew nut didn't come out. Instead, the pipe broke. When the pipe broke, it suddenly struck him that there is a message for him here that Bhagawan did not want him to indulge in smoking. If God wants to transform your life, He can come in the form of a cashew nut. I am smaller than the smallest. But, He who is smaller than the smallest is also bigger than the biggest. This was the lesson that the great Maharaja Bali Chakravarti realized.

The Lord came to him as a dwarf and emperor Bali asked, “My dear young one, what can I give you.” The dwarf said that he wanted just three paces of land, as much as he can step on. Emperor Bali said, “That is all! Granted,” but to his astonishment he found that the little dwarf Vamana grew into a gigantic figure. With one step, he crossed the earth and with the second step he measured the skies and there was no place left for the third step. He asked emperor Bali where he should put his third step. Bali did the wisest thing any man can do. He offered his head to the

Lord and the Lord stepped on him, blessed him and redeemed him. What is the message this story has for all of us? There are many big things in life but the biggest thing is ego. Offer it to the Lord and your life will be redeemed.

Prof. V. K. Gokak, the first Vice-chancellor of our University, went to USA and saw the intensity of the devotion of the devotees there. He said that this is the Viswa Roopa darshan of Bhagawan. On the other side of the globe, people adore, with so much of intensity someone, someone who grew up in a place that was described as a stone's throw from Stone Age. Can anybody transform Puttapparthi into Prasanthi Nilayam, the way it is today with the best of amenities like world-class healthcare or world-class educare? It is possible only because of the divine will of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

I went to Bali, Indonesia a few months ago to attend a youth conference. After the conference was over, we were taken to the Sai centre of Bali, Denpasar and somebody started telling me the story of the Sai centre. There was an architect who was employed to construct this beautiful mandir. The architect was totally unaware of Bhagawan. After the construction was over, the Sai devotees installed a huge picture of Bhagawan at the altar. When the architect saw the beautiful picture he said, "O! Is this the person for whom you have constructed this building?" The devotees answered in the affirmative and asked the reason for this question. The architect said, "This is the man who was coming and instructing me daily about what I should do and what I should not do about the building construction." Where is Puttapparthi and where is Bali, but Bhagawan is already there giving instructions about the construction of His mandir to the architect. He didn't go to the devotees but went to the architect to instruct him about the construction of his mandir. This is Bhagawan's Vishwa Roopa.

Last week, I was in Muscat, Oman. Devotees of Oman refer to their country with great religious fervour. They say, “Our country name begins with Om and if you reverse the name it becomes ‘Namo’. Om Namo, which is Oman for us. If you think that wearing white is a privilege, then all the citizens of Oman, especially the men folk wear this dress. We were deliberating on human values and a very unique event took place, which is what the glory of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is. In an Islamic country, the Ministry of Education asked the Sai group (Serve and Inspire group as it is called), what it had to offer to Oman in its fortieth year of renaissance, a year in which the country's modern development started?

The devotees said that they would conduct forty workshops on human values for the teachers of the Omanese schools. The function was presided over by the Minister of Education and after my talk was over, she got up to go for another engagement but again sat down. When the officials again reminded her, she very reluctantly got up saying, “I know what I am going to miss, I don’t want to go but what shall I do?” After the whole function was over, the devotees who organized this function received the following message from the Director General of private education:

Dear all,

I don't have the exact words to express my gratitude to you. Your efforts are beyond my 'thank you' words. The human values were very clear in today's event where each and every one was working in harmony with the others, filled up with love and caring. Thanks for being there today and for being the way you are.

Aisha-ul-Balushi
Director General of Private Education, Sultanate of Oman

Bhagawan throughout His life lived his message; now it is our turn to imbibe that message and take it to the wide world and tell them that we have seen God that we have lived with God; that is the greatest redemption for all our lives. On this auspicious occasion of Vijayadashami day, I take this opportunity to express to our beloved Bhagawan our heartfelt gratitude, for not only having given us this life but more importantly for showing us the way to live and the way to reach Him.

Excerpt from Divine Discourse

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

O! Students, you think that your parents love you; your wife and children love you? No the supreme love can be found only with God. Parents love you expecting that you will earn and support them in their old age. Wife and children also love for the same reason. But it is only God who loves you without selfishness and self-interest hence offer your bad qualities to him as only he will receive those things and no one else.

If we have a hundred rupee currency note which is dirty and useless and not good to look at even, beggar will not accept that note, the road sweeper will not pick up the note when he comes to remove the garbage; but the same note if surrendered to RBI, they will accept that note and give one new and fresh note. In the similar way, nobody will accept this dirty mind like the dirty note, be it the father, mother, wife, son or daughter; but God in the form of RBI accepts the note and gives a clean note to you. Hence God is our reserve bank which is '*godraize*' almirah, where we can keep our bad qualities and be happy, making even the world happy.

Don't keep anything with you, don't offer it to anyone else but offer it to God saying, "O! God, I do everything to please you and offer everything to you:

*twameva mata cha pita twameva,
twameva bandhuscha sakha twameva,
twameva vidya dravinam twameva
twameva sarvam mama deva deva.*

Offer everything to God who is your mother, father, friend and everything. What is the meaning of this surrender or offering? It doesn't mean sitting idle like a lazy fellow, but offering every karma to God. As a result, the rewards will be conferred by Him onto you. One should write the letter, put it in a cover and post the letter; our work ends there. The cover will be transported to America or Japan on its own by the postal department without you thinking about it. The letter will go on its own accord from Bombay to New York. In the same way, do your duty and offer it to God like posting the cover, God will certainly give the deserving reward. This faith is lacking in today's man. This faith is very essential. Without *vishwasa* the faith, there is no *swasa* i.e. breath. The faith should be saturated with love as without love this faith is useless.

A guru used to stay in an ashram in a forest near a village and a student used to go to him every morning and returned every evening. The guru used to say:

*mata nasti pita nasti
nasti bandhu sahodaraha,
artham nasti gruham nasti
tasmad jagruta jagruta.*

This means there is no father, no mother, no wealth, no family, no house whatsoever, so be careful, be careful. He also used to say:

*janma dukham jara dukham
jaaya dukham punaha punaha,
anta kaale maha dukham
tasmāt jagruta jagruta.*

Be careful, birth is misery, life is misery, wife is misery death is misery again and again. The student thought that these teachings are applicable to the preceptor and not to people like him. This may be for others but not for my parents and wife. My wife doesn't eat food if I don't go home, and my parents wait for me at the doorstep when don't return home. They love me so much hence this shloka is meaningless to my family. The guru said that he would show from direct experience that what he is telling is correct. The guru gave a pill to the disciple and told him to swallow it as soon as he reaches home. As a result, you will fall down unconscious but you will be able to hear whatever everyone is speaking. You will look like a dead person to the outside world and then you will be able to understand the truth. The guru said it is like a test for you. The present day students feel 'test is their taste' as they have so many tests like the first semester, second semester and so on.

The student went to his house, took the pill and fell unconscious. The mother came, called the father and starting wailing that her son is no more. In the meantime, the wife came running and started crying and cursing her fate. Even at that time the wife was bothered about her security. All the people gathered and sympathized with the family members saying that the boy had a very spiritual bent of mind. The guru came at the appropriate time and asked the mother, "Why do you cry like this?" The mother replied, "Alas! My son died today that why I am crying." The preceptor next asked the wife, "Why are you crying?" The Wife replied, "The person who died was my husband, what will happen to me?"

The guru asked the father to get a tumbler of water and closing his eyes pretended that he is doing some prayer and declared, “whomsoever here drinks this water will die and this fellow will get up.” He took the water first to the wife and asked her to drink it as she is her better half. The wife replied, “I am the only daughter of my parents and if I die, my parents will not be able to live, so I am not prepared to drink this water.” The guru trying to negotiate, added, “even if you die, your husband will come back to life”. The wife said, “that fellow is anyway dead and gone so I am not ready to go for him.” The preceptor asked the mother, “Are you ready to drink?” The mother said, “One of the daughters has come for delivery and two more are to be married, leaving all these responsibilities how can I die?”

Next the guru approached the father and asked him to drink the water. The father thought for a while and replied, “I am the head of this family, already my daughter-in-law has become widow and if I go, even my wife will become a widow, there won’t be a man left to take care of the house, hence how can I die?” The family members went inside and hit upon a master plan. They came out and requested the guru, “O! Swami, you are so compassionate, you have no responsibilities so why don’t you drink this water and save this man. We will certainly construct a marble Samadhi in your memory.”

At this moment, water was sprinkled and the disciple got up. The guru asked the disciple that all of them asked him to die in their place. Therefore, the whole world is illusion.

*janma dukham jara dukham
jaaya dukham punaha punaha,
anta kaale maha dukham
tasmad jagruta jagruta.”*

Be careful. Birth is misery, life is misery, wife is misery, and death is misery, again and again. Because of the body attachment you love the body, which is out of selfishness. God is the only one who is selfless, therefore, love that God and then love your relatives. Whatever good work you do, take it as God's work.

11 July 1995, Prasanthi Nilayam



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