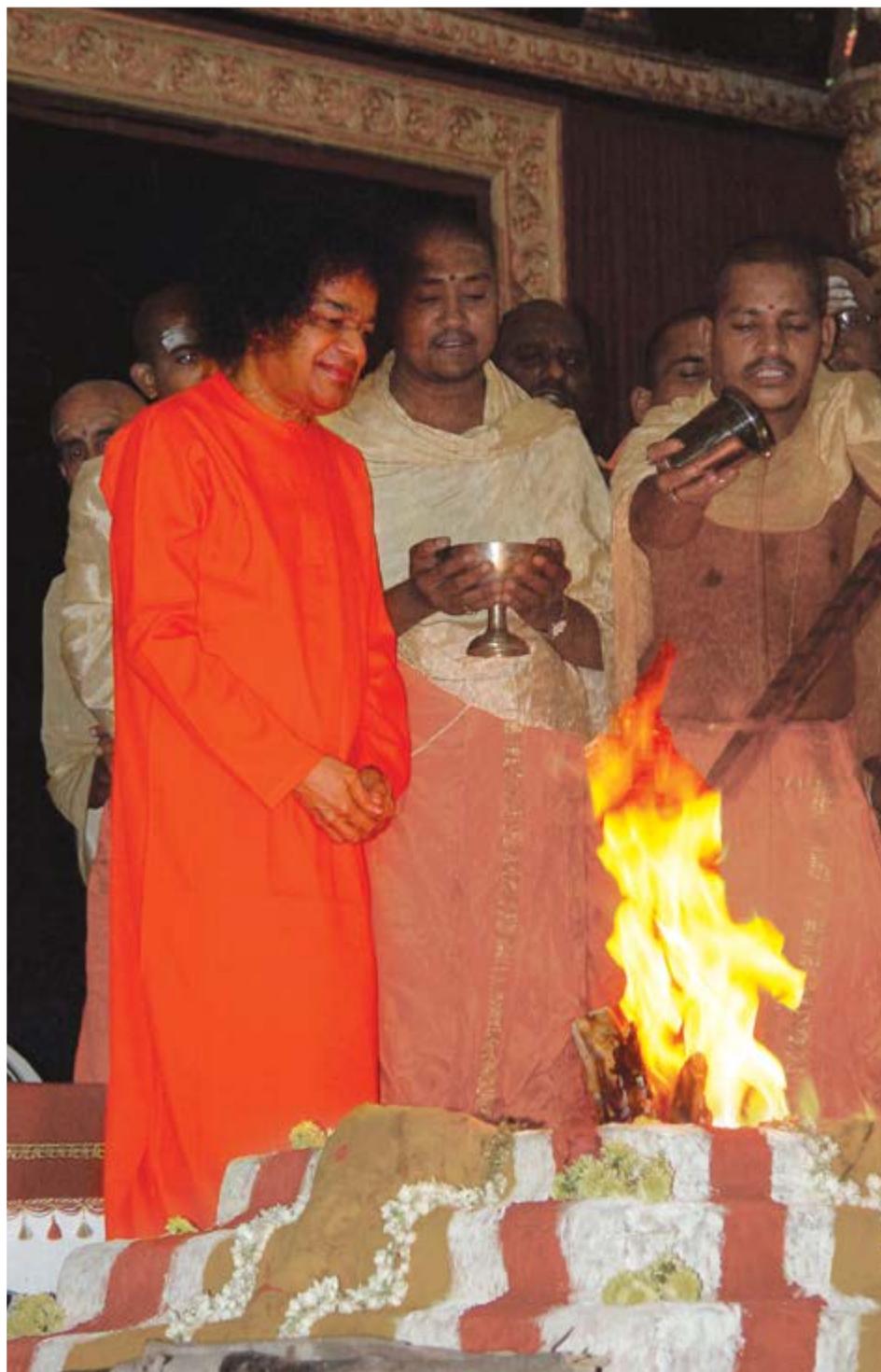




SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING
(Deemed to be University)

PRASANTHI VIDWAN MAHASABHA

2012





SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

PRASANTHI VIDWAN MAHASABHA

18-24 Oct 2012 | Prasanthi Nilayam

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Dedicated to our Beloved Master,
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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 Vijaya Dasami, 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 is a compilation of all the talks delivered during the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha in 2012, that took place from 18 to 24 October. Relevant transcripts of excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Divine discourses are also included.

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Bhagawan Baba on Dasara

On several 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. 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 fends the universe, they can easily win and reach their goal. 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 gathered here to enjoy the supreme delight in the holy presence of the Lord and to recognise the unity of all in the Divine Atmic splendour. 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.

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 the 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. Vijaya Dasami was the day on which they retrieved their weapons from the tree and used them to achieve victory in battle over the Kauravas. In the Treta Yuga, Sri Rama's coronation, after his victorious return to Ayodhya from Lanka, was performed on the Vijaya Dasami day.

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, and taking on the Rajasic quality, seeks to destroy the evil elements. This is the inner meaning of the Dasara festival.



Inner Meaning of Devi Worship on Dasara

When the Divine Goddess is in a dreadful rage to destroy the wicked elements, she assumes a fearful form. To pacify the dreadful 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.





Introduction

Prof. A Anantha Raman

Professor (Hon.), Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL

Legend has it that the celebrations of Dasara signify the victory of *devas* over *asuras*. Euphemistically, it is the triumph of righteousness over unrighteousness. Prasanthi Nilayam used to reach the heights of grandeur during the tenth day of the Navaratri festival, when the Veda Purusha Himself would accept the Poornahuti. It is the second year that we are performing the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna in the physical absence of that Veda Purusha, who presided over this auspicious festival 1961 onwards. Right from the first year, Bhagawan used to prescribe that the evening sessions of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha – which was the archetype assembly of the learned who came to present their spiritual and other wisdom to the devout – commenced at the residence of the Raja of Venkatagiri (at that point in time).

In the initial years, until the late 1980s, Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was a collection of speeches made by these learned men, and not infrequently they also had a special feast of Swami's discourses along with these programmes. Thereafter, after a gap of a few years starting in the late 1980s, when the event started again in 1993, Swami added to the list of speakers, His own students, staff and senior devotees; and since they year 2000 this group of students, staff and senior devotees was the predominant group that was giving a talk here in the evenings. The event was still labeled as Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha and Swami Himself provided the answer as to why it is still called as the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha where only His students and teachers speak.

He had the habit of summoning one of His teachers suddenly to speak on one of these occasions. Sometime in early 2000, it was my turn to be summoned. I was not ready and I thought that I had the right excuse. I went to Swami and uttered, “Swami, since, I am not a Vidwan, I may be excused.” He snapped back in Kannada, “For me, my students and teachers and not ordinary Vidwans, but Aasthana Vidwans.” Behind this simple utterance of Swami, there is a whole genesis of His mission in this world. Swami’s unfettered love for His students and His lofty expectations about the role of students in His mission have been rendered in prose and poetry. While Swami’s love overflowed all boundaries like the universal sun shining on all with equal radiance, His love for His students was something that has to be seen and wondered (at the level of intensity it was capable of). I have seen this love reflected in the limpid eyes of a school child when he offered a flower to Swami. I have seen this in the expected countenance of another student as Swami listened to his tales of woe. I have seen it in the palpable excitement of the students when they would line up on the streets with conch shells in their hands to serenade his arrival whenever Swami returned after a visit elsewhere. I have seen this in the pride that Swami used to exhibit when He would summon one of His students (almost as if in competition) immediately after a musical concert of any maestro in Sai Kulwant hall. These were truly the times when the coordinates of love and longing merged with each other.

Several years ago when I took a teaching assignment at SSSIHL, after the very first day of my teaching, I was waiting nervously at the Kulwant Hall one evening. I was told that Swami had the habit of asking students the opinion of the teacher after they had attended a program. I had asked Swami for His blessings the previous day before taking my first class and I was certain that He would demand report of my performance.

Swami came early that day, spent a lot of time talking to a group of students which included the students whom I had taught that morning.



Finally, He came to the verandah, came near me and asked me to come inside the interview room and sit down. My heart sank within. I thought that I would be fired even before I was hired. Nervously, I looked up, expecting that Swami would pass on to me the comments He has received about my performance from students. His next question startled me, “How are my students?”

I was relieved but my ego was shattered. He was not interested in how I perform but all He was interested was to know how His students measured up. I gave him the correct political answer. I told him, “Excellent Swami!” He would not have accepted any other answer on that day.

The Swami that I saw that day was not the undifferentiated Brahman that He undoubtedly is, nor did I see the gravitas of a mighty God who once said that don’t walk behind me for I can’t lead, don’t walk ahead of me for I can’t follow, but walk with me and be my friend. This is probably the most profound and most exact way in which Swami’s love to His students can be described.

He was truly their intensely loving friend. This love produced energy beyond the power of thought. It is this love that made this multifoliate rose play table tennis, go on a picnic, supply water and build hospitals and universities. It was a kind of love that set its own rules. Several of us – during this exhibition of love between Swami and His students – have sat in the sidelines and wondered somewhat jealously, the unabashed love between the creator and one section of His creation – His students. It made even a past Vice-chancellor of the university comment, “When I am reborn, I would like to receive my degree from this Chancellor.”

The physical form of the Chancellor is no longer with us. Succeeding generations of students will not have the privilege of the physical manifestation of that love. They can only hear about it in songs and



ballads and in tales of legend of the bygone age. But it is necessary at this time that all of you students ponder over some soul searching questions. Firstly, those of you who have received His love openly, those of you who have heard about it, those who have observed this love from a distance, ask this question – do we deserve that love? That love which drenched and burnt away the debris. Have we acted post Mahasamadhi, consistent with our master's teachings? Have we acted without ego, without envy, without jealousy and without hatred? Do our words come out from the depths of truth; have we allowed the world around us to be broken into tiny fragments by narrow domestic walls? Have we allowed reason to lose its way in the sand of habit? Above all, have we loved our fellow beings?

These are not the questions of an end-semester examination, which you are used to, but these are the questions for which you need to find answers to after tugging at your heart's strings. By extension, all assembled here and the millions assembled elsewhere ask the same question, particularly during Navaratri, when the Goddess is worshipped in all the three forms – purity, spirituality and wisdom, where the theme of the entire Vedas is reflected. It signifies the end of darkness and the beginning of knowledge, as it is a period to transcend all limitations.

Devotees all over the world need to ask the same questions post Mahasamadhi:

Have we been true to the memory of Sai? Have we narrowed our divisiveness? Is our mind led forward into ever-widening thought and action? Have we eschewed and given up hypocrisy, sham and deceit? Have we really practiced the unity of thought, word and deed?

To find answers to these questions, we cannot look at our neighbour but rather look deep within us and find the answers. This is the imperative of the hour.



The pure Love of Bhagawan

Sri Ruchir Desai

Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL

‘My task comprises *Veda samrakshana*, *Vidwat Poshana* and *Dharma sthapana*.’

This was the momentous declaration that Swami made on the first day of Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna more than fifty years ago. Half a century later, we see in front of our own eyes – be it a nine-year old from the primary school, be it scores of students from the school and University participating in the yagna, be it devotees from all parts of the world — whether it is India, England, Croatia, Argentina, etc., sitting together and chanting vedam — if the revival has begun, He has sown the seeds, the fruits of which we are beginning to see and which we will witness more and more in the years to come.

In the same discourse on the same occasion, He said that Yagna is the destiny of every living being. Life is sustained because of the sacrifice each one makes for the other. We make sacrifices for me and mine. Here is a being that lived His life on earth sacrificing every single moment for the sake of others. When your or my heart beats it probably says me and mine, me and mine; when His heart beats it beats for every single one of His creation. I am reminded of a very small incident that happened a few years ago in Brindavan.

It was the summer of 2004. Unfortunately, Swami had injured his right shoulder and was physically not in a position to give darshan. His hand was strapped and He might have been in excruciating pain. But

everything that Swami does is to teach us a lesson. In the last years, we witnessed many occasions when our beloved Lord was in front of us with lot of physical discomfort. But He exemplified what He had told a devotee once, many years ago – ‘Pain is physical, suffering is mental.’ He went through the suffering and just prior to this event happening, I had a problem; a big problem that He makes small.

My mother was complaining of what symptomatically looked like a heart problem. She was complaining of pain in the chest, breathlessness and she had to stop while walking up a slope. Typically, it pointed to a heart problem and like all of us here, I had only one refuge and that is His lotus feet. So we thought of placing the problem at His lotus feet at the earliest available opportunity. A few days later, I was lucky enough to get an opportunity and I seized this opportunity and told Swami about the problem. Swami said that nothing is wrong and said, ‘Don’t worry’. He seemed to dismiss this problem but my mind was not at rest. Though you hear of Swami’s glory, though you hear of scores of miracles, though you bask in the sunshine of His love and grace, very often you find that when it comes to your own self, His word is not enough.

I was not satisfied by Swami saying ‘don’t worry, everything is alright.’ I persisted in telling Swami the entire story. Swami said, “Go tomorrow and meet a doctor at the Super Speciality Hospital and get your mother checked up.” The following day, I went with my mother to the hospital and she underwent all the tests, but before I could tell Swami about the outcome of the tests, this unfortunate accident (of Swami hurting his shoulder) had occurred and therefore I could not inform Swami about our visit to the hospital.

Days passed without darshan, and Swami was confined to His room. Finally it was announced that on Eswaramma day, Swami would grant darshan to the devotees in Brindavan. Everyone was waiting with eager anticipation for that day. We learnt that a few days before



Eswaramma day, Swami had finally stirred out of His room. The next day we even heard that Swami had come down to the ground floor of Trayee Brindavan. Many of us prayed for an opportunity to have His darshan out of concern for His health.

The following day I went to Trayee Brindavan and learnt that He had come down. I found that Swami was sitting with two to three elders in the interview room who had also gathered in Trayee Brindavan with the hope that they would get an audience with Swami. I waited in the round hall outside this room. A few minutes later, He came out of the interview room after spending some time with the elders who had gathered there. When I saw Swami, something hit me, which is indescribable. Here was someone who was a radiant and vibrant personality, now looked a pale shadow of his former self. Swami had his hand strapped; He was walking out of the interview room towards the steps of Trayee Brindavan with great difficulty, literally pulling himself along. For all His life, He had been a source of strength, a source of help for everyone around him, so it was only natural that He refused to take help from people around Him. Swami was walking slowly, shuffling along, when suddenly He looked up and saw me. I was standing there with hands folded. I ventured to say something, but before I could say something, Swami asked me, "How is your mother?" I started to reply, wondering whether I should tell him. Before I could say something, He posed the next question, "Did you go to the doctor? Did you get the check up done? Did you get the reports? What did the doctors say?" He asked a series of questions one after another. I was in no position to reply. There was only one way, I could answer and that was the language of tears.

Here was someone who had His hands strapped up, who could hardly walk, who was not able to give darshan because He was physically unable to do it, but He had a lesson for mankind. You don't live for yourself! Every moment of your life you are living for someone else. He had put aside His pain, His physical discomfort when He saw



another person; only thinking how to help this person. In all the pain, He remembered that ten days ago I had gone to him with a problem and He had directed me to go to a hospital and get the check up done.

If He is the heartthrob of millions around the globe, it is because His heart throbs not for Himself but for every living being and every part and parcel of His creation. If sacrifice is the destiny of every living being, then Swami was teaching this lesson of sacrifice, not by mere words, but by live examples backing these words. He says 'My life is my message', which is not an empty slogan that is to be quoted but He lived it every moment of His life. If we have to live our life by His example, what is it that we have to do? He sacrificed His life; will it be in vain? No! It will never be in vain. The saviour always sacrifices Himself. Two thousand years ago, the son of God sacrificed himself to redeem his followers. Two millennia later, the Veda Purusha Himself came down and led a life of sacrifice. Our lives will go in vain if we don't learn the lessons He laid down for us.

At the time of the first Veda Purusha Yagna, the day before *poornahuti*, in His discourse Swami said, "I am the Veda Purusha, I not merely perform this yagna but also receive the offerings from this yagna." On that occasion, several well-to-do devotees had gathered, and many of them had precious stones and jewellery made of gold, and some of them ventured to get sandalwood to offer it into the sacrificial pit. Swami said, "I will not allow you all to throw a few rupees in the sacrificial pit and get away with it. What is the offering that I want from all of you? I want all of you to offer all your bad qualities into this pit. I want you to offer all your faults and failings, temptations and transgressions. So, search your mind, find them from every corner of your mind. It will take lot of exertion to offer all these into the yagna."

He knows the level of difficulty in this exercise as once He commented, "I am Nataraja, the dance master and I alone know the pain of teaching My students every step of the dance." All of us have been difficult



students, not learning the steps of the dance that He tried to teach us. But this yagna offers us an easy route. Let us make this mental effort to offer all our bad qualities in to this yagna and take the purity of His teaching, at least one of which we will try and follow in our lives. That is the best offering which all of us can offer at His lotus feet.





Sundara Kanda

Dr. Nori Narayana Murthy

Hon. Telugu Pandit

In the *sannidhi* (hallowed presence) of Swami, I will speak about the Sundara Kanda of Ramayana which glorifies the sterling virtues of Hanuman and confers courage, well being, health, literary skills and eloquence (*vaak patutwam*). In Valmiki's magnum opus, the Ramayana, Sundara Kanda is the 5th *kanda* or chapter. If one listens to Sundara Kanda or worships Lord Anjaneya¹, one gets all the eight forms of *siddhis*², and a lot of merit.

What are the astha siddhis or eight superior powers?

Buddhi (intellect), *balam* (strength), *yasha* (fame), *dhairyam* (valour), *nirbhayatwam* (fearlessness), *aroghata* (good health), *ajadyam* (alertness), and *vaak patutwam* (power of speech) are the eight siddhis.

Sundara Kanda is considered the best of all the *kandas* in Ramayana. Among millions of stars in the firmament, the moon shines resplendently. In the same manner, in the blue skies of Ramayana, Sundara Kanda is like the brilliant moon. If Ramayana is a blossom, then Sundara Kanda is the nectar in it. It gives all auspiciousness and helps in the accomplishment of a deed (*karya siddhi*).

Anjaneya is the one who alleviated all the sufferings of Lord Rama. He is valiant, courageous and one with presence of mind who crossed the vast ocean of 100 *yoganas*³ and located mother Sita, who was abducted

1 Hanuman

2 Great accomplishments

3 A Vedic measure of distance used in ancient India. The exact measurement is disputed, with distances being given between 6 to 15 kilometers (4 to 9 miles).

by the demon King Ravana. He is the one who had all forms of learning.

In the beginning of Ramayana, Sage Valmiki asks Narada, “to be the hero (*nayaka*) of my composition, is there anyone in this world who is truthful, wealthy, full of wisdom, guileless, follows the conventions, full of splendor, having a bewitching form, righteous, one with gratitude, mighty, refuge of the downtrodden; and who can protect human values like sathya, dharma, shanti and prema?” Sage Narada revealed, “Rama, the son of Dasaratha has all the virtues illustrated by you.” Our Lord Sri Sathya Sai, who took birth as Lord Rama, has all these qualities.

The monkey warriors who were sent by Sugriva in search of Sita found themselves stranded at the coast of the mighty ocean. They asked the wise Jambavan, “Who has the courage to enter Lanka; who can annihilate the strength of the demons and find the whereabouts of mother Sita?” Jambavan revealed, “He is none other than Anjaneya. But Anjaneya will not recognize his strength until he is extolled, as he doesn’t know his power due to a curse. So, please praise him.”

All the monkeys came near Hanuman and extolled him in many ways.

Manojavam maruttulya vegam
Jitendriyam buddhimatam varistham
Vaataamajam vanaryutha mukyam
Sri Rama dootam sirasa namami

Lord Rama’s emissary, the foremost among the intelligentsia, is swift as thought and equal to wind-God in speed. I bow reverentially my head to that wind God’s great son Hanuman, who keeps his sense organs ever under control and is a leader of the army of the monkeys.

As soon as he was extolled, Lord Hanuman – remembering his strength – stood up, ready for the mission to Lanka.



When Hanuman started for Lanka, soaring in the sky with his gigantic form, he looked like a mountain of gold flying in the sky with the effulgence of the sun and toughness of a *vajra* (diamond). The monkey warriors were wonderstruck witnessing this wondrous form. On one hand, the monkeys were seeing him off with thunderous applause and the devatas, on the other hand were offering floral tributes to Hanuman from the heavens. All the Gods — Garuda, Gandharva, Kinnar, Kimpurusha — eulogized Anjaneya in numerous ways.

Hanuman first turns towards the east and worships his mother, father and preceptor. Swami teaches us that mother is divine; next comes father; then guru, and finally God. As Hanuman was a great scholar, he knew this dictum and hence bowed to his mother, father and preceptor – the Sun God. He then prayed to Rama.

Hanuman started his journey to Lanka heading southwards. He took a miniscule form upon reaching Lanka and reached the northern ramparts of this fortified city, escaping the gaze of the demons. He leapt on to the fort wall effortlessly and had a bird's-eye view of the city of Lanka. The city had spacious and spotless streets with beautiful plants and creepers adorning them. Myriad flags were fluttering on different flag posts on tall, seven-storey buildings. He saw exquisite houses with incessant chanting of Shiva's name. The city of Lanka was a treat for the eyes. Hanuman was not able to locate mother Sita in this magnificent city.

Hanuman went into the inner chambers of the palace and saw a divine, lustrous figure sleeping on a couch. 'Who is this?' he thought to himself.

Sage Valmiki describes Ravana's form as a heap of black gram. Anjaneya was stunned to see this form of Ravana. He turned his gaze to the other side of the apartment. Next to the sleeping quarters of Ravana, Hanuman saw a lady reclining on a couch. She was the embodiment of all beauty, adorned with resplendent jewels. Lord Hanuman felt mighty happy thinking that he has found Mother Sita. A doubt may



arise as to how a wise and knower of all branches of knowledge like Hanuman had such a delusion.

There is an explanation for why Hanuman mistook Mandodari⁴ for Mother Sita. This is because Mandodari's father Māya was a devotee of Goddess Lakshmi. He didn't have issues so he used to worship Goddess Lakshmi everyday. Owing to the intensity of his prayers, Goddess Lakshmi appeared and asked Māya to ask for any boon. Māya replied, "Mother! I don't have children; I want a daughter like you."
Mother blessed him and said, "So be it."

Mandodari is like Goddess Lakshmi and Mother Sita is verily Goddess Lakshmi. When Hanuman saw a lot of resemblance with Mother Sita, he started jumping and rejoicing – all the time mistaking Mandodari as Sita. His joy knew no bounds and began chanting 'I have seen Sita, I have seen Sita!'

Swami always gives importance to the buddhi – the intellect that is endowed with the power of discrimination. Swami says that the ability to judge between right and wrong, what to hear and what not to hear, what to speak and what not to speak, is discrimination power. Bhagawan says that Hanuman has the keen power of discrimination.

Hanuman, the epitome of buddhi tried to reanalyze. He thought to himself, "This cannot be Sita as Mother Sita will not eat food after separation from Rama, she will not put on ornaments nor leave Lord Rama and be with another man. This is someone who resembles Sita but not Mother Sita."

He resumed his search. He felt despondent and tears flowed from his eyes when he didn't find mother Sita. With folded hands he began praying to Lord Rama and recited the śloka which is the most sacred

4 Ravana's wife



and auspicious one in Sundara Kanda:

*Namostu Ramaya sa Lakshmanaya
Devyaicha tasyai Janakatmajayai
Namostu Rudrendra Yamanilebhyo
Namostu Chandrarka Marudganebhyaha*

I bow down to Rama and Lakshmana, I bow to mother Sita, I pray to Rudra, Indra, Yama, Vayu, Chandra, Sun and the Maruts.

Wherever this śloka is chanted or heard, all the sorrows, difficulties and anxieties get removed. Immediately after chanting this śloka, Hanuman remembered Ashoka vanam- the Ashoka grove, and with a single leap reached the grove, which had rich foliage of Sal, Ashoka, Champaka, Uddalaka, Naga, and Mango trees. Chanting relentlessly the name of Rama, Anjaneya sat on a branch of the Ashoka tree in the early morning hours and turned his gaze downward.

He was taken aback with the spectacle. He saw a woman clad in grimy and soiled yellow cloth and felt as if a lotus was sprouting out of slush. Separated from her husband, she resembled the star Rohini⁵ being tormented by the militant planet Mars.

Hanuman saw a koel surrounded by crows, and a sandalwood tree in the midst of a conflagration. Identifying the lady as Sita and trying to find a way to communicate with her, Anjaneya started singing the sacred Ramayana.

It is said that if one hears or recites the Sundara Kanda, the merit of listening to the whole of Ramayana will accrue to him. That is the greatness of Sundara Kanda. Hanuman began with the story of King Dasaratha and stood in utmost humility before mother Sita and said, “Oh! Mother, my name is Hanuman, I have come as the messenger of Lord Rama. Please don’t be afraid. Rama is perfectly fine.” He added,

5 One of the 27 *nakshatras* in Indian mythology



“Lord Rama has sent His blessings to you and Lakshmana has sent his salutations to you.” Sita felt very happy about the way Hanuman spoke to her. She recollected that Lakshmana always used to bow reverentially to her as she was like a mother to Lakshmana.

There are five types of mothers – the mother who gives birth, the wife of one’s preceptor, the wife of one’s elder brother, one’s mother-in-law and the one who feeds you when you are hungry.

There are five types of fathers - the father of the physical body, the preceptor, elder brother, father-in-law and the one who protects you in difficulties.

Today is the auspicious day of Devi Navaratri. The shakti aspect of the mother is found in eighteen seats known as Shakti Peethas in and around India. Adding one and eight gives us the divine number nine. Bhagawan’s year of birth 1926 also adds up to nine. Know that Bhagawan is the one who pervades all these eighteen *Shakti Peethas*. Hanuman says, “Sri Rama is the embodied form of the Lalitha Devi, Adi Parashakti – the primordial force.”

Thus Hanuman began extolling the sterling qualities of Lord Rama to Sita – the epitome of virtues. Mother Sita was overjoyed hearing the words of praise of Lord Rama.

After describing the beauty of Lord Rama, Hanuman considered that this is the most opportune time, to hand over the ring given by Lord Rama to mother Sita. Sita placed the ring to her eyes and gazed at it for a long time with indescribable bliss welling up in her heart. She enquired with a lot of pain in her heart, “When will my sufferings come to an end?” Hanuman who was in a miniscule form, said in a tone full of confidence, “Mother, why do you worry, your bad days have ended from this instant. Come, O! Mother, please sit on my shoulders; I will take you at this moment to Lord Rama.” Hearing the words of



Hanuman, mother Sita smiled and said, “You are so tiny, how can you lift me on your shoulders; you are exhibiting your fickle nature of being a monkey.”

If a three-year-old child goes to his mother and says, “Mother, you have lifted me for so long, now it is my turn to lift you,” the mother will laugh at this statement of the boy. Similar was the situation when Hanuman requested mother Sita to sit on his shoulders.

When Sita uttered the word ‘monkey’, Anjaneya got a little upset and said to himself, ‘I crossed this vast ocean of a hundred *yojanas*, entered this city of Lanka without the knowledge of all the demons, ogres, goblins, savages and the massive Ravana’s army, how can mother Sita mock at me.’ He started to increase his form, continuously chanting the name of Lord Rama, and within the blinking of an eye he took a gigantic form with four heads.

The eastward facing form looked like a monkey to mother Sita. The southward countenance resembled Lord Narasimha⁶. His westward form was seen as Garuda, the mythical bird. In the northern direction, Hanuman manifested in the form of Varaha, the wild boar.

When these four effulgent faces of Hanuman were spreading their brilliance in all the four directions, a resplendent fifth face with the brilliance of thousand suns sprang up facing towards the heavens in the form of a *haya* (horse).

This is the *panchamukhi* form of (the five-headed) Hanuman. If this form is worshipped, evil spirits are kept at bay, all the diseases are eradicated, and all types of enjoyments are conferred.

Mother Sita was not able to look at the effulgence of Hanuman and cried out, “O! Hanuman, I have seen your gigantic form, now calm

6 One of the dashavatars (ten Avatars) of Lord Vishu – half man, half lion



down and again show me your gentle form.” Hanuman took the name of Rama four times and four of the heads vanished and he regained his pleasing and serene form of the monkey. Hanuman requested mother Sita, “Mother, I have given you the signet ring of Lord Rama, please give me a memento to indicate my meeting you today.” Mother Sita took out the Chooda mani⁷, carefully kept in a knot of her saree and gave it to Hanuman. He took the souvenir and flew over the Ashoka Vatika. Hanuman said to himself, ‘this garden has given untold suffering to my mother Sita; this place is meant to be destroyed.’ Hanuman with his unmatched valour, killed 80,000 demons in one shot and destroyed the Ashoka grove.

After annihilating the *rakshasas*, Hanuman reached the court of Ravana. In Ravana’s court the demon king asked Hanuman, “Who are you?”

Hanuman proudly announced:

*Dasoham Kosalendraya Ramasyaklishta karmanaha
Na Ravana sahasram mey yudhe prathibalam bhaved
Ardayithwa pureem Lankamabhivadya cha Maithilim*

Meaning- I am the servant of Lord Rama, who functions effortlessly, and even thousand Ravana’s can never become equal to me in war. I am going to destroy the city of Lanka, salute the daughter of Mithila.

The demon king insulted him and ordered the demons to set Hanuman’s tail on fire. Hanuman thought to himself, ‘this is the opportunity to destroy Lanka.’ With His blazing tail, Hanuman set the city of Lanka on fire and then doused His alighted tail in sea waters.

Then, with a mighty leap, Hanuman flew over the sea and landed at the lotus feet of Lord Rama. He stood with utter humility to convey the news of Sita’s well-being.

7 A diamond that Mother Sita used to wear in her hair



He bowed down to Lord Rama and said, “O! Revered Father, I saw mother Sita, an epitome of sorrow and despair, in the city of Lanka in a garden of our enemy, the demon king Ravana. Every second she is waiting, thinking about your divine lotus feet, counting every day in anticipation that you will release her from this bondage.”

Lord Rama was relieved after hearing the news of Sita. He thought of rewarding Hanuman. Rama didn't find any award equivalent to the task that Hanuman has performed. He gave Himself to His beloved devotee and embraced Hanuman with love and joy.

Hanuman is the epitome of humility, intelligence and selfless service. We should all aspire to be like him.

Lord Hanuman knows the fact that the same Rama took birth as our Lord Sri Sathya Sai. In his childhood, when Swami went to do some repairs to a small temple of Lord Hanuman, the fellow boys asked Him to come for a *pradakshina* - circumambulation of the temple. Swami initially refused to accompany them. When the boys persisted, Bhagawan consented to accompany them. All of a sudden a monkey came and held the feet of Bhagawan and prayed, “Swami, I know who you are? You are the self same Lord Rama who has taken avatar in the form of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It is we who have to sanctify our lives by doing *Pradakshina* to you.” This is the hallowed land where Lord Hanuman moves around. This is the land that receives the abundant grace of Lord Anjaneya.

After hearing the news of Sita, the son of Dasaratha crossed the ocean with the army of monkeys, killed demon Ravana, made his brother Vibhishana the king and returned to Ayodhya in the Puspaka Vimana. The coronation of Lord Rama was conducted with great pomp and gaiety in the presence of sages like Vashishtha, Vamadeva, Yagnavalka, Jabali and ministers like Dhriti, Jayanta, Vijaya, Siddhartha, Arthasadaka, Ashoka, Mantrapala and Sumantra. A crown studded



with all the nine types of gems adorned him. Let me recite the most auspicious *Pattabhisheka* (coronation) śloka. Mere hearing of this śloka confers all auspiciousness:

*Vaidehi sabitam suradruma thale haimey mahaa mandape
Madhye pushpakamaasane manimaye veeraasane susthitham
Agre vaachayati prapanjhana suthe tatvam munibhyah param
Vyaakhyaantam bharataadhibhibh parivritam raamam bhaje
syaamalam*

Meaning- although Hanuman was seated on his “Veeraasana” in the golden Mandapa and even though he was surrounded by Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrugna and the saints, it was in the immediate presence of Anjaneya that Sri Rama expounded Gnana Upadesa.

In the rein of Sri Rama there was peace and harmony everywhere. There was prosperity in the whole kingdom and all scrupulously followed the human values of sathya, dharma, shanti and prema. That same Lord Rama was born in the year Akshaya, in the month of Karthika on a Somwar (Monday), at the time of *brahmamuhurta* to mother Eswaramma.





Excerpts from Divine Discourses

Those who don't have body attachment, worldly attachments and anxieties and have the spirit of sacrifice are the real preceptors, then and now. This is the word of truth of Sai.

Embodiments of Love!

God is present in every atom; He is inherent in every cell and shines forth all over. The Upanishads have declared the all pervasiveness of divinity and it is divinity, which is responsible for the motility of all beings in this universe. The modern man is not making an attempt to know the teachings of the Upanishads and the great sages of the yore. It is a matter of mystery why man is not able to visualize God, who is present in every atom as declared by the Upanishads in a very simple way.

To listen to the essence of the Upanishads in this assembly is your greatest good fortune. Nobody can estimate the greatness and mystery of the mantras being chanted by the priests in the yagna performed every morning during this Dasara. The priests who chant these mantras in Prashanti Nilayam have very pure hearts.

Let me give you a small example: All the priests assemble for lunch by 12 noon but one of the priests who was doing worship of Linga didn't get up. Another priest who was reading the Bhagavatam also didn't retire. There are four priests who do *Veda Parayana*. None of them went for lunch. They said, "You go, we will come after finishing the parayana." Until the task is accomplished, they do not get up. The one who performs the *sahasralingarchana* sits there until 2 p.m. As we have priests who have such pure hearts, the efficacy and potency of the mantras increases manifold. To know the inner meaning of these mantras is your good fortune. Even if you don't understand the inner



meaning of the mantras, it is enough if you listen to them when they are chanted. This listening is the first step of bhakti, which leads you to the final stage of merger. The different steps in nine types of devotion are:

Sravanam (listening), *Keertanam* (singing), *Vishnu smaranam* (chanting), *Padasevanam* (service), *Vandanam* (salutation), *Archanam* (worship), *Dasyam* (servitude), *Sneham* (friendship), *Atma nivedanam* (Self surrender). When the spirit of friendship is achieved, it takes the devotee to Self-surrender. Surrender is not possible until friendship is developed. Hence we should try and achieve this friendship. To achieve all this we have to start with the first step of listening.

Sacred thoughts are the undercurrent in all these sacred rituals. Yagnas are not done here in a routine way. The yagna is performed with total sacrifice. We have no desires, no wants, no preferences – it is only for the welfare of the humanity. It is done with the objective that all should live happily and peacefully. In order to make everybody happy and blissful, we are performing this yagna. We don't go and perform yagnas due to the occurrence of famine and drought like elsewhere. They come and go. I don't give place to such narrow thinking. Whatever I do lasts permanently. It is sacred and gives you deservedness.

Dasara Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam, 11 Oct 2002



Acceptance of God's will

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A couple of years ago, after the exuberant Dasara celebrations in this very hall of grandeur, some of the undergraduate students decided to spend the winter vacations with Bhagawan. Each day was spent in prayer and anticipation seeking Swami's special attention. One of the most memorable days was when Swami came to our block and asked one of our campus authorities in Telugu, "Are any girls ready to speak now?" Fortunate were those of us who knew Telugu, for without a moment's delay, we quickly hid behind the girls in front us, holding our breath, crossing our fingers and thanking our stars for not sitting in the first line. None of us had the courage to overhear the conversation that followed. I only remember that after a while I felt a sense of achievement and thought that I escaped it. So here I am realizing that I postponed it. I stand here today humbled by the truth that His will always prevails.

Dearest Swami, of thy vision, of thy mission
a mere puppet that I am, let me swing to thy string
the words that I say, I plea thee bring.

God's will prevails and none can escape it and none can ever understand it. This is because God's will can't be understood by questioning it. It can be understood only by accepting it. Acceptance is the only key that unlocks the mysteries of the Divine will. What exactly is this acceptance? It is most often misunderstood as the inevitable feeling one resorts to in such a situation. In truth, acceptance is a conscious

choice. It is a rare virtue which one has to readily exercise at three different levels, which I wish to address in today's talk.

The first one is the acceptance at the individual level, which means that we have to love and accept our own selves for what we are and what we are not. In fact, Bhagawan himself helps nurture this self-acceptance. Giving us His unconditional love, He makes us feel wanted and important, and thus instills self-confidence in us. Many a time, Swami has said that an individual who lacks confidence in himself is of no use to the society. Truly speaking, it is only when we accept ourselves for whom we are, can we ever attempt to accept others the way they are. This is what I call acceptance at the societal level, which is the second level of acceptance.

Each and every one of us who comes into His fold is loved and accepted much before we are transformed. This proves that acceptance actually inspires a change. Bhagawan on many occasions beautifully explained that accepting others the way they are leads to understanding them, which leads us to adjust with them and finally results in love for them. So when Swami says 'Love all Serve all', He certainly wants us to start from accepting all; which is what I call acceptance at the societal level. The third one is the acceptance at the spiritual level. To put it in simple terms, it means to accept God. We know God and we love God is different from 'we accept God'. We usually accept that part of God and those definitions of God which easily fit into our framework and reject that which is opaque to us. We do this without realizing that everything is God. Everything He does or doesn't, is He alone. It is impossible to understand God and so the need of the hour is to accept Him.

Accepting God means accepting God's word. Bhagawan once, whilst casually talking to a young boy in the darshan line, said that you are my student. Taking the hint this boy got elated and applied for the MBA program of our Institute. Unfortunately, he was not selected.



Disappointed, he sat in darshan again. Swami approached him and while consoling him asked him a very thought provoking question, “Do you want to be a Sai student or a Sai college student?” Confused, this boy prayed to Bhagawan to explain the difference. Swami said, “A Sai college student is he who resided within the four walls of Sai’s college whereas a Sai student is he who resides in the heart of Sai by implicitly obeying His command.” This is perhaps what Swami means when He says ‘my students are my property’. Certainly His property consists of those who live His message. Hanuman crossed an ocean for the Lord’s word but never crossed the Lord’s word. Implicit obedience of His injunctions is what I call as acceptance of His word.

The second one is accepting God’s work. What is God’s work? Maybe a more pertinent question might be, what is our role or contribution (albeit insignificant) in His mission. When these thoughts take a toll on me, I imagine myself as a car that has to be repaired in a service station. I imagine myself as a car that is discoloured, disfigured, dysfunctional and probably dismantled by the mechanic. However, I have a humble desire to be driven by God. On the other hand, even if we were the much sought after Mercedes Benz or the stunning mineral white BMW with a swift drive having 13000rpm, 740bhp and a price tag of ₹1 crore; if we do not care to halt and offer God a ride, of what use are we to Him? This proves that availability is more important to God than ability. Lord Rama did not employ the *vanaras* for battle because they were great warriors. They assured the Lord of their availability for any kind of work that He commanded. This trait we have in our Sai family today around the world. Even highly qualified men and women offering their services right from wiping tables to washing dishes, from feeding the needy to giving them a bath, from running errands on bare feet to sitting unending hours near the gates – this is probably what the Lord means by availability for His work. Accepting the Lord’s work is being available to Him.

The next one is accepting God’s blessings. Quite a few letters written



by Bhagawan to a few devotees end with line – accept my blessings. At times, perhaps we really don't accept God's blessings, as we are not able to recognize them. How do we know how a blessing looks like? Every situation and person we encounter in our life is a God sent blessing. Often, we foolishly return these gifts unopened only because they probably don't come with colourful packing and a bow. Accepting life the way it comes is what I call accepting God's blessing. It is certainly not simple, as life presents too many problems to solve and much confusion to deal with. I would like to quote a small incident here.

There was a classroom where a group of students were waiting for a disaster called an exam. The master enters the examination hall smiling and as he is distributing the question papers, they almost grab the papers from his hand in a desperate attempt to jot down what they studied before they forget it. There was, however, an instruction at the top of the paper that said – read the entire paper carefully before answering the questions that follow.

As they wrote, some students thought keenly, some thought that they wrote brilliantly, some looked around blankly, some questioned uninterruptedly, some blamed ceaselessly and some others cried intermittently and most left the hall abruptly. There was however one boy who reached the fag end of the paper and to his utter shock found only one question in bold letters which said, have you read the paper fully: $1 \times 100 = 100$ marks. This boy got confused, quickly wrote 'yes', submitted the paper and most unexpectedly scored full marks.

What does this mean?

Going through life patiently is all that is expected of the exam of life. Our frustrations are the outcomes of answering the unasked questions. Life certainly is a blessing that has to be accepted with unquestioning faith.

The last one that I want to talk about is accepting God's help. This



sounds strange because who would not want to be loved by God? I am saying this because seeking God's help is different from accepting God's help. Swami Himself enlightened me on this once. It was a period of time in my life when things were so trying that I felt extremely helpless. I felt forlorn and forsaken by everyone, including God. There were these surging questions for which I had absolutely no answer. It was on the whole, a miniature darkness of the soul and I tried to resolve the situation with my mind and failed miserably.

On Ladies' day¹ that year, after blessing the Veda chanting and brass band groups with a photograph, Bhagawan approached the Nadaswaram group, which I was part of, looked at me and said something to me, which I could not hear. He repeated it and yet I could not decipher it. Anxious not to miss the invaluable message of His, I almost pulled the sister behind me and said loudly in front of Swami, "Please listen, I can't understand what Swami is saying." The most merciful and compassionate mother repeated it for the third time and then I heard it loud and clear. He said with His eyes brimming with concern and compassion, "Give me a little way." Puzzled, I looked around and found a lot of space around Swami and nothing was obstructing Him. It struck me much later that trying to solve my problems on my own, I blocked His way into my life. So surrender, let go and give Him a little way into your lives; let Him take over. This is what I call accepting God's help.

The mighty elephant king Gajendra struggled for thousands of years in order to relieve himself from the clutches of the crocodile. Tired and dying, in the end, he calls out to Lord Vishnu saying, 'other than you refuge there is none, please come to my rescue, save me.' Potana, the author of the Bhagavatam in Telugu, was composing these powerful verses of Gajendra Moksham, when he abruptly stopped writing after this, unable to gauge how the Lord rushed to His devotee in distress. After all, who would know how the Lord feels after seeing his devotees in pain? How can anyone describe how He rushes to him or her when

¹ Celebration at Prashanti Nilayam on 19th November every year



they call out to Him? By the time the poet resumed His work the lines were already written by the Lord.

This is how it goes:

“In a hurry to rescue Gajendra, Lord Vishnu forgets to take his *shankha* and *chakra*, forgets to command the help of the devatas, doesn’t even brush aside the flowing curls on His charming countenance nor He pays heed to the enquiries of mother Lakshmi. He rushes absolutely unmindful of Himself in order to rescue His devotee who called out His name. Call out His name with all your heart and he shall rescue.”

Bhagawan in one of our interviews asked if anyone has any doubts when one of the sisters got up and asked, “Swami! What is better, God’s name or God’s form?” Swami said, “suppose I go to the Anantapur campus, stand near the gate and call the gateman and ask him – may I meet the lady who wears a green saree and a large *bindi*, has big eyes, a long nose and so on, I am sure he will still stand confused. Instead, if I call him and say – may I meet Dr. (Mrs.) Jayalakshmi Gopinath, he will immediately take me to her.”

This proves that God’s name takes you faster to Him than His form. That His enchanting form is distanced from us today, the wealth that lies with us is His unforgettable name. With that very name on our lips and His beautiful form in our hearts, and His work in our hands, pray we march together in achieving His mission with our dear Lord Sai leading and guiding us.



Ramayana and Sai Tatwam

Dr. Mulukutla Brahmananda Sastry

Hon. Telugu Pandit

Swami, while talking about the bhakti of Hanuman, mentions of an incident that happened during the birthday celebrations of Lord Rama. There was a scrumptious feast, and after the feast, mother Sita, while getting ready to retire, was carrying a jug full of water along with a tumbler, and was going to Lord Rama. Lord Rama instructed all the people assembled around him to go back to their dwellings and take rest. Rama started walking to the retiring room and when he turned back and saw, he found Hanuman following him. A little surprised, Rama asked, "Hanuman, where are you going?" Hanuman very politely replied, "I have to be always with you, O! Lord." Rama rejoined, "I agree that you always want to be with me but now you go and take rest somewhere and come tomorrow morning." When Rama took few more steps ahead, he found that Hanuman is still accompanying him. Rama repeated, "I already told you, please come tomorrow so that we can talk." Hanuman spoke complainingly, "O, Lord when mother can stay with you at night, why can't I?" Rama replied, "Mother puts a vermilion dot in the parting of her hair so she gets an opportunity to stay with me, you don't have it so you can't stay with me." Anjaneya thought to himself, "Mother Sita just by putting a dot stays with Lord Rama, if I smear vermilion on my whole body, I will definitely be closer to my Lord." Hanuman went to the shops of Ayodhya, bought *sindoor* and smeared it all over his body and came in presence of Lord Rama and said, "I have more vermilion on my body than mother Sita, and hence I should stay with you."

Swami always tells us in many contexts that Hanuman is an ideal

in the spirit of service, as Hanuman declared, *Dasoham kosalendraya ramasya aklishta karmane.*

Swami's smile is like a gentle shower of jasmine. When Bhagawan showers His grace on a devotee and talks to him, it is like a feeling of bathing in the soft and tender moonlight of the full moon. When Swami comes out for darshan gently gliding among the devotees fresh as a blossomed flower, the wind brings with it the divine fragrance of our Lord.

Swami's words are like the songs of the sweet singing cuckoo bird. When devotees come from far off places with untold sufferings and anxieties, the words of Swami act as the shower of nectar, making them forget everything and healing their body, mind and soul. Swami's soothing and pacifying touch is like the gentle breeze caressing you.

In the time of Lord Rama, the citizens of Ayodhya used to feel that one's life is a waste if one has not seen Rama or if Rama's gaze has not fallen on him or her. Similarly, when Swami would give a discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium for around an hour and when He would go back to Prashanti Nilayam mandir to retire, devotees would make a beeline to have a glimpse of Him. This shows that our Sai Rama is verily the Lord Rama of Ayodhya.

Today, man is seeking the mirage of sense pleasures and is getting afflicted by the venomous snakes of the senses. Let us pray to Bhagawan to lead us away from this vicious path of sense pleasures and make us taste the nectar of His bhajans and the sweetness of His name.

Swami always used to narrate the potency and efficacy of the name of Lord Rama:

*Chhakkere kante teepi dadhi saaramu kante ruchyamavunu
Pempekkina tenee kannu ati ruchyamu
Notanu pallka pallaga mikkili kammanau amritame anipinchinu*



Kaavu me nityamun chakkaga danini meeru smareyimpudu sairama namamu

Meaning- The name of Lord Rama is sweeter than sugar and tastier than honey and yogurt. It becomes nectarine if chanted continuously. Chant this sweet name of Rama incessantly.

If one has to cross this ocean of worldly existence, Sai's name is the best refuge. When Swami gave His thundering discourses, devotees would get rapturous and feel that the opportunity of listening to the divine is very meritorious, conferred on them due to His grace. The ultimate refuge of all the people suffering from physical and mental afflictions is the name of Sai Rama.

Similar is the case with the vibhuti of Swami.

Paramam pavitram baba vibhutim
Paramam vichitram baba vibhutim
Paramartha istartha moksha pradanam
Baba vibhutim idam ashrayami

Devotees apply the divine Vibhuti on their forehead and take it very reverentially to alleviate their physical and mental suffering. When devotees are afflicted by economic and monetary troubles, just by remembering the name of Sai all these troubles are assuaged. One who has the intense desire of knowing the Self, for him the royal highway is the continuous utterance of the name of 'Sai'. It is the best panacea. Let us all bow down to such a Swami who is the supreme one, who is the only refuge of the devotees and who is the only one fit to be extolled.

In the era of Rama, all poets had eulogized the glory of Lord Rama. Similarly, in this era of Lord Sai, there are many poets and composers who have glorified Sai's life, His teachings and His leelas.



How can you say that Dasartha Rama is our Sai Rama?

There was a great musician named as Nagaratnamma in Bangalore. The saint poet Tyagaraja appeared in her dream and said, “Go to Puttapparthi and sing in the presence of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, He is the same as my Dasaratha Rama.” She immediately wrote a letter to Puttapparthi and came to know that Bhagawan was, at that time, in Venkatagiri. She then wrote to the Raja of Venkatgiri describing him about the dream and seeking permission to have the darshan of Bhagawan Baba and sing in His presence. She was very graciously invited to the Venkatgiri sansthana on the occasion of Krishna Janmashtami.

Nagaratnamma sang in front of Swami for two hours and even Swami accompanied her. Bhagawan was overjoyed and created a silver idol of Lord Rama and gifted it to Nagaratnamma and said, “I will talk to you tomorrow.” Next day Swami asked her desire. She said, “I want a peaceful death with your name on my lips.” Within one year she left the body in a very peaceful manner. This experience is recorded in Sathyam Shivam Sundaram and bears testimony to the fact that this Sai Rama is Rama.

What were the virtues of Prahlada, Gajendra, Dhruv and Kuchela that the supreme one came to their rescue? Prahlada was a jnani who knew that God is all pervasive and prayed to Him in a way that pulsed the heart of the Lord and made Him come to the rescue of Prahlada.

Gajendra fought with the crocodile for nearly a thousand years thinking that he can save himself from the clutches of the crocodile. When he realized that it is not possible for him to bail himself out, he cried out to Vishnu with complete surrender and Vishnu came to redeem him. Lord Vishnu rushed to save Gajendra, showing us the power of the Lord’s name. Swami says that God’s name is like a hotline, which makes Him rush to the rescue of the devotee.



When Kuchela came with a bag of beaten rice, Krishna lovingly accepts and eats it. Kuchela was blissfully unaware of what was in store for him. When he reached his home he saw a resplendent mansion in place of his humble hut.

There was a great devotee of Bhagawan named Sarada whom Swami used to call Pedda Bottu. She had the good fortune of serving both Shirdi Sai Baba and Parthi Sai Baba. One day she asked Swami to teach her a way to meditate on the Lord. Swami chided her and said, “Don’t bother yourself about meditation; chant incessantly the name of the Lord, there is nothing more potent than the name of the Lord.”

Once, in Prashanti Nilayam when there was a mild drizzle, she made up her mind to continuously chant the name of Sai. When she started the *namasmarana*, Swami lovingly told, “*Dunnapota*¹, why you are remembering me so much, won’t you allow me to sleep?” Pedda Bottu asked with surprise, “Swami, what have I done to interrupt your sleep?” “You are ceaselessly uttering my name, how can I sleep?” said Swami, exhibiting His love and intimacy which He bears for His devotees.

Bhagawan’s home is Prashanti Nilayam, the abode of supreme peace; His mind is the permanent dwelling of tranquility. Sage Valmiki, while introducing Lord Rama, says

Sa hi nityam prashant Atma mrudupurvam bhasyate

Meaning- Lord Rama is eternally joyful and speaks very sweetly and politely.

Lord Rama was asked to rule the kingdom of Ayodhya and the very next instant he was asked to head towards the forest for an exile of fourteen years. His mind was unperturbed and calm under both these circumstances. When he was asked to be the new king by father Dasaratha, he felt happy, but when he was asked to go for exile, he

1 Male buffalo in the Telugu language. Swami would lovingly and chidingly address His devotees thus.



exhibited the same joy and equipoise.

Valmiki says – *Buddhiman madhura bhashi poorvabhashi cha priyam vadaha*; Rama speaks intelligently, softly, sweetly and is a man of measured and well chosen words. Rama's words are sweet as sugar candy.

In the same way, when Bhagawan speaks, He explains abstruse and esoteric truths in a clear and concise way like the peeling of a banana and giving one to eat it. Swami's gaze is also full of peace and tranquility.

Akrura varadah krishnaha krurasurantakaha: Krishna annihilated demons like Krurasura, but conferred his benediction on a devotee like Akrura. But Bhagawan Baba's task is even more difficult. He transforms individuals who are on the wrong path and makes them good. Swami not only protects the virtuous but also transforms the wicked and makes them virtuous.

Swami says, 'Rama is serious, Krishna is mischievous.' Rama had the gravitas of a deep ocean. When Dasaratha commanded him to get ready for coronation he had the same demeanour as when at the behest of Kaikeyi, He is told to go for exile. Kaikeyi summoned Rama through Sumantra to break this news to him. His father didn't speak to him. Rama asked Kaikeyi, "Why have you called me mother? Father is not speaking to me; can you please tell me the purpose of summoning me?" Kaikeyi replied, "Once your father gave me two boons. I have asked for those two boons now. One is that you have to go to the forest for fourteen years and the second is that your brother Bharata has to be coronated as the next king."

Rama replied, "Mother, you have more love for your stepson than your own son Bharata. You have asked me go to the forest and fill my small tummy whereas you have given my younger brother Bharata a herculean responsibility of ruling the entire kingdom."



However, Rama felt pained that Dasaratha didn't pronounce this command to him. In this manner, the Rama avatar showed by actual practice, how a human being can become divine. Swami would always emphasize the importance of emulating these lofty ideals practiced by the different characters in Ramayana to His students to make them ideal citizens. He stressed on these aspects in His books such as 'Rama Katha Rasavahini', His discourses and also by making great scholars speak about these ideals in front of Him.

Let us consider the sterling character of Lakshmana. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reached Panchavati on the instructions of Sage Agastya to spend their remaining one year of exile. Rama asked Lakshmana to construct a hermitage for them to stay. Rama didn't instruct Lakshmana where to construct the hermitage. Lakshmana was in a dilemma and thought to himself, 'Brother has not given me the instruction as to where should I construct the hermitage, if I build the shelter of my choice, there is a possibility of Him not liking it.' With a confused mind he asked Rama, " Brother, you have not told me where should I erect this sanctuary." Rama replied, "You erect it at a place of your choice." Lakshmana quickly rejoins, "Brother, I have no preference of mine, I am your servant, wherever you say, I will erect the hermitage. Your choice is my choice."

Swami very beautifully compares this episode with today's fraternal relationships. Rama and Lakshmana exhibited 'supreme' brotherly love whereas these days, brothers are going to the 'supreme' court to claim their share in their father's property. Lakshmana considered seva to Rama as his only wealth. Extolling Bharata, Swami says that Bharata got the padukas of Rama and worshipped them day and night. Lakshmana served Rama whereas Bharata attained Rama. Hence, Swami says that Bharata is a greater devotee than Lakshmana.

In the Krishna avatar, during the episode of Krishna going to the court of Hastinapur as a messenger; He partakes food in the house of Vidura



and not in the house of Duryodhana or Bhishma. Duryodhana asks him, “I agree that I am a man of evil traits, but why didn’t you accept food in the houses of Bhishma and Dronacharya.” Krishna says, “I go where there is devotion. If anyone offer me a flower, a leaf, a fruit or water with devotion, I accept it. If it is not offered with devotion, I reject that offering.” In a similar way, Bhagawan went to a cobbler’s house and accepted food. This shows that devotion is what the Lord looks for most in a devotee.

Krishna has two mothers, Devaki and Yashoda. The poet saint Potana describes this very beautifully. He says that all the women folk of the village were overjoyed when they heard the news that Yashoda has given birth to a boy. All of them made a beeline to have a glimpse of the child. This was the attraction of Krishna.

Lord Rama was an apotheosis of good character. He had the special trait of treating everyone as equal even if they were of a low caste, were underprivileged and inferior in education. Guha is an excellent example in this respect. He was of a low caste, had no education and was from an economically weaker background. Rama considered Guha as his closest friend. Guha questions Him, “What did I do Lord to deserve friendship with you?” Rama replies, “You came all the way and enquired about our well being and spoke some pacifying words. This is the greatest help which you have extended to us.” This is the greatness of Lord Rama.

Rama accepted the idea of seeking refuge of Sugriva. Lakshmana was not at all ready to endorse this idea. He thought that the One who gives refuge to everyone, what is the need of him asking refuge of Sugriva. But the gesture of Rama seeking asylum was instrumental in the friendship of Sugriva and Rama. They mutually agreed that they would accept each other’s joys and sorrows as their own. They agreed that Rama would help Sugriva in annihilating Vali and Sugriva would help Rama in the search of Sita.



When Vali was killed, it was natural for Sugriva to shed tears, as Vali was his own brother. But Rama also shed tears. As Sugriva was Rama's friend and when Sugriva shed tears due to the loss of his brother, Rama also felt the pain and cried. Rama always showed love even to His enemies. In the same way our Bhagawan showed pure and unsullied love even to His detractors and critics.

When we consider the scene of the two armies getting ready for the war, Ravana was viewing the whole army from one of the buildings and Rama, Lakshmana, Hanuman and Sugriva were having a bird's eye view of the armies from another building. At this juncture, Sugriva felt indebted to Rama for his help of acquiring his kingdom back. He decided to go and kill Ravana and get mother Sita back to Rama. With this resolution he took a leap and attacked Ravana, but gets vanquished and was beaten black and blue by Ravana. When he came back to his camp, Rama said, "You went without telling me, if something untoward would have happened to you, rescuing Sita would be of no value to me." Rama wanted that Sugriva should be safe and sound. This is the best example of ideal friendship.

When Vibhishana came seeking refuge, Sugriva didn't endorse that at all. Rama said, "I treat all as my brother Bharata. Vibhishana has come to me seeking friendship, hence we should respect his feelings and extend our friendship to him." Rama extolled Bharata and at the same time praised Sugriva as a very close friend. Swami also has this characteristic. He praises a person, and when he gets puffed up with vanity, Swami subtly pricks the bubble.

Bhagawan has a strong determination. He was able to accomplish mammoth projects like free medicare, free education, free water supply and a beautiful mandir like Sai Kulwant hall for the devotees to have His darshan.

Lord Rama's determination was also the same. When Rama was going around in the forest during his exile, the sages petitioned him

to eradicate mother earth from the influence of vile *rakshasas*. Rama gave a word that he will accomplish this task. Sita got a doubt, 'Did Rama give a word in haste or is he really capable of achieving this colossal task?' She said to Rama, "Such a statement can be understood in different ways: one, you are telling a lie which is not true, the second is that you are enamoured by a *rakshasa* woman which again is not true, and the third is when you have enmity with the demons. When you don't have any of the three, how can you achieve this task? You are in the garb of a recluse — and although you have weapons — how can you achieve this task?"

Rama replied, "I am ready to forsake you or even Lakshmana but I will never go back on the word given, especially to Brahmins." Rama showed by practice how to follow dharma. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba also said, 'My Life is my Message;' He also followed and showed the path for us to follow. If Swami smiles, it feels as if Lord Buddha smiled at the populace who are suffering due to the entanglement in *samsara*. If Swami walks, it looks like the gait of mother Parvati which is very aptly described in the Lalitha Sahasranama – *Marali Mandagamana Mahalarvanya Shevadibi*; meaning, she is the one who has a slow gait of a swan and she is the store house of supreme beauty.

Swami, in a legendary miracle, introduced Himself as 'Jodi Adipalli Somappaya Namaha.' When asked later, why He chose that name of all others, Baba said, "I am Somappa, Appa (Lord Shiva) and Sa Uma (Sa – along with; Uma – Goddess Parvathi, the consort of Lord Shiva). The place of My residence is Aadipalli, the primeval village, Kailasha. It is Jodi (joined together) because it belongs to Sa & Uma 'Shiva-Shakti', - the twin - Prakrithi and Purusha (Nature and God)." This is therefore Baba's most appropriate epithet, selected by Himself, for that profound miracle of grace. It reveals His truth as 'Shiva-Shakti'.



Excerpts from Divine Discourses

Embodiments of Love!

What is our truth?

Love is truth. Without love you can't see anything in this world. In fact, you are the personification of love. Being this form of love, you run after things, which are not to be accepted, and therefore you struggle. What is that we should seek? What should we experience? What should we pine for? What delights us and makes us blissful?

It is love. There is nothing other than love that is permanent in this world. Having that eternal love principle within us, we are searching for it outside. At the first instance, we have to enquire our true identity. Love is our form.

Sarva roopam dharam shantam

Sarva naam dharam Shivam

Sarva roopam advaitam

Love is non-dual, eternal, peaceful and it is awareness in all forms and all names. The same love exists in all. You hate other people and love your own kith and kin, which is a mistake. This is a sign of living in duality.

'A man with a dual mind is half blind.'

You are in half darkness. You consider the man in front of you as separate from you. The ones at your home, you claim them to be yours. This is a big mistake, all are your own forms. You have to experience this oneness.



Advaita darshanam jnanam.

True wisdom lies in the experience of non-dualism. Being non-dual, man is going behind ephemeral and transient things, reposing faith in them and struggles to acquire them. Give up that type of search and anxiety. Develop the feeling, 'I am present in everyone and everyone one is present in me.' That which takes all these forms, is verily in me. That Atma which is present in everybody is present in you too. You don't recognize the Atma present in you and feel jealousy towards others.

Embodiments of Love!

The Atma present in you is present in everyone. You experience these cardinal principles for yourself but think that others are experiencing it.

There was a dog in search of food. It found a dry bone and started biting it. After some time, a piece of the bone pierced its gums and blood started oozing out. The dog was happily licking its own blood thinking that it was oozing from the bone it had bitten. In the same manner, man forgets his innate bliss and is under the delusion that he is able to derive happiness from the external world. This is a big mistake. In fact, all that he fancies that he is experiencing in the external world originate from within him. Pain or pleasure are the result of his own imagination. It is said, 'Pleasure is an interval between two pains.' Pleasure and pain are within, not outside. All that is seen is only a reflection; the reality is within. Hence, Vedanta exhorts man, 'Know thyself.'

Once, an IAS officer camped in a village. Some villagers cautioned him that the house in which he was lodged was a haunted one. They said,





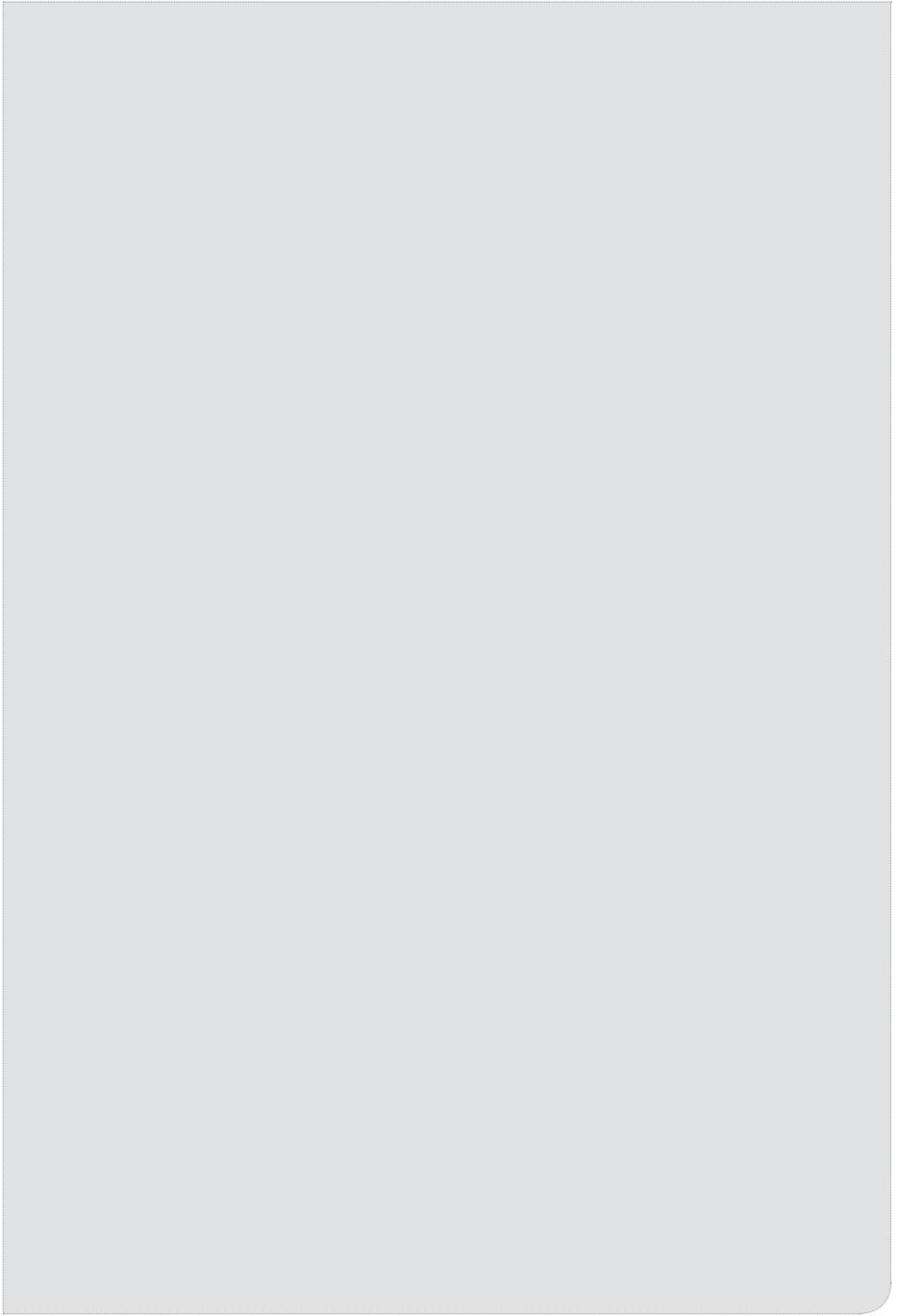
“You are a white man, you won’t be able to see them, only we can see them, but be careful.” The officer wanted to investigate the veracity of their statement. He put off the main light and switched on the bed lamp. He reclined on the bed keeping one leg over the other. He was shaking his legs and was lost in thought. Suddenly, he noticed a giant shadow of his legs on the wall. The shadow moved as he shook his legs. The foolish officer mistook it for a ghost and was fear-stricken. He took his gun, aimed at it and shot and lost his finger. Likewise, man is put to suffering because of his own delusion. In fact, nothing other than You exists in this world. All are essentially divine. *Ekam sath viprah bahudha vadanti*; Truth is one, but the wise call it by different names. Have firm faith in this principle of unity in diversity. Only then will you be free from worries and fear.

Embodiments of Love!

You may ask, what is the basis of all this and how one can visualise unity. We are in constant delusion right from the time we take birth. If you feel sad seeing somebody it is for you only; if you feel happy seeing somebody it is for you only. Pain and pleasure belong to you and none else. Hence, gradually reduce your *dehabhimanam* (body attachment) and develop *Atmabhimanam* (love for the Self). In this lie divine thoughts and feelings.

Dasara Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam, 10 Oct 2002





Avatar Declaration day

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Today is a very significant day. On this day seventy-two years ago in a small town called Urvakonda in the erstwhile Madras Presidency of South India, a fourteen-year-old boy Sathyanarayana Raju returned from school one afternoon, cast away his books and declared emphatically to his sister, "I am no longer your Sathya, I am Sai Baba. My devotees beckon me, I have work to attend to, I am leaving." He moved into a garden of a neighbourhood house and to the people gathered there, He sang the epochal bhajan- *Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam, Dustara Bhaava Sagara Taranam*.

When His parents arrived from Puttaparthi a couple of days later to see what had happened to their beloved child, little Sathya washed their feet, mixed all the food prepared by mother Eshwamma, made it into three morsels and while eating the food said, "My maya is gone". Reportedly a photographer took the picture of little Sathya at that time. As he took the picture a little rock protruded out of the picture. When he developed the picture, that rock became a picture of Shirdi Sai who was practically unknown in the state of Andhra Pradesh at that time.

Swami Himself declared subsequently that that day was a part of a three-stage announcement of His divinity. The previous two being the reported scorpion bite earlier and the one on 23 May 1940 when He emphatically told His furious father about His divinity when His father demanded the reason for His unusual behaviour. Swami declared that

He is Sai Baba.

Today we have to remember and recognize the significance of young Sathya's statement on that day. His words that He no longer belonged to the family and that His devotees are waiting for Him were clear indication of the commencement of His Avataric mission. It signified the end of His human bond and the beginning of a spiritual relationship with His devotees who had already started to trickle down to Prasanthi Nilayam in small numbers and subsequently in larger numbers.

Secondly, His assertions that I am Sai were His earliest references to the Sai phenomenon and of His connection to Shirdi Sai earlier. Later on, He delineated the meaning of the three words 'Sa', 'Aayi' and 'Baba' to mean the universal mother and father principle. The intruding boulder reportedly turning into a picture of Shirdi Sai was to assert the oneness of the same Sai in all the forms then, now and in the future. Finally, the first bhajan that he sang- *Manasa bhajare guru charanam*, demonstrated in a capsule, the catholicity of his beliefs. There was no mention of a God, religion or a sect but a command to surrender to the divine principle, which alone is the true guru or preacher. This bhajan is not addressed to a particular deity, creed or sect but the mind that is common to all humans.

As we get up in the morning now, we must be grateful that we were once contemporaries of this being whose buoyant reality is beyond verbal definition. His infinite variety can only be experienced and not explained. As Sir Isaac Newton said when he enunciated the principle of gravity, 'we are all little children playing with pebbles on the seashore while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before us.' We can't understand His mystery, we can only immerse in it. As Swami Himself said, 'Dive and know the depth, eat and know the taste'. But there is one aspect of His reality that is crystal clear. He descended to facilitate our ascent. Swami Himself announced, 'Sadhus prayed and I came.'



There is a story of a flock of little birds caught in the swirling snow unaware of a door to the open van, which would give them entry into warmth. The compassionate man inside the van was gesturing wildly to the birds and pointing to them the window that was open. But unfortunately the birds could not understand the language of the man or his gesticulation. The compassionate man then prayed to God to make him into a little bird so that he could fly inside with them. It is this same agony that makes God take a human form to come amidst humanity to save and sustain.

In the famous letter that Swami wrote to his brother when he was twenty-one, He declared that His task was to foster all mankind. The vow was to lead back all those who were led astray. He also announced in ringing tones, 'You yourself will see the full glory in the coming years.' What a glorious mission we have seen! The mansion of Sai is a multistoried splendour. Each storey has a story to tell us. The story of an educational system which runs in ninety countries with three quarter of a million young men; the story of the healthcare model which provides primary and tertiary healthcare completely free of cost; the story of the supply of water, the elixir of life to a parched land hitherto condemned to drought and despair; the story of new homes to the communities ravaged by floods and Prashanti Nilayam with all its structures which has become a spiritual destination to millions of people all over the world, nourishing the mind and calming the soul; all this drawing unsolicited acclaim from all over the world. The water project is an unparalleled example of public private partnership. While other universities are infected by perplexity, anxiety, discordance, indiscipline and irreverence; the accreditation committee¹ refers to Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning as a crest jewel. Prashanti Nilayam itself strikes any visitor here by its sheer size and the clockwork precision with which the whole organization operates.

1 The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an organization that assesses and accredits institutions of higher education in India.

It is over a year since His lovable form disappeared from our midst, but our greatest privilege is that God came here as a man confining His powers to accommodate a human form. '*Daivam Manusha Roopam*—what greater love can a creator show to His creation? Generations to come will hardly believe that such a one as this had ever walked the earth.



The glory of Bhagawan's Avatarhood

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We are celebrating the Navaratri festival in our country. In the far northeast of our country, she is worshipped as Goddess Kamaksha. Goddess Kamaksha prevails over the tradition of Tantra. In the form of the cleft on a rock, she is the creative desire of humanity. Desire born out of nature pure and aggressive, she becomes the untamed and unbridled shakti of our existence. Down south, the Goddess is worshipped as Kamakshi. In the form of Kamakshi, she prevails over the ecology of nurture. The desire is restrained, nurtured and transformed into devotion to God. What was raw there becomes regal here, what was abstract there becomes manifested here. Kamaksha and Kamakshi demonstrate the two stages of development of our spiritual progress.

But there is a third stage to it, which is more mysterious and enigmatic. The Goddess is worshipped as Kanyakumari at the southernmost tip of India. How profound the significance was for the founding fathers of our nation to commence the habitation of this land invoking the mother Goddess there! The legend of Kanyakumari reveals that the Goddess incarnated as a princess in order to slay the demon called Banasura. In due course, she realizes her identity and desires for Shiva. There are many climaxes in the story. What we see now is the Goddess waiting in the form of a bride for Shiva, for the divinity to come out of His trance and accept her as His bride. For many days, I was puzzled by

this unusual mythological construction. Why do we conceive such an arrangement where the bridegroom is left wandering in the Himalayas and thousands of miles away the poor bride has to wait for centuries?

The groom gives a promise that He will come but he is yet to come. The bride declares that she will wait and she waits for centuries. This appears to be a very interesting story that is still unfinished. The story could have ended by Shiva coming down and they could have married and would have lived happily ever after, but this does not happen.

This arrangement defines the concept of Bharat. It defines our existence as a nation, as a race. At the summit of the land we place the ultimate truth – Shiva and at the bottom the human soul aspiring for divine proximity and intimacy. In due course of time, the ultimate truth (Shiva) has to climb down from the Himalayas, come to the human level, traversing the entire land mass, and come to the southernmost point – which is another extreme of our consciousness; only then the union can be possible. This is what Bharat stands for.

Generations that have gone by and the generations that will come have only one destiny, which is to wait and yearn for the divine intimacy, divine love and divine proximity. Such an auspicious *muhurtam* arrived more than seventy years ago on 20th October 1940, when Shiva apparently came out of His trance and revealed His Avataric splendour. He demystified a part of His identity when He declared that I am no more your Sathya, I am Sai; maya has left me, my devotees are waiting for me. Years later on another auspicious moment, He demystified another facet of His identity after a long divine drama when He revealed to us the genesis of the Sai Avatar. The legend of sage Bhardwaja's penance, his visit to Mt. Kailasha and his witnessing the cosmic dance have become inseparable narratives of our celebrations and our collective memory. The suffering of sage Bhardwaja due to paralysis and the promise of Lord Shiva denotes that human suffering with a divine aspiration results in transformation and opens the pathways to



liberation. The penance of sage Bharadwaja and the boon bestowed by Lord Shiva became a blessing on humankind.

For the last two years many of us felt that our hearts were paralyzed because we were not able to see the beautiful form of our master. This sense of separation and pain is like a knife plunged into our heart. We can't take it out and we can't keep it there. We alternate between an emotional purge and an intellectual nothingness. But this pain is also a form of benediction as Bharadwaja's suffering opened the doors of grace. Nobody can predict, but we can only hope that from the womb of the dark night of collective grief, we will invoke the twilight of grace, happiness, joy and divine love.

One Sufi saint puts it very beautifully:

“When you were there I had the pride and vanity that you are with me, you have disappeared now but I have the faith that you are with me. When you were seen, I was afraid that I will fall asleep but now when you have gone inside and hidden there remaining awake becomes a nightmare for me.”

If you open the pages of the Ramayana, you will know that the entire epic rests on the two themes of separation and yearning. Characters are separated from each other, they long for each other, they meet and again they get separated; resulting in yearning. Father is separated from the son, brothers are separated, wife is taken away from the husband, the master waits for the servant, the citizens wait for their king, hence separation and yearning is the bitter reality. This epic highlights that this longing results in a mystical sweetness that fills our lives.

Five thousand years ago, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, when Arjuna decides not to confront his enemies and throws down his weapons, Lord Krishna delivers *Geetopadesham*. I want to clarify that there are different planes of existence. In the objective reality, the people present at the battlefield would have seen Krishna pacifying his friend



Arjuna who has put down his weapons and who doesn't want to fight. Following this, Arjuna gets up, he fights and wins the war. It takes a sage like Vyasa to capture that objective reality in a different plane of existence, to capture the essence and present it to us in the form of 700 verses of the Bhagavad Gita. This Bhagavad Gita has been contributing to the growth and progress of humankind. Our perceptions, society, governance, spiritual and corporal life, sense of idealism – everything is covered by the Bhagavad Gita. But in the objective sense, it is merely an exchange of a few words between Krishna and Arjuna.

In this avatar, we see the objective reality of what this avatar has created, accomplished or achieved. He has created a great superstructure of faith, service and devotion; mammoth projects which no one dares to repeat anywhere else; millions of acts of compassion; countless experiences and miracles. This objective reality itself overwhelms us. We are able to cognize it, classify it, construct and deconstruct it the way we want. But perhaps what we can't comprehend is what this avatar has done or what change He is bringing in different planes of existence. We need several Vyasas to compile for many centuries what this avatar has done, to capture the essence and produce it for us in a manner so that we mortals can figure out what has happened.

This is the difference between an avatar and a saint. Our landscape is filled with many sages, saints and prophets. But they always operate under certain conditions imposed by time, society and other aspects. The sages and saints are like artists who come to show us their pictures that inspire and motivate us. They show us a world of utopia and we are inspired to follow it. But an avatar is not like an artist. In the worldly manifestation, I can say that an avatar is like an eye doctor who catches each one of us and corrects our vision. For a sage, saint or a prophet the world is a unified entity. But for an avatar, each individual is a world, a complete creation in itself.

Many years ago, devotees prayed to Swami, "Swami! Today is a full



moon evening; let us have a gathering on the Chitravati sands.” Swami understood that these innocent devotees want to witness *leelas* on the river Chitravati as He would create many things from these sands. Swami lovingly said, “Do you think I need the sand of Chitravati to manifest things? Do you think I need to have sand to show miracles?” Then one devotee replied, “Swami, we will go to the bhajan hall and do Bhajans, if you are gracious enough we will witness some miracles.” Swami told, “You want me to entertain you with miracles, when will you understand that you all are my miracles. Your very existence is a miracle of mine.”

Kasturiji very beautifully captures this essence when he says that their plan of full moon fun was blasted out in one moment and we understood what kind of phenomenon was with them which cannot be found in written human history. Innocent villagers who were not highly educated were present there when Swami made this statement. Many of them would have wondered, what kind of miracle Swami was talking about.

What this avatar has willed to achieve, what He has accomplished and has been achieving, is something that we cannot comprehend. Let me end with a beautiful verse of Tagore:

“I thought that my voyage had come to its end at the last limit of my power – that the path before me was closed, that provisions were exhausted and the time come to take shelter in a silent obscurity.

But I find that thy will knows no end in me. And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.”

Dear brothers and sisters, perhaps we will grow old with these verses and in the twilight of our years, perhaps in a retrospective mood we will try to find out if there was a miracle in our lives or our life itself



had turned into a miracle.

In a worldly sense, we might have led an ordinary life achieving nothing extraordinary; but we might live in an extraordinary time where the extraordinary turn of events has brought us to know divine love in this form and in this name and perhaps then we will understand that each one of us have become the greatest miracle of this avatar.



The power of mother's love

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There are many spiritual texts that exist in our Indian history describing the glory and grandeur of our mother. The Vedas talk about the Sri Suktam, Medha Suktam, Durga Suktam, etc. Adi Shankara gave us the Soundarya Lahiri. Several other works like the Durga Saptashati and Devi Mahatmayam also exist. However, the single most powerful form of worship in the category of namas is the thousand names of Devi Lalitha found in the Brahmaanda Purana, popularly called as the Lalita Sahasranama.

Lalitha Sahasranama is very special because it was Devi herself who gave humanity the opportunity to worship her in a form and manner that she likes. Sage Hayagriva, an avatar of Lord Vishnu, later passed it on to Sage Agastya. Swami says that the word Lalita is equivalent to the word *svaha*, meaning offering in fire. *svaha* also means the end, the ultimate. Smt. Vijay Kumari in her book Anyatha Sharanam Nasti describes extensively the celebrations of Dasara in Puttaparthi. Swami used to come in different vahanas, very similar to how the Lord of Tirupathi comes during the Brahmotswam time. He used to adorn Himself with different robes on different days. She said that she had a vision of Swami as Lalitha Tripurasundari herself, having beauty unparalleled in all the three worlds. She was fortunate to see in her vision, Swami having jasmine flowers in long hair, wearing a yellow saree with a red border and *kumkum* smeared all over the head. He used to resemble Devi herself. Indeed for us all, our Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai is Lalitha devi herself from Srinagara.

Lalitha Sahasranamam has two dimensions to it. One is her love and glory and the second being her might and power. Talking about love, the verses say:

Bhandaputra vadhodyukta bala vikram nandita.

Meaning- she is a small girl, a love incarnate, but she is at war with Bhandasura. Her love doesn't hinder her from destroying the evil in Bhandasura.

Similar is the case with Lord Krishna, who destroys Kamsa; Lord Subramanya who destroys Soorpadma; and our mother Sai when She destroys the evil whenever it crops up within us. To talk about Swami's love, there are innumerable instances. Let me quote one of them.

There was a boy in our hostel who was not of a sound financial background. Swami knew this and assured the boy that He will take care of all his financial requirements. The boy was so hesitant and shy that he would not approach Bhagawan for any monetary help. He sat in front of the canteen without coupons with hunger and starvation, with tears in his eyes and Lalitha Sahasranamam on his lips. The verses were:

Annada vasudha vrudha brahmatmaikya swaroopini

Annada means the provider of food. Lo and behold! As he was chanting this, somebody tapped him from behind and when he turned back, he saw a man handing him an envelope with hard currency in it with instruction that it was from Bhagawan for the boy to have his food. We can't fathom the depth of love that Swami has for us. Lalitha Sahasranama, in addition to love and glory also describes her power and might.

I feel it is very silly of our scientists to claim that they have found the God particle. This is because it is beyond human comprehension to



fathom the divine energy and limit it to a particle.

In another verse it says:

Anekakoti Brahmand Janani divya vighraha

Vishwa garbha swarna garbha varada vaagadheeswari

She is the mother of many, many universes.

She holds the earth in her womb

In 2008, Swami changed *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* to *Samasta Lokaha Sukhino Bhavantu*. It meant that we should not only pray to Bhagawan for the welfare of beings of this world but also for the wellbeing of all the worlds. This is proof that Bhagawan is not just the mother of all of us, but is concerned and thoughtful for all his creation.

Desh Kala Parichinna Sarvada Sarvamohini

The Divine Mother is beyond time and space and has the charishma to attract all beings.

When I read these lines I feel it is futile to confine Bhagawan to the 85 years of mortal existence that we are aware of. Regarding the charisma of Bhagawan, I want to quote a personal example.

I never had any prior experience of Bhagawan before joining this university, nor was I from a background of Sai devotees. I played the role of Garuda in a drama in my first year. My character had a very odd look with a beak and a pair of golden wings fluttering around me. Perhaps it was too odd for Bhagawan too. When we assembled for a photo session, He got attracted to my strange attire. He called me and when I went up the aisle, I told Him in Tamil, "Swami, I am your *vahana*." Swami looked at me very seriously and said, "I have been seeing you." It struck me much later what He intended by this statement. He tried to drive home the point that He didn't need any introduction from us, He is beyond time and space. Today I stand



here with the confidence that immaterial of His physical presence or absence, He will always be guarding us for eons to come.

The *Phalasruti* of Lalitha Sahasranama says that it confers upon its readers discrimination, discipline and fulfillment of all desires. Swami adds here a caveat and changes the dimension of the Sahashranama. In a discourse on 10 March 2003, He says, “People chant Lalitha Sahashranama and Vishnu Sahashranama, but without purity of heart, no benefit can accrue by chanting them any number of times. Fill your hearts with the essence of the thousand names and practice at least one percent of your recital.”

I will end with a story which most of you might be aware of. I once imagined that I was holding God’s hands and He was carrying me across the shores. We left two pairs of footprints on the sands; it was a joyous occasion. But then, tides of problems and difficulties came lashing at us and I found that there was only one pair of footprints left on the sand. Furious I was and in my ignorance, I turned to Swami and asked, “Why did you leave me when I needed you the most?” Smiling at my ignorance, He replied, “Look carefully son, it is I who am carrying you in my arms and shoulders and in fact today you stand closer to my heart than ever before.” Today, on the 20th of October, Swami declared His Avatarhood. Today, I also want to declare that my love and gratitude for you will go on forever and forever. Thank you Swami for all that you have given me.



God is the essence of all

Miss G Shilpa

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Seventy-two years ago on 20 October 1940, young Sathya was on his way to school when suddenly he turned back returned home, flung his books away and cried out loudly, “I no longer belong to you, maya has left me; my devotees are eagerly waiting for me. I am leaving.” Saying this, young Sathya set out on a mission that has today become a mission accomplished. To that legend whom we revere as God, I surrender myself completely.

His hands moved with incessant vigour upon the canvas; with deft strokes He splashed some hues of crimson and orange. Painstakingly, He finished the painting and turned to look at me; those eyes had a divine glow in them. He pointed to the canvas and there I saw the words etched on it, like whispering breezes calling out to me, soft voiced across the lowland sward, like the immanent divinity – be still and know that I am God.

Dear Lord, when I saw you for the first time, my eyes were filled with your celestial beauty and when I shut my eyes now, only your form lingers on, just like the splendor in the western sky after the sun has sunk behind the horizon. I looked at the canvas, it was moving back as if it was being pulled back by some unseen hand, the closer I moved, the farther it went. I stood still, and everything around me started revolving. The scene disappeared and I woke up with a start. I had dreamt of God and myself being separated from him. It carried a message that made me think that if that beautiful canvas can mesmerize me, then how

much more beautiful is the hand that created it. The refrain echoed in my mind, like the immanent divinity – be still and know that I am God.

To experience the immanent divinity, we must first perceive the existence of God in all. The Vedas declare; *rasovai saba-* God is the essence of all. God is verily the essence of all, as He created all of us and bestowed on us the wealth of wisdom. However, all can't comprehend this sacred principle.

Let me illustrate this by narrating a story of how man's delusion has prevented him from attaining wisdom. Once, in the heavenly quarters of the demigods, a meeting was held. All the demigods felt that God created man with the very precious wealth of wisdom, but he doesn't deserve it. They decided to steal that wisdom from man and place it somewhere so that it would be beyond his reach. They thought of taking it to the highest of the mountain peaks and place it there, but one of the Gods disagreed saying that one day man will scale these great heights of the mountains and he may find it. They then decided to take it to the depths of the ocean. Once again one of the Gods disapproved, saying that when one day man will learn to swim, he will dive deeper and deeper, and then he may ultimately find it.

Again, the demigods thought of taking it to the core of earth's crust and placing it there. For the third time, one of the Gods reminded them that one day man will excavate the earth and he may find the precious wealth of wisdom. By now all the Gods were exhausted, although they admired the capabilities of man. Finally, one of the Gods said that there is one place that man has not yet explored and he is not expected to do so very easily. All the Gods came together and placed this precious wealth of wisdom within man himself. Since then, the wisdom lay buried within him. Thus, time again, man has successfully failed to realize this truth. Man has travelled thousands of miles in the external world and has even reached the outer space, but has miserably



failed to take one step to his innermost being. He is drowned in the ocean of delusion and struggles to find a way out.

Is there anyone who can help him? Yes! We have our ever-compassionate Lord, who despite our flaws, accepts us. To experience this compassion, we have to open our heart to God and install Him there in. This is the ultimate step to divinity. Here I am reminded of a beautiful story.

Once Lord Vishnu asks sage Narada as to which among the five elements is the greatest. Sage Narada replied that earth was the greatest. Lord Vishnu remarked, “Three fourths of the earth is covered by water hence which between the two is greater – earth or water?” Sage Narada agreed that water was greater. Lord Vishnu asked again, “In that case, Sage Agastya drank the water of the oceans in a single gulp, then who is greater, Agastya or water?” Sage Narada replied, “Indeed Lord, Sage Agastya is greater.” Lord Vishnu again posed a question, “Sage Agastya, is a tiny star in the firmament, who is greater, the sky or Sage Agastya?” Sage Narada agreed that the sky is greater. Lord Vishnu nodded in approval, “Your understanding is correct, indeed the sky is greater.” He added, “When the Lord incarnated in the form of Vamana, he asked for three steps from emperor Bali and in the course of accepting the gift of three steps, Lord Vamana assumed the gigantic form of Trivikrama. He covered the entire earth in one step, and the entire sky in the second step. There was no place to put the third step. Emperor Bali had to offer His head for the third step. So in this case who is greater, God or the sky?”

Sage Narada then replied, “When the foot of the Lord was so big as to envelope the entire sky, how much greater would be the entire form of the Lord. Indeed the Lord is greater than the sky. Lord Vishnu then gave a meaningful smile and said, “God, who envelopes the entire cosmos, dwells in the heart of a pure devotee. In such a case, who is greater, God or the devotee?” Sage Narada emphatically replied, “Indeed my Lord, a pure hearted devotee is the greatest of all.”



Indeed, God resides in the heart of a devotee. He is the indweller, He is the doer, He holds the steering wheel of our lives and knows very well when to accelerate and when to brake. Bhagawan has given an analogy of a human body and a car.

Once Swami called a family for an interview and during the conversation, Bhagawan asked a small boy, "What do you like the most?" The boy's mother, who was seated by his side, made a silent prayer in her heart wishing that he should say that He loves Swami the most. But the boy very frankly said, "Swami, I like Rolls Royce." Swami gave a broad smile and said, "So, you like cars, can you give me one car?" The boy thought for a while and said, "I can't give away my car, but I will let you drive my car." Bhagawan gave a blissful smile and said, "That's precisely what I am looking for. I do not want your car, just allow me to drive your car." There started the fascinating philosophy of how the human body is like a car and how God is the driver of the car. Be assured that when God drives your car, he will always take you on the right path.

Dear Lord! Even if my path is with obstacles, I am sure that with you in my car, I will always win the race. As for me, I have chosen the path and I can say in the words of Robert Frost:

'I would be saying this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
and I took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference.'





Excerpts from Divine Discourses

Embodiments of Love!

In every human being, there is eternal truth in the form of the principle of love. Strengthen that love within you, only this love will confer peace on you. This love will confer courage on you. If we cultivate this love, it is enough.

Love is God, God is love, live in love. Let us lead our lives in love. Why do you worry, why do you suffer when the love principle is within you?

We see many forms in nature. No two forms are alike. There is a lot of variety in names and forms, but the fundamental principle is one. You should never forget this principle of oneness. You are getting deluded seeing this diversity. You don't need to feel sad for anybody, not even for yourself. Be happy for yourself.

Why is this body given? What have I to achieve with this body? Is it education, is it games and sports? No, you have come to know who you are. Wherever we go, we have to put a question to ourselves – who am I? If you know yourself truly, you will know the rest.

It is very simple and easy to know the path of truth. There is nothing simpler than knowing yourself. It is difficult to know others, but it is very simple to know oneself. Follow the spiritual practices to know thyself. The body suffers from many sufferings and troubles. The suffering of the body is due to your food and habits. We should not be mindful of this suffering.

All of you have assembled here; why have you come here? All of you have come here for studies but you all are searching for something



different. You have to make an attempt to know the real purpose of your coming here. Then your task of coming here is accomplished. Hence, don't forget the purpose of your coming here. People all over the world have been investigating on these lines. They get worried about their life. But they should put efforts to know the truth. If we know this truth, we will know everything. Only through love, you can know the truth.

You can see so many bulbs burning here. You might find different forms of bulbs, but in every bulb there is only electricity. Without this current, the bulbs will not glow. The Atma within is the main switch. That spirit hears through the ear, sees through the eyes and is in the form of awareness in every body. You are forgetting this constant integrated awareness. You should never forget this awareness. So long as consciousness is present, you will experience this awareness. We have to make every effort to understand this awareness. The awareness doesn't come, doesn't go; it is the very existence then and there itself.

We are becoming prey to so many doubts and mistaken ideas. Because of these doubts, we turn mad. We should first dispel all our doubts. So long as there are doubts, we can never experience truth. We become ignorant due to our doubts.

Embodiments of Love!

Don't entertain doubts. These doubts make man forget his true nature. Strong faith is very essential. If that faith is not present, you are blind.

Despite having eyes with vision, you are blind, not being able to see the auspicious form of the Lord; with all the ears, you are deaf to the melody of the divine music; forgetting God seated in your heart, you





want to rot in the family life.

Saint Surdas said, “When I had eyes what is that I wanted, now I am blind what is that I want? What all I saw when I had eyes, when I lost the vision now, I want see the same things. In spite of vision you see only one thing as you see in its absence.”

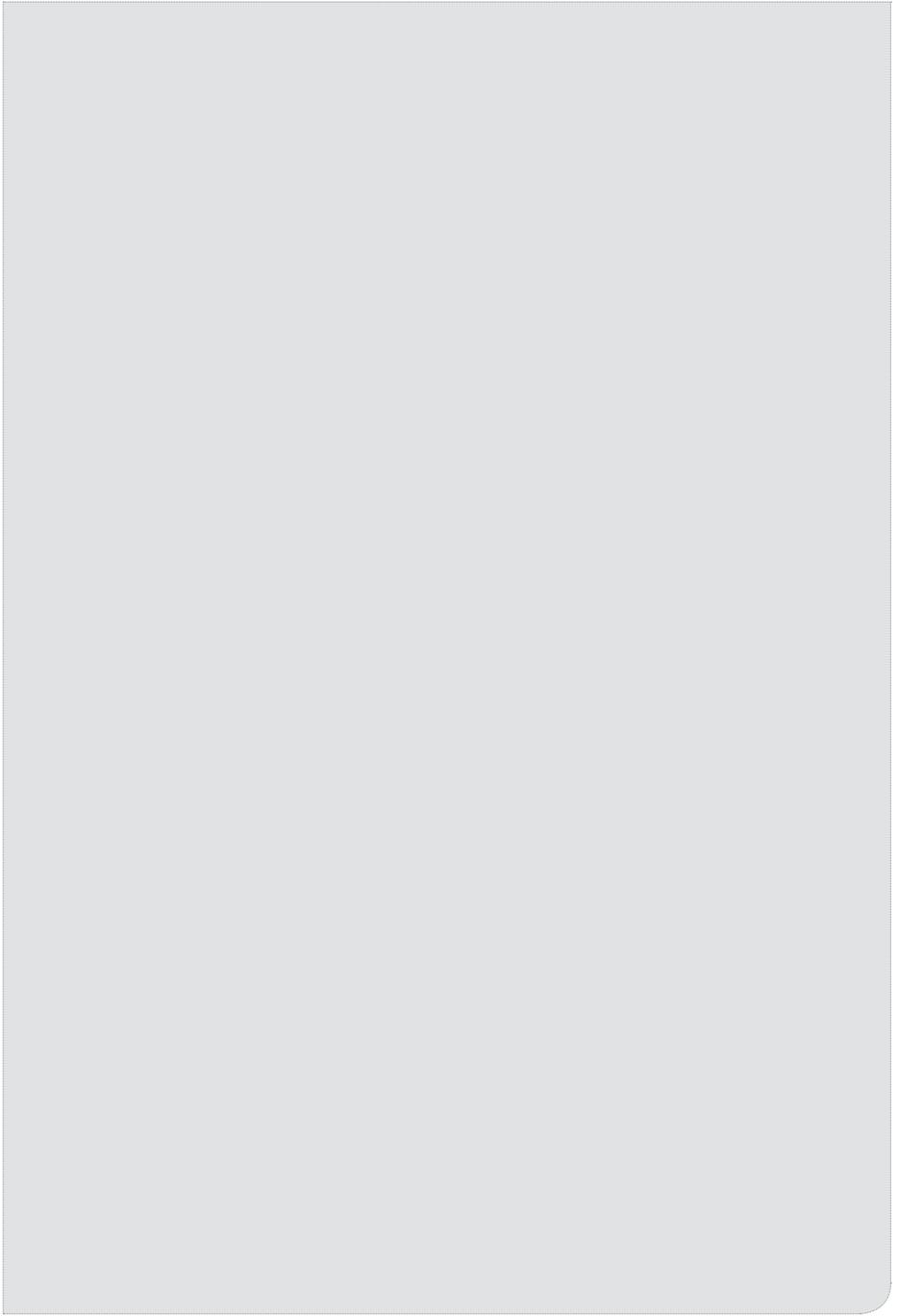
Do not go only by the vision, it should be divine vision. Fill your hearts with the divine light and divine vision. That divine light is present in everyone. Without that divine light, you can't see any light. Our main divine light is Atma. It is in the celestial song Bhaja Govindam that the same message is propagated and publicized all over the world by Adi Sankara. You are not enquiring what you should enquire.

Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam – think of God, if you think the rest, what for is life? What is to be thought of is only God. You are divine; God is not separate from you.

You and God are one.

Dasara Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam, 10 Oct 2002





The importance of five Mothers

Dr. (Miss) N Srividya

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*Pudami, kannatalli, poojaneeyulu kadaa!
vaari minchuvaaaru vasudha leru
kanna talli seva – kanna minchinadi ledu
Janma bhoomi kanna swargamedu*

Motherland and mother are venerable,
None is greater than them in the world,
No service is greater than serving the mother,
Is there any heaven other than the mother land?

This verse, recited by Bhagawan many times, brings forth the glory of mother and motherland. Today, I have the privilege of sharing a few thoughts on the mother principle on this auspicious occasion of Navaratri.

The Mother principle has been extolled in all scriptures since ancient times. Swami says that this country depends on four mothers – bhoo mata, deha mata, veda mata and go¹ mata. These are four pillars of our country and represent sathya, dharma, shanti and prema.

Deha mata refers to the mother who gives birth to the body. Go mata is the cow which gives us the sustaining milk, Bhoo mata is the land that grows crops which feed our body, and Veda Mata refers to the spiritual heritage and treasure which reveals the aims and objectives of our life and takes us to self realization. Finally, the desha mata gives us

1 Go here represents 'cow' in Sanskrit

the protection, care, culture, opportunities, rights and chances to serve others and elevate ourselves.

More fragrant than sweet smelling flowers, softer than butter, more beautiful than the eye of the peacock, more pleasant than the moonlight, is the love of mother. This poem, oft quoted by Bhagawan, illustrates the importance that He gives to the love of Deha Mata. Even in our Vedic injunctions, worship of the Mother is given primary importance as *Matru Devo Bhava* comes first. Bhagawan Himself is a shining example in this regard. He promptly acted on the noble thoughts of mother Eswamma that has fructified into mammoth projects in the area of free education, medicine and safe drinking water. Swami always remembered his mother with fondness and love. This yagnam during Dasara reminds us of the great sacrifice which a mother undertakes to bring up her children. Bhagawan says that blood, head and money are the gifts of our parents. Hence it is very important to show gratitude to our parents. Mother's grace is very essential as Bhagawan says that when mother's grace is there, God's grace flows automatically.

At this juncture, I take this opportunity to pay my loving homage to my loving mother who was instrumental in bringing me under Swami's divine umbrella. She was a loving mother to all who approached her. No one left the threshold of her house hungry. Whenever she prayed for her children, Swami's grace flowed. She was a loving Bal Vikas guru, a counselor and a very good human being.

Saint Kabirdas says:

Kabira jab paida hue to jag hansa hum roye
Aisi karni kar chalo, hum hanse jag roye

When you are born, you cry and others rejoice, live your life in such a way that at the end, you smile and others cry. She verily lived up to this dictum. I offer my gratitude to Swami to have given such a beautiful soul as my Deha mata.



Another mother whom we have to give importance to is the Bhoomata. In Bal Vikas, we learn a śloka which gives the importance of the Bhoomata and it goes like this:

*Samudra-vasane devi parvata-stana-mannddale
Vishnu-patni namastubhyam paada-sparsham kshma-svame*

This śloka asks forgiveness from mother earth for touching her with our feet. The dancers offer their pranams to mother earth before performing. Bhoomata, the bestower of all that is required to sustain our lives, is the personification of patience and compassion. We, her children should therefore show respect to her and use the resources wisely and sustainably.

One of the treasures given by Bhoomata is the cow. Bhagawan has exhorted many times that one ounce of cow's milk is better than barrels of donkey's milk. The Mother cow has been given a very high status in our culture and tradition. The Lord Himself took the role of tending to cows in the Krishna avatara. The cow is also worshipped as the celestial wish-fulfilling Kamadhenu. It is believed that all Gods and fourteen lokas reside in the cow. Hence Go Pooja is considered as most auspicious and fruitful. Bhagawan also constructed *goshaalas* and maintained Gokulams. He used to personally feed the cows during the Krishna Janmashtami and give them love.

In the Skanda Purana, it is stated that offering respect to the cows will help the devotees diminish the reactions to their past evil actions. Lord Krishna stated in Srimad Bhagavatam that the Lord can be worshipped within the cow by lovingly tending to it. Go mata is not only important because of the life sustaining milk that it provides, but also as stated in our Puranas, the presence of the cow is beneficial to our environment. The surya ketu nerve that is present at the back of the cow is known to absorb harmful radiations and cleanse the atmosphere. Even her so-called refuse is very useful and has been given importance



in our tradition. Cow dung has been attributed to over a hundred uses. It is not only used as a fuel but also to cover the floors and walls, which again are known to prevent harmful radiations. It is also known to have antiseptic and protective properties.

Panch gavya, which is derived from five sources of the cow, has been scientifically found to be very useful in agriculture and many other applications.

This land of Bharat, which has so much of rich tradition and culture, is also venerated as mother- the Desha mata or the Bharat Mata.

Janani janma bhoomischa swargadopi gariyasi, declared Lord Rama; meaning that mother and motherland are greater than heaven. Bhagawan has also quoted this many times. On numerous occasions, He has described Bharat as *karmabhoomi*, *yogabhoomi* and *tyagabhoomi*.

The heroic sages of Bharat with their capacity to concentrate and experience bliss by practicing the Vedic dictums became eligible to receive the Vedic message. There are many scientific achievements of the sages of ancient India that have been forgotten today. For instance, the construction of *vimana* or the flying vehicle was described way back by sage Bharadwaja. Sages were advanced in the science of the mind; they could reproduce the past and predict the future. The science of medicine was also highly developed in ancient India. Sage Aatreya is credited with the propagation of healing techniques, thousands of years ago. Sage Sushruta had expounded many surgical processes. Dhanvantari and many other sages have brought to light many other medical discoveries of ancient India. There is hardly any branch of study that was not researched or practiced by ancient Indians.

Extolling this greatness of Bharat, Swami would recite the following verse:

Khanda Khandantara khyati narjinchina mahaneeyulanu ganna mathru



bhoomi

*Paschatnya veerula para drolinchiyu, swatantramunu ganna samara
bhoomi*

*Sangeetha sahithya sastreeya vidyalandu, dhe shakthi choopina divya
bhoomi*

*Chitra kalalatoda chitramayi unmatti Bharata bhoomi yandu janana
mundi*

*Bharata mata dharma bhagyambu kapada badhyatantayu meede bhaktu
laara*

Meaning- this great motherland of ours has produced very evolved souls; spreading its glory across continents. This heroic land which won its freedom from occidental adventures; this sacred land, that achieved eminence in music, literature and fine arts; being born in this land of resplendent and artistic achievements, it is the supreme duty of all to protect the treasure of dharma bequeathed to us by Bharat mata.

To be born in a country with such diversity is a blessing. We have to be proud of this wise and useful Vedic wisdom of Bharat and give due credit and respect to it. We have to realize ourselves and not imitate others. One of the most fundamental aspects of our country is the Vedas. The Vedas are also referred to (or honoured as) the Veda mata. Vedas sustain the spiritual life of Bharat. They are the very breath of Bharat. They possess divine powers. The Vedas have been extolled more by the foreigners, especially by the Germans. German scholars have realized the power of mantras. They have conducted a lot of painstaking research on the Vedas. This has enabled them to unravel strange mysteries in the Vedas and they found that the Vedas contain many secrets which can confer progress on man.

Swami has lamented on numerous occasions that whilst other countries have come forward to learn our Vedic language of Sanskrit (so that they can understand the Vedas and the subtleties of the vedic culture), we Indians have been lagging behind.



The Gayatri mantra is considered as the quintessence of the Vedas. *Gayatri chandasam maata*, meaning- it is verily the mother of Vedas. Chanting of the mantra with faith and devotion bestows upon the individual, freedom from the fruits of karma. It helps purify the mind and like the sunrays, it dispels darkness within oneself. Gayatri is the oldest of the divine mantras and has a compelling charm of its own. Its speciality is that it has the power of the mantra as well as the prayer. When the power of prayer is combined with the power of mantra, the seeker is fully equipped to bring forth the spiritual potentialities to the maximum extent.

The structure of the Gayatri mantra has three distinct parts. The first part, comprising the first line, is to prepare the seeker's mind for prayer, meditation and realization. The second part, comprising the second and the third lines, is directed to intensify the seeker's aspiration or determination to reach the goal of realization. The first two parts represent the stage of effort on the part of the seeker. The last part, which is the last line, brings about the attitude of self-surrender, which is the stage of no effort. The Gayatri mantra bestows health, longevity, beauty, strength, vitality and resplendence to the person who chants it. There are instances that corroborate this, like the time when sage Gautama fed thousands of people with the power of the Gayatri mantra during a famine lasting twelve years.

The greatness of the Gayatri mantra has also been recognized by the western world. A British-born evolutionary biologist JBS Haldane wrote: the Gayatri mantra should be carved on the doors of every laboratory in the world. According to Swami, the Gayatri mantra doesn't belong to any cast, sect or religion. It is universal in nature. Hence the Gayatri mantra can be aptly extolled in the following verse:

*Sarva roga nivarinini Gayatri sarva dukhpariharini Gayatri
Sarva vaanch phala Sri Gayatri, sarva Veda mata Gayatri*

Meaning- Gayatri eradicates all diseases, it removes all sufferings, it



confers all that is desired, it is verily the mother of Vedas.

Swami used to narrate a *chinna katha* to tell the plight of the current youth regarding their knowledge about our culture and tradition, which is as follows:

There used to be a young man whose father was imbued with the Indian culture and tradition. His father would advice him to chant the Gayatri mantra 108 times at least thrice a day, preferably in the morning and evening. The son was a little reluctant but in order to please his father, he started reciting the mantra. Over a period of time, he got bored with it, and didn't find any meaning in continuing it. He started doing it in a different way and the father observed that he was able to finish the chanting very quickly. One day, he called the son and asked him as to what he is doing. The son replied, "I chant the mantra once and then say ditto the rest of the times." The father was shocked and was not in a position to explain to him what a purposeless effort he was putting in, and prayed to God to show his son the way.

The son, after finishing his preliminary education was getting ready to go abroad for higher education. Before leaving, the father wanted the son to go to the Devi mata temple to take her blessing so that he doesn't lose touch with Indian culture in foreign lands. The son finished his higher studies and returned after three years. The parents took the boy to the Devi temple, but he was reluctant to go in. When asked the reason he said, "I can't go without a shoe so I don't want to come in." The father very patiently told him to remove the shoes and took him inside the temple. The father then asked the son to thank Devi for finishing his education successfully. The boy, seeing the deity, said rather casually, "Hi Mommy, how are you?" and went ahead to shake hands with her. The parents were flabbergasted seeing this act of the son. The father got enraged, slapped the son and said, "Thank God, you have not forgotten you mother and father!"



Swami says that this is the state of our youth today. This can help us reflect more seriously on how we can benefit by this rich culture and tradition of Bharat.

We should pay our respect to all these five forms of the mother. For us, however, these five forms of mother are embodied in our Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the *Vedapurusha*. He has been a great patriot of our country Bharat, and He showers the love of a thousand mothers on all of us. He is the solace of the poor and the needy, and the eternal guru. To that supreme loving mother, I offer my loving gratitude. Beloved Sai Maa, I pray for your grace for all; please help us tread the royal path of Sai Dharma, overcoming all obstacles and impediments. Let us bask in Your divine love and protection. Help us make thee happy every moment of our lives.



The quest of Love

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I stand here as a witness, a subject, and a bard, all rolled into one to narrate a tale; a tale of the quest as subtle as thought and yet as pervasive as consciousness. It is the tale of the quest for love. ‘Embodiments of love’- these were the words which provoked this question, ‘What is love?’ and thus began my quest. I started looking for an answer in the world outside with its definition. Love is a strong feeling of affection; it is the care and concern which one living being showers on another. Hence love is a feeling, an emotion. If love is a feeling, it can have many facets. It can be the love between mother and child, between siblings, between friends or even between a patriot and his motherland. But all these forms of love are worldly love; they are temporary like the human lives. According to my understanding, love is something that is eternal, permanent; hence worldly love is not true love. If this is the case, then true love has to be divine love, as it is permanent, eternal and spans lifetimes.

What is Divine love? Divine love is the love between God and a devotee. God can go to any extent to come to the rescue of His devotee. He alleviates the suffering and pain of the devotee sheerly as an act of love. Didn’t Lord Vishnu rush to the rescue of the elephant king Gajendra when a crocodile caught his leg? Didn’t Lord Shiva rush to the rescue of Markendeya when the Lord of death himself came to take him away? Did not Lord Vishnu come to the rescue of Prahlada when his father subjected him to intense torture and cruelty? Each of these instances shows the love of the divine.

Divine love is made up of two parts; God's love for man and man's love for God. What about man's love for God? Sometimes it happens that man doubts the divine and fails the test of love. Even if we call love as divine love, it is incomplete. What is divine love? Is it just a feeling? Bhagawan has always stressed on the five human values—sathya, dharma, shanti, prema and ahimsa. Love is the most important human value because from love springs the other human values. Love in thought is sathya, love in action is dharma, love in feeling is shanti and love in understanding is ahimsa.

Love is Bhagawan's most important message. In his own words: The Sai principle and the Sai message are same, i.e. love. But why did God choose love, what is so sacred about love? The answer to this I found in the modern world, which is filled with hatred. One is ready to kill his own blood just for the sake of some material gains. In this case, man is heading to self-extinction. If man has to save himself, there is only one way out – he has to rekindle the spirit of love in his heart which gives him a way out.

Bhagawan says, 'Love and faith are the two cardinal principles that can redeem humankind.' So can I define love as a human value? Perhaps, but my thirst was not quenched. If love is something which has to be taught, if love is something which has to be re-instilled in our hearts as if it was never there, then I think I have come no closer to the answer. Love cannot be just a human value. The answer eluded me. I was back to the same point from where I had started.

What is this love? I gave up in despair. I had failed miserably. Knees bent in humility and hands stretched skyward in surrender, I called out to Him, I cried out to Him. But the quest of love is mysterious, it is elusive. Finally at that moment it chose to reveal itself to me. Yes! It was a revelation. It came to me as a flash. What is it that existed before the birth of time? What is it that shall exist when the universe shall fade away? What is it that is eternal and is in our hearts? What



is it that is the basis of creation? What is it that can neither be created, nor destroyed but can only be felt and experienced? These questions pointed to only one answer, i.e. God, and they pointed to another answer which is love. The answer that was staring in my face was Love is God, Live in love. Has He not declared this again and again?

Love is that eternal force that created this universe and it is this force by which the universe shall dissolve away. Love is that eternal force that can neither be created nor destroyed but can only be felt and experienced. It is that eternal force which resides in our hearts as God. It is the basis of creation as Bhagawan has declared, 'I separated myself from myself so that I can love myself.' Love is the fundamental undercurrent of the universe. Love is responsible for occurrences in the universe and love is the one that runs the universe. This is what Bhagawan wanted to tell me all this while.

'Premaswaroopulara- Embodiments of Divine love'. These eternal words that He addressed us with, was an acknowledgment that we are Divine. When He raised us to His level, if there is any task that awaits us, if there is a goal that is set for us by Bhagawan Himself, it is to justify these words with which He called us. How do we do it? The path has been shown to us. He always said, 'My life is my message'. We have to live His message as our lives and then our life shall become His message of love. Thus the quest came to an end, thus I found an answer I was looking for. What is love? Love is God.

Having been in close proximity of Bhagawan for so many years, which is like a feeling of floating in a river of love, I have learnt many a lesson. I would like to share two of them with you all.

Bhagawan ceased His finite form and assumed the infinite form yet He is ever full and ever fulfilling. It was in my third undergraduate year; just before the gratitude program. I had prayed to Bhagawan that He should show us His divine physical presence during our program.



The day of the program came but nothing extraordinary happened that would have answered my prayer. My prayers remained unanswered and I went back to Brindavan. One day, I got a dream where Bhagawan was sitting in the portico in His chair and all of us were sitting in the Kulwant Hall pouring out our hearts in the form of gratitude songs to Him. At the end of the program, Swami came amidst us, threw chocolates at us and blessed by posing with us for a photograph. The dream ended.

Even as the dream ended and I woke up, only one thought prevailed in my mind – that my prayers have been answered already. But the frailties of my mind led me to question this experience. I shared this with my co-room leader and as I was narrating this dream to him, he suddenly remembered that the chocolates that He had blessed during the gratitude program, had not yet been distributed. He started distributing those chocolates to all my roommates, including me. Even as I finished narrating the dream, Bhagawan had already proved to me that what I experienced was real, for those very chocolates that He had given to me in my dream were in my hands. Love can go to any extent to prove that you have experienced love. The lesson that I learnt was that love leaves no stone unturned to reach out.

Let me narrate to you my second experience. When I returned to Brindavan for the third Undergraduate year after the summer vacation, there was a hollowness in my heart due to the absence of His physical presence. I didn't know what to do; I was feeling melancholic because on every other birthday of mine, He had blessed me profusely. This time He won't be there and I was sad. One day, just a month before my birthday, one classmate of mine came running to me and told me that he had a dream of Bhagawan. In the dream, he saw that, he was sitting in the Sai Kulwant hall with a tray for birthday blessing and I was sitting next to him. Swami came for darshan, sat in the portico and beckoned him to come on the stage. As he was going near Bhagawan, Swami told him to stop and pass on the tray to me. I took the tray from



him, went up to Bhagawan, He blessed the tray, spoke to me and then asked me to go back and sit. After this, he blessed the other boy. As this boy was narrating the dream of his, I knew that my birthday had been already celebrated with Bhagawan. He had already blessed me for my birthday and I didn't need anything more than that.

Love knows no bounds, no barriers; love is a reward unto itself. I think with regard to love, my silence can speak more than what I can because in the depth of silence, love truly speaks to you. I want to end with the words of Khalil Gibran on love:

“When love beckons to you, follow him, though his ways are hard and steep.

And when his wings enfold you yield to him, though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.

And when he speaks to you believe in him, though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.

Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun,

So shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself. He threshes you to make you naked.

He sifts you to free you from your husks. He grinds you to whiteness.

He kneads you until you are pliant;

And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast.”

I wish you all success in your quest for Love.





Feeling His presence

Sri Adhitya Sekhar

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When Albert Einstein was formulating the principal tenets of his pathbreaking theory of relativity, he asked himself a simple question, “if I close my eyes and sit in a car, would I be able to differentiate between two situations; one when the car is travelling at constant speed and the second when the car is not travelling at all?” Similarly, when I was in Prashanti Nilayam one and half years ago for the entrance exam of SSSIHL, I found myself pondering over a similar conundrum. I was asking myself, if I were to close my eyes and sit in Sai Kulwant Hall, what would be the difference between that day, and a day ten years past? I thought that the only difference could be in my ability to feel His presence.

Less than a month later, when we were inducted into the portals of this Institute, we found ourselves back at Prashanti Nilayam. This time we were here for the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. During this Summer Course, the Registrar of the Institute was highlighting the salient features and the primary characteristics of this Institute. In that address, he mentioned that one of its goals is that each and every student, before passing out of these portals, must experience Swami. That caught me thinking, ‘what exactly does it mean to experience Swami?’

I strongly felt that to experience Swami, one has to feel His presence, His omnipresence. What exactly is it about His omnipresence that benefits us? All the benefits from His omnipresence can be summarized

in one word – reassurance.

On this note, I am reminded of a short story: there was once a little girl who was travelling with her father on a road trip in Europe. On the first night, after the sun had set, the girl asked her father, “Daddy! Where are we going?” “To your uncle’s house in Germany,” replied the father. The girl then asked, “Daddy, do you know how to get there?” Father replied, “No, but I am sure that we will find the way.” The same conversation repeated itself on the second night.

On the third night, the father was surprised to find that the car was silent and he turned around, expecting to find his daughter fast asleep. He was surprised to find that she was staring out of the window looking at the scenery outside. The father asked her, “Do you know where we are going?” The girl replied, “Yes father, we are going to my uncle’s house.” He asked, “Do you know how we will get there?” She said that she doesn’t know. Father, slightly puzzled asked her, “Why are you not worried tonight?” She replied, “It is because daddy is driving.”

Similarly, when we know that in this journey of life, God is driving us, what greater reassurance do we need than His presence, than the knowledge that He is there to take care of us at every moment. When Henry Ford set up his Ford motor company and ventured into the automobile industry, he did so by revolutionizing the factory production methods. He introduced the assembly line technique in which he gave each worker his own niche, his own forté to focus on. Similarly, in our lives, God as our manager has given us our own specific roles and duties. When we have faith in his knowledge, when we have trust in his judgement, when we have confidence in his decisions, when we believe in his abilities; then and only then can we progress to feeling his presence, his omnipresence. There is a verse in Bible that says, ‘My presence shall go with thee.’

When we have this assurance that He is with us, how can we not have



the reassurance of feeling Him with us? The first way is to feel him in events that happen around us. Many times in our lives, we may be placed in situations that appear bleak, helpless and hopeless. It appears to offer no avenue of escape and at that moment the circumstances of our surroundings may contrive to put us in a better place. Instead of attributing that sudden turn of events to coincidence, let us remember that coincidences as those moments when God chooses to remain anonymous. Let us feel Him through those events and derive reassurance from that feeling.

The second way to feel His presence is through the people around us whom He has chosen as His instruments. Let us take the example of when, during the Dasara festival, the students of His educational institutions take part in *Grama Seva*- village service. When we go and stand in front of the doorsteps of these villagers and hand over the food, *laddoos* and clothes, the joy that we see on their faces speaks for itself and because do not see us for what we are, but they see Bhagawan Himself in us. They are convinced that Swami is coming to them in our form and giving prasadam and blessings. Similarly, whenever people step in and make a change for us, let us acknowledge that God is acting through them, acknowledge that they are His instruments and feel Him so that we may derive this reassurance from this feeling.

The next way in which we can feel His presence is through our surroundings. With regard to this, I am reminded of a short story. Once there was a four-year-old child who had gone shopping with his parents in the streets of Chennai. It was a dark night and the road was crowded. Suddenly, the child found himself separated from his parents. Not knowing what to do, he wanted to get away from the hustle and bustle of the surroundings and turned towards a dark alley. For the next forty minutes, his parents searched the entire locality, alternating between the forces of the physical law and the forces of the cosmic law, hopping from the police station to the temple, all in the hope that their only child might be found again. Eventually, they got a phone call



from a shopkeeper that the child is sitting on the steps of this shop, happily sipping orange juice as per the child's particular request! When the parents reached the shop, the child showed no signs of being lost, instead he was enjoying himself.

Upon going home, amidst scenes of relief, the mother of the child felt that that was an opportune moment to teach the child a lesson. She called him aside to the privacy of another room and asked, "Son, do you have any idea of what you did, and of what could have happened to you?" The child replied, "Mother, nothing could have happened to me for Swami, for Swami was with me the entire time." It was a simple reply but what was even simpler was the conviction that the mother saw in the child's eyes. This conviction (of the child) convinced the mother that indeed the child felt Swami in those moments. That presence the child had felt made him completely unaffected by what was going on around him.

Similarly, when we are lost in the streets of life, we can feel Swami around us and that feeling can give us the happiness and the reassurance. A few years back, Swami had visited the hostel at the Prashanti Nilayam campus. While addressing the students there he said, "Wherever you may go, whichever town or village you may take up work, I will always be with you." When the translator translated this message, he added the words- like a shadow. Swami promptly cut in and said, "No, not like a shadow, but through your own self."

Through this small incident, Swami was telling us that He was not just going to be a shadow which might be behind us, beside us or in front of us – depending on the position of the light source and one's orientation; instead He would be within us, guiding us, guarding us, directing us and protecting us from within. Swami was giving us the assurance that He was going to be our manager, our driver and our marshal, and will guide us all from within us.



I remember an incident in the bhajan hall of Prashanti Nilayam. I was a ten year-old child seated in the bhajan hall waiting for Swami to come. When Swami entered bhajan hall, He walked up to me and asked me, “Why have you come?”

I replied, “To see you, Swami.”

Swami asked, “Is Swami in you?”

“Yes Swami”, I replied.

He asked, “Then why have you come?”

I had no reply, as I was logically outwitted. I could not think of any reply that could suffice as a reply to His question. He then went on to speak to other people present there but I got His message clear. He was not telling me but made me tell myself that He was within me. He gave me the assurance that He was within me. When I was lost as a child in the streets of Chennai, I felt Him near me. Now He told me that He is within me, and if He is truly within me, if He is truly within each and every one of us, then wasn't He within us before? He was within us, He *is* within us and He *will be* within us. So the question arises – what is the difference between then and now? He was within then and He is within now; then by default there is no difference. I got answer to my question. We have to feel His presence within as His presence is His omnipresence, and He will be felt and there would be no difference between then and now.





Excerpts from Divine Discourses

We have to remove the differences that He is God and we are the devotees. The six inner enemies or weaknesses are responsible for bad conduct. These six weaknesses are present in animals also. What is the difference between animal and you? Animals have hunger and they partake food, they sleep; and the same is with man. He also partakes food, he also sleeps. What is the difference between the two?

Man should have *Prajnam Brahma*, the spiritual awareness. So long as the intellect of spiritual awareness is present, man will not experience grief. All the rest pass away as passing clouds. Why should we worry and brood over these passing clouds? We have to catch hold of that principle which is changeless. That is the principle of Atma, the principle of awareness, which is sacred. Once you experience divinity, you turn into God- *Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati*.

Mamevashmo jeevaloke jeevabhootas sanatana- All are the sparks of the divine. The sparks of the divine exists in all.

Then how have the apparent difficulties, troubles and problems come? This is because we have filled our hearts with all bestial qualities. Distance yourself from this animality. Run away from bad company. Fill your hearts with eternal truths. For example, the cup kept here has water. If we have to pour milk, you have to pour the water out. On the other hand, if you just put milk directly, both the milk and water will be wasted. In the same way, you have filled your heart with wicked qualities. If you now add the good qualities, retaining the wicked qualities it will be of no use. So, distance yourself from bad and fill the heart with good and sacred qualities. Then you will become a sacred being. We have to follow a sacred path to make our lives sacred. We have to keep our heart empty of bad qualities. Once the heart is sacred,



you can fill it up with all the sacred thoughts.

We earn a lot of money and eat a lot of food, where does this go; with whom are we sharing all this? Ultimately, who will claim your property, no one knows. To fill this little stomach, you earn lots and lots of money. In fact, all the money that you earn, will it help you? No, it will not be helpful. For, in this momentary life, we face all these troubles and difficulties. This body is impermanent; it is like a water bubble; the mind is like a mad monkey. Don't follow the body, don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience; follow love. Follow reality. This is the true form of education.

You are studying so many things. We all study and study...ultimately to die; we should study to be immortal. What is the outcome of this secular education? These studies will help us only to eke out our livelihood. An educated person and an uneducated beggar also fill their stomach, is their anything great in this? We should not just fill our belly, but fill our hearts with love. This love will confer everything in the world.

Make every attempt to fill the heart. *Hrudayam* means compassion, i.e. one that is filled with *daya*- compassion. This compassion is love that has to be filled in our hearts. Don't waste even one moment and preserve this love. People are distancing themselves from such sacred love, they are distorting it and making their life miserable. There is no attachment between you and anybody.

Who is attached to anybody, what is the relation? There are no such attachments; there are all your making. Prior to marriage, who is husband and who is wife? After death again, who is husband and





who is wife? Both don't exist. Therefore, in family life these should be viewed as passing clouds. These relationships come in-between and leave in-between; they are not permanent. So, don't worry for these passing clouds.

Struggle and strive for bliss. You should enjoy love and share this with everybody. Man today is not sharing this love; on the contrary, he is sharing his anger, jealousy and hatred with his fellow men. After getting such good education, we are not sharing our love but only our hatred. This hatred is a highly demonic quality. The demonic hatred is ever on the rise but not the sacred love principle. If you receive even a fraction of love, share it with ten others. This is your real duty. Do that duty properly and acquire the divine principle.

Students!

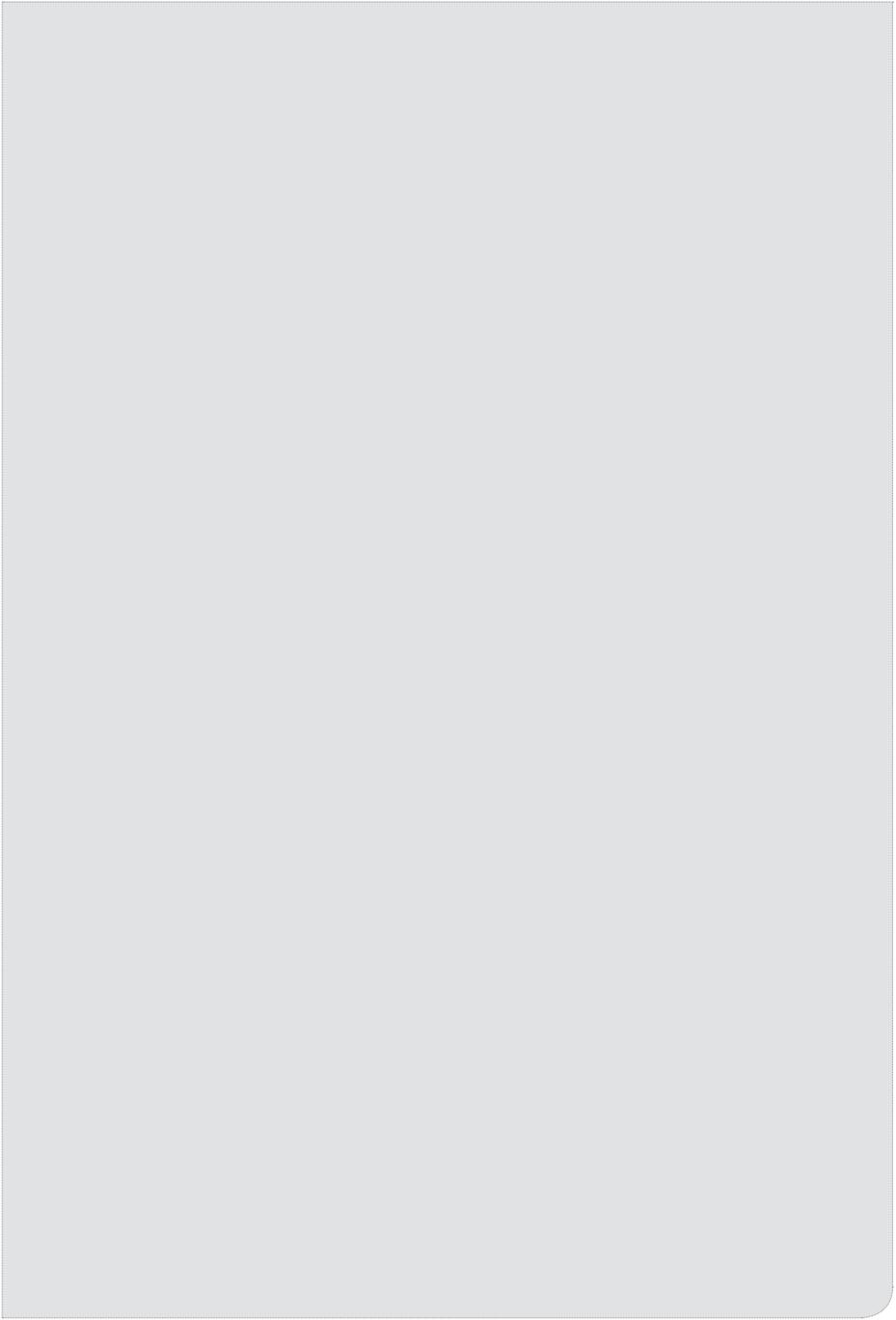
The subjects that you read belong to this world.

Ihamunu sukhayimpu hemataaraka vidya
Paramunu sukhayimpu brahma vidya

Secular knowledge will help you to be happy in this world and spiritual knowledge will be helpful to be blissful in the other world. We have to develop this quality, then we will have everlasting happiness.

Dasara Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam, 10 Oct 2002





Lessons taught by Bhagawan

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There are two yagnas going around at the moment. One is the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagna and the second is the Narayana Seva Yagnam. Bhagawan has given the mandate for the performance of these two yagnams for the people concerned. But there is a third yagnam, the mandate for which Swami has given to all of us here and elsewhere. Unlike the first two, which are confined to the nine or ten days of Navaratri or Dasara, the third Yagnam is not confined to any specific time as it occurs moment to moment within us. It is the Antara Yagnam. Just like every piece of wood, when dipped in ghee is offered as *aahuti* in the fire stoking it; just like every packet of food given appeases the *jatharagni* of the receiver and the fire of gratitude of the giver for getting an opportunity to give, every moment of absorption and reflection kindles the divine flame within us in this Antara Yagna.

How do we participate in this Antara Yagnam? What are the rituals in this yagnam? There are three main rituals in this Antara Yagnam. First is living in the present. We have heard Swami say innumerable number of times that live in present, as the present is omnipresent. What does it amount to? We have heard the story of the two monks, which goes like this:

Two monks were undertaking a journey and en route, they come across a lady at the banks of a river struggling to wade through the waters. Without a moment of hesitation, the first monk carries the woman on his back, takes her across the river, drops her on the other side, comes

back and continues his journey with the other monk. Several hours pass by and when the second monk is no longer able to contain it within himself, he bursts out and asks the first monk, “How could you do this, we are supposed to be monks, how could you carry a lady on your back? This is very improper.” The first monk replies, “Well! I carried her on my back and dropped her hours ago, are you still carrying her?”

Our mind is like this. Most of the times, it is in a victimized state, trying to force explanations. It is trying to live in the past, reliving a story, recounting and telling the moral of the story, or at the other extreme – living in future, building castles with bricks of desires and wishes. It is therefore a prisoner of the past or slave of the future.

What is the solution? The solution as Swami says is to consciously invest 100% presence into the present moment. Rudyard Kipling says in his poem:

If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,

Gulzar said it succinctly in the line of a song:
Aanewala pal jaane wala hai, ho saka to isme zindagi bita do
Pal jo ye jaane wala hai, pal jo ye jaane wala hai

If we experience the freezing of time in the moments with Swami, perhaps a word with Him, perhaps a mere look from Him; it is because in that moment, Swami invests 100% of His presence. Not only does He invest 100% of His presence in that moment, He also makes us invest 100% presence in that moment. There would be innumerable occasions when in the rehearsal of a convocation drama or any other drama, the boys would put up the drama the nineteenth time, but He will see it as if He were watching it for the first time, laughing at a funny dialogue or joke. That is the freshness of the moment, the



intensity of the present. No scores to settle, no rewards to expect – it is pure, still existence. When our mind is in the present, we are in a pure state of existence and then the cycles of highs and lows and the vicissitudes of our emotions are completely absent.

The second ritual in this Antara yagnam is being in the state of acceptance. The other day, a student from Anantapur spoke about acceptance at three different levels. Being in acceptance is being non-judgemental. Judgements are the impressions from years or births of conditioned learning like our thoughts, belief systems, notions and so on. They influence our comprehension of reality.

A man once went to a Zen master seeking to be initiated to the Zen way of life. The master said, “Sure, my child, I will teach you the Zen way of life. But let us have a cup of tea.” The man sat and the master offered Him a cup and started pouring from a teapot. He started pouring and pouring continuously into the cup; the tea was overflowing, it was falling on the ground. When the man had crossed his threshold of irritation, he shouted, “Master, what are you doing? Stop! The teacup is full.” The master said, “The tea cup of your mind is full, how can I pour the tea of my teaching?” Swami says, “I give you what you ask for, so that you may learn to ask for what I have come to give you.” The question is; are we ready to receive, are we ready to accept, is our teacup empty?

Acceptance is all about dropping these belief systems, notions and ideas. But there is a tricky part here because we don't realise at times that we are judgemental. As Swami says, ‘It is like wearing a pair of green glasses and saying that the world is green and not knowing that it appears green as we are wearing green glasses.’ The solution in this case is to play the devil's advocate. It is to cross-examine and cross-question the mind. If there is any trace of defensiveness, or if the mind tries to give a long concocted, convoluted justification for the judgement, or if deep down within there is some restlessness, then you



are sure that some judgement is involved.

The solution is very simple. It is to observe because the mind is like a child. When the child knows that it is observed, it gives up the thought of mischief. The mind is like a child, observe but don't react.

Emptying the teacup of the mind is the next step in discovering the true nature of the mind. This is the third step of the Antara Yagnam. How do we overcome the mistaken belief of what we think we are? Narada once asked Vishnu the meaning of Maya. Vishnu replied that he will tell.

During one of the celestial rounds, Vishnu was thirsty and he asked Narada to fetch him some water. Narada promptly went to the earth, knocked at a door seeking a glass of water. A young lady opened the door. Not only she got a glass of water but also some curtsy. The curtsy turned into hospitality, hospitality turned into generosity. One thing led to the other, an hour passed thus and then a day, a week, a month and very soon Narada forgot the purpose of his visit. Eventually, he fell in love with the lady, married her, had children, started a profitable business, accumulated a lot of wealth, property and possessions. If anybody else would have been the author of the story, it would have ended as they say – they lived happily ever after. But alas, God was the scriptwriter. One fine day, there was a big flood, a holocaust, and everything that Narada had, got swept away. He lost his wife, his children, his property, his possessions and everything. One moment he had everything and the next moment he had nothing. As Kabir says:

*Do din ka jag me mela sab
Chala chali ka khela*

*Koi chala gaya Koi jave
Koi gathari bāndh sidhava
Koi khada taiyaar akela re*



*Koi khada taiyaar akela
Chalachali ka khela re khela re khela re*

*Do din ka jag me mela sab
Chala chali ka kela*

Out of utter despondency, Narada cried out to the Lord, “Why did you do this to me?” In the silence amidst the stroke of thunder, he heard the soft voice of Vishnu, “Narada, twelve hours have passed, you have not got me a glass of water.” Narada again cried out to the lord, “Lord! Twelve years have passed and you say that only twelve hours have passed.” Vishnu replied, “Was it not you who asked me the meaning of maya? This is the power of maya or mind identification.”

What is the solution? Mind is like a lock, turn it inward- bliss and heaven, turn it outward- misery and hell. A samurai warrior went to a Zen master and asked the master, “Where is heaven and where is hell?” All the Zen masters and Sufi mystics have a unique way of teaching; they create a situation and allow the lesson to unfold on its own. Swami did that and continues to do that. This is known as the case study method. The master looked at the samurai and said, “Sure my son, I will tell you, but tell me who you are? The samurai promptly introduced himself with all his accomplishments of war and all the titles he had won. The master said after a pause, “Hmm...I am sorry my son, with all your achievements and accomplishments, you are after all a soldier. I think you are not capable of receiving such high truths from me.” Angered at this reply of the master, the samurai was ready to draw out his sword from the sheath. When he looked at the master, he heard the words- ‘here is hell my son.’ In that moment, he realized that what a profound teaching the master imparted to him. Sitting in front of master, the samurai bowed down with all humility and reverence and he got the answer to his second question, ‘here is heaven my son.’

Swami says that both are within. Swami narrates the story of an old



woman who was searching for the needle that she lost in her house, outside in the street, because there was light in the street. A young boy went to her and said that she must take the lamp inside the house and search for the needle for it is the house where she had lost it. This is the essence of the song of Kabir:

*naiharwa, hum ka na bhave
niharwa niharwa*

*sai ki nagari, parama ati sundar
parama ati sundar
jahan koi aaye na jaave
niharwa niharwa*

What is the way to discover our true nature? Swami has given a simple recipe – self-assertion. *Soham-* as Swami will say in His inimitable style, because the spiritual path is a self-fulfilling prophecy. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati-* as you think, so you become. It is not without reason that in each and every discourse of His, Swami addressed all of us as Divyatma Swaroopulara. Perhaps with a faint hope that somewhere along the way; we would all truly assert our true divine nature, Divyatma Swaroopulara. When we start to discover our true nature, the more the mind and the ego would be absent and the less we would be in our mind. So, let us undertake this *Antara yagnam* by asking our mind, which has wandered away into this distant arena (where it is an alien and is subject to misery and suffering), to come back to its very home.

*Chal re mann apne dham, chal re mann apne dham,
Is jag mein pardes hei bandey, bhatak raha kyon subah aur shaam.
Chal re mann chal re mann, chal re mann.*



The beauty of Divine poetry

Dr. Medasani Mohan

Hon. Telugu Pandit

We have to do a lot of enquiry and introspection on what is the real beauty in this whole universe, which is made out of the five elements. We enjoy some spectacles and desire to see it again and again and we detest some sights and don't wish to see them another time.

Soundarya Lahiri of Adi Sankara

The real beauty is the beauty of words. This beauty manifests itself in the form of Soundarya Lahiri of Adi Sankara:

*Avidyanam antas-timira-mihira-dweeppa-nagari
Jadanam chaitanya-stabaka-makaranda-sruti jhari
Daridranam cinta-mani-gunanika janma-jaladhau
Nimagnanam damshtra mura-ripu-varahasya bhavati.*

In this 3rd verse of Soudarya Lahiri, Adi Sankara describes the glory of mother.

The dust under your feet, Oh Goddess great,
Is like the city of the rising sun, that removes all darkness, unfortunate
from the mind of the poor ignorant one,
Is like the honey that flows from the flower bunch of vital action to the
slow witted one,
Is like the heap of wish giving gems to the poorest of men,
And is like the teeth of Lord Vishnu
In the form of Varaha, who brought to surface the mother earth,

To those drowned in this sea of birth.

*Sarad-jyotsna-shuddham sasi-yuta-jata-juta-makutam
Vara-traasa-traana-sphatika-ghutika-pustaka karaam;
Sakrn na thva nathva katham iva sathaam sannidadhate
Madhu-kshira-drakhsa-madhurima-dhurinah phanitayah.*

Sweetest words rivaling the honey, milk and grapes,
Can only come to the thoughts of the devotee,
Who once meditates on your face, which is like the white autumn
moon,
On your head with a crown with the crescent moon and flowing hair,
And hands that shower boons and give protection,
Which hold the crystal chain of beads and books.

*Jai janani sudha samudraantan manidweepam samrudha bilwatave
Madhya kalpadruma kalpa kaadamb kaantara vaasa priye
Krithivasa priye
Sarva loka priye*

Victory to the mother who is interested always in living in the forest
of Kadamba trees
Which are similar to the wish giving Kalapaka trees
And which is in the forest of Vilwa trees
And which is situated in the gem island in the sea of nectar
Who is the consort of Lord Shiva
Who is the darling of the entire world.

*Sadararabdha sangeetha sambhavana a sambhrama lola
neepasraga badha chooli sanadathrike, Sanumath puthrike,*

Who has her posterior decorated by her dancing hair, which has been
freed by the raising crescendo of the soulful music, who is the daughter
of the mountain.



Soundarya Lahiri is the waves of beauty and auspiciousness that hits the devotee. If we stand on the seashore, we notice continuous generation of waves hitting the coast. We feel overjoyed witnessing the ebb and flow of the waves following a rhythm. In this way, the waves of beauty rise forth in the heart of a poet and cascade out in the form of ethereal poetry. This flow of the words, emotions and thoughts of these great poets confers bliss on all who listen to these poems.

Kalidasa's poetry

Poet Kalidasa did intense penance and was fortunate to have darshan of the mother and hence was able to compose verses of utmost beauty and sublimity. The same is the case with sage Vyasa and Valmiki. When sage Valmiki felt like a fountain of sweetness and poetry flowing from his speech, Lord Brahma manifested to him and said, "You are getting this feeling because Goddess Saraswati is seated in the lotus of your heart. This is to make you compose the epic Ramayana and spread it in the world."

All of us have to aspire to attaining such beauty. Those who aspire for this beauty are really blessed. Prahlad, Parasara, Narada, Pundarika, Vyasa, Ambarish, Shuka, Sounaka, Bhishma, Rukmangad, Vashishtha, Arjuna, Vibhishana, Hanuman and the likes were able to attain this beatitude by their penance.

This is a gift that is conferred by Goddess Saraswati by her darshan after intense tapas. Bhojaraja, the king in whose court Kalidasa was a poet, loved Kalidasa as Kalidasa had attained the acme of devotion to Goddess Saraswati. He was an adept in narrating *maha kavyas*, eliciting the subtleties of emotions in words, explaining esoteric truths in his poems and in chiselling out a beautiful poetic sculpture with his artistic visualizations. Bhojraja was very fond of Kalidasa, so he thought, "This great poet likes me so much that he writes so many verses in praise of me. If he gets the news that I have died, he will write



exquisite poetry in pain but alas! I won't be able to listen to it.”

Bhojaraja finally asked Kalidasa, “Please assume that I am no more and compose a poem for me.” Kalidasa replied, “This is a very strange situation, please don't think of this even in your dreams.” Bhojaraja said in a commanding tone, “As a king I am ordering you to write these verses.” Kalidasa refused it outrightly. Bhojaraju said angrily, “Do you know the punishment for turning down my request?” Kalidasa replied with audacity, “I know O King! It is either death penalty or banishment from the kingdom; I am ready for both.” Kalidasa was banished from the kingdom.

Bhojaraja was not able to bear the pangs of separation from Kalidasa. He was not able to conduct his day-to-day activities. He grew a long beard and his entire personality changed. Bhojaraja set out in search of Kalidasa. After a diligent search spanning a few days, Bhojaraja found Kalidasa, but was not able to recognize him as his appearance had got a complete change. At first, they were not able to recognize each other but after they started a conversation, Bhojaraja recognized this stranger as Kalidasa. But Kalidasa had immersed himself in the worship of Mother Saraswati and treated this outside world as ephemeral and hence was not able to perceive anything in the outside world. Bhojaraja realised that Kalidasa was in a trance. Kalidasa exchanged a few pleasantries and asked Bhojaraja about the place from where he had come. Bhojaraja replied that he is from the town Dharanagaram, which is ruled by Bhojaraja. Kalidasa was overjoyed and asked about the well being of Bhojaraja. Bhojaraja immediately took advantage of the situation and replied, “Where can you find him now. I came here not able to bear the sight there. Once Kalidasa left him, Bhojaraja unable to bear this separation was bedridden and left his body.” Kalidasa was immersed in the ocean of sorrow and a poem burst forth from his lips in that grief.

*Adya dhara niradhara niralamba saraswati
Pandita khanditah sarve bhojaraje divangate*



Meaning- The city of Dhara lost its foundation; Mother Saraswati lost her support; all the scholars and poets having become valueless, as Bhojaraju has left his mortal coil.

Listening to this śloka, Bhojaraja in the guise of the tattered man fell down on the ground and died. Kalidasa had *vaak suddhi* (purity of speech), i.e., whatever he said would come true. Kalidasa immediately realized that it was Bhojaraja who played a trick on him to bring forth this verse and felt very dejected. He sat there shedding tears. Mother Saraswati manifested before him and chided him, “O! great poet, how can you be so despondent, change a few words in the śloka composed by you and change the meaning.

*Adya dhara sadadhara sadalamba saraswati
Panditah manditah sarve bhojaraje bhuvangate*

Meaning- the city of Dhara has a strong foundation, Goddess saraswati always has a prop; all the scholars are very erudite when King Bhojaraja is on the earthly plane.

Immediately, Bhojaraja got resurrected. Kalidasa was always in perfect equanimity and equal mindedness; he had earned the grace of Goddess Saraswati and transcended the pair of opposites. Sometimes, even for a great saint, the maya peeps in and troubles him. When Kalidasa was speaking to mother Saraswati, she said, “*kavir dandi¹, kavir dandi bhavabhuti², schapanditaha.*” Poet means – he should be like the great poet Dandi; and a scholar should be like Bhavbhuti. This statement irked Kalidasa. He rued, “I have done intense *tapas* and by its power I made Goddess Saraswati to manifest before me, and she is praising someone else in front of me.”

In that anger Kalidasa said, ‘*Koham Rande*’ meaning am I a fool? Mother quickly rejoined, ‘*Tvamevaham tvamevaham*’- You and I are

1 Dandi – a great Indian poet

2 Bhavabhuti – a scholar of high repute



one. She meant that, as Kalidasa was one with the Goddess, she didn't praise his poetry. She taught a lesson to Kalidasa that he should not get entangled in the vices of jealousy and vanity. Kalidasa realized his mistake and asked mother for pardon. He was now able to see Mother in every speck of the cosmos.

One day a scholar who boasted of possessing great knowledge came to Kalidasa and asked him, "I request you to introduce me to king Bhojaraja and solicit him to felicitate me. This will be helpful for the removal of my poverty." Kalidasa tested his scholarship and found that he doesn't know anything. But Kalidasa felt pity for him and thought that the scholar should be given some felicitation from the king. Kalidasa hit upon a plan. He decided to introduce this pundit as an accomplished scholar who is now practicing a vow of silence. He asked the scholar to strictly maintain silence. The scholar was overjoyed. Kalidasa dressed him in the attire of a pandit and took him to Bhojaraja's court. Kalidasa introduced this scholar to the king, "O! King, I have with me an erudite scholar who has accomplished a lot of name and fame by his scholarship. Bhojaraja was very impressed as a great poet of the order of Kalidasa is praising this scholar. He left his throne, came down and bowed down to this scholar and declared that such gifted litterateur is worthy of felicitation. Bhojaraja got a desire. He felt that this savant should visit the Ramayana temple that Bhojaraja had constructed. In this temple, Bhojaraja had kept the Ramayana written by him up until the Sundara Kanda chapter.

Kalidasa felt it is all right to step into the temple, as this doesn't necessitate the scholar to speak. Kalidasa took this scholar to the temple adorned with elegant and flawless sculptures from the episodes of Ramayana. Upon witnessing the exquisite beauty of the sculptures, this scholar forgot himself. His eyes fell on a gigantic figure of demon king Ravana and unable to stop himself, he uttered, '*Rabhana Rabhانا*.' Bhojaraja was surprised and seeing the face of Kalidasa thought, "Kalidasa is applauding him and he is not able to even utter clearly



the name Ravana.” Kalidasa had Mother in every speck of his being. He used his presence of mind and said to the king, “Before going into the vow of silence, the scholar had raised a very pertinent question. He said that in the name of the brothers of Ravana, i.e. Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana we have the sound ‘bh’, but why we don’t have it in the name of Ravana?” Bhojaraja once again realized the greatness of this scholar and bowed down to him. Bhojaraja felicitated the scholar and sent him. This shows the grace that was showered on Kalidasa by the divine mother Saraswati. This grace of Mother has worked through many great poets and writers and has given us sacred compositions like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Brahma Sutra. All these great works are the sparks of the divine light, hence we should read them and take their essence and apply it in our daily lives. If we do this we also will understand the true meaning of beauty and bliss. We can attain this by undertaking penance of body, mind and speech. We have to turn inward to see the divine light of mother.

Hanuman was a pundit who saw that divine light in Lord Rama. Great devotees of the Lord forget themselves when they see this divine light. Duryodhana was not fortunate to witness this divine effulgence when he witnessed that even on the eleventh day of the battle, both Krishna and Arjuna were very fresh and energetic. This is the sign of having the evil trait of jealousy.

Krishna accepted the task of being the charioteer of Arjuna. He would take care of the horses every night after the war. He would remove any arrows that were shot at the horses, clean the horses, and also tend to any repairs to the chariot. He would do all the tasks on his own, as He was God himself. He showed by example, the spirit of service.

Divine Romance results in Elevating Poetry

When Yudhisthira was coronated, he had peaceful sleep. Until then,



he never used to have sound sleep as he had a desire to be the king and had many difficulties and obstacles. He thought to himself, “As my desire of becoming a king has been fulfilled, I will go to Krishna and learn a few lessons about divinity. Arjuna has been so fortunate to receive the song celestial Bhagavad Gita from Krishna directly.” He went in search of Krishna and to his amazement found him still with Arjuna in his mansion.

Yudhisthira went to the house of Arjuna and found Sri Krishna in *dhyana mudra* (meditative posture). Dharmaraja was surprised seeing Krishna doing meditation. He wondered, “Why does Krishna need to meditate, He is God himself? We meditate on his bewitching form, on His lotus feet and sanctify our life, but Krishna – being God Himself, is meditating on whom? Is there any other God?” He sat there waiting for Krishna. The one who was coronated as the emperor and had all the wealth, riches and domain of land under his control, waited for Krishna for two hours. This should be the yearning for God.

Krishna came out of his meditative pose and finding Dharmaraja in front of him, enquired about his welfare. Dharmaraja touched the feet of Krishna and asked with amazement, “O! Brother-in-law, it is very surprising that you are doing meditation. I am curious to know, what you meditate upon. Krishna replied with a smile, “What is the surprise in this, when devotees meditate for God, God also meditates for His devotees. I meditate on the devotees who take refuge in me and depend totally on me. I do it everyday, you saw it only today.”

This made Yudhishitra even more curious and he asked, “Krishna, I am also your devotee, do I also come in your meditation?” Krishna replied, “You have come only today; until yesterday, you didn’t come in my dream.” Confused, Yudhisthira asked, “I have always been your devotee and I have got this kingdom only by your grace, then what is the reason for my not in your *dhyana*.” Krishna replied, “All your brothers come in my meditation daily as they don’t have any desire



for kingship; they fought as mere instruments to give the kingdom to you. But as you had the desire for sovereignty, you didn't come in my *dhyana*. The desire for kingdom got fulfilled and now you have started thinking about me, hence you are coming in my meditation.”

This shows that as the devotees seek God, God also seeks his devotees. This sweet mutual relationship of love gives birth to such beautiful poetry. The whole of Indian literature has been gifted to us by this divine romance. All the great poets discovered this light of divine by traversing the highway of emotions and sharpening the swords of their wisdom to give us great epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavatam, Meghasandesha, etc. We are fortunate to taste the nectar of love, beauty and devotion in these epics. If we don't take the essence of these narratives and apply it in our lives, our lives are futile.

Saint Tulsidas

Great saints like Adi Sankara, Ramanujacharya and Annamayya yearned to behold this divine light. Sage Valmiki had the darshan of Lord Rama and composed the magnum opus Ramayana. Tulsidas who wrote the Ramcharitmanas, also wanted to have the darshan of Rama. He did intense meditation. He did this penance for a long time and his frame became emaciated due to the lack of food. One day during *sandhya* time, he came out of his trance and went to the nearby river for taking a bath. He saw two young princes walking past wearing a royal attire. Seeing them, Tulsidas thought to himself, 'I have no business with nobility' and went for his bath. After bathing, when he came back and sat for contemplation, he saw the same personalities in his vision and realized that they were none other than Rama and Lakshmana. Tulsidas cursed himself and felt very despondent that he was not able to recognize Lord Rama when He came to give His darshan to Tulsidas.

He commenced his meditation with redoubled vigour. After doing



penance for a long time, again one day, he set out for the river to take bath. This time he saw a Muslim king and his servant. He thought that they are some sultans; ignored and left. When he returned to meditate, he understood that the Muslim sultans were Rama and Lakshmana. He felt very angry on Rama as the Lord is showing Himself but not allowing Tulsidas to know His identity. Tulsidas cried out to Rama, “O! Rama, what mistake have I done that you are testing me so much. I will not give up my resolve to have your darshan, regardless of the many tests you put me through.” Tulsidas sat down in meditation again. This time after sitting in meditation for a long time, Lord Hanuman manifested in front of him. Tulsidas extolled Hanuman in many ways and felt joyful. He told Hanuman, “I called out for Rama and got your darshan. This darshan is in no way lesser than Rama’s darshan but can you please tell me why I am not able to have the darshan of Lord Rama?” Hanuman replied, “O! Tulsidas, you are a great tapasvi. Sage Valmiki wrote the Ramayana by having a direct vision of Rama. You have written the Ramacharimanas after beholding Rama in every atom and speck. Hence, Rama didn’t like that a saint of your order who has seen Rama in every atom, should see Him in physical form, and hence He tested you.” Tulsidas understood the love and compassion that Rama exhibited towards him and said, “O Lord, it is true that having seen you in all, I desired to see your finite form.” At that moment, he looked at the sky and found Rama immanent in all the creation. He preserved this experience of his in the form of a book named ‘Sakshatkar’, after finishing his magnum opus Ramacharitmanas.

Each and every verse and word of these great poet saints is a fountainhead of beauty. All the 32,000 *kirtanas* of Annamaya are storehouses of beauty. We have to keep in mind the beauty, grandeur, love and devotion of these great poet saints when we study their works and try to inculcate those virtues within us. Jnana is limitless and unfathomable.

Be it the Jnana Praseonambika of Sri Kalahasti, Brahmaramba of



Srisailam, Alvelu Mangamma of Tirupati, She – the feminine aspect of God – takes the form of the pure white one, like the moon (Goddess Saraswati) to confer knowledge; she takes the form of a dazzling coral (Goddess Lakshmi) to confer wealth and prosperity; and takes the hue of Blue sapphire (Goddess Parvati) to alleviate the suffering of Her devotees.

I seek refuge in the lotus feet of the Divine mother.





Excerpts from Divine Discourses

When Adi Sankara was going to river Ganga for a bath with his thirteen disciples, he saw one scholar sitting under a tree and repeating the rules of the grammar, *Dukrum karani, dukrum karani*.

These rules of grammar are found in the compilation of Panini. This man wanted to be a great scholar by repeating the rules of the grammar compiled by Panini. Sankara puts a question to this man, “What will you gain by this scholarship?” The scholar replied, “By acquiring this knowledge, I can get position, power and money from the king. The king being pleased with my scholarship, will certainly reward me amply.” Sankara rejoined, “For how much time you can enjoy these rewards?”

The scholar replied, “I will fulfill these desires till I am alive.”

Then Adi Sankara questioned, “Will you remember all this after your death? O! mad cap, till you are alive, think of that which exists in all the three periods of time.”

Sankara then sang:

*Bhaja govindam bhaja govindam, govindam bhaja moodhamate
Samprapte sannihite kaale nahi nahi nahi rakshati dukrun karani*

Sing the glory of Govinda, O foolish man, when the end approaches, the rules of grammar like *dukrun karani* will never come to your rescue.

Sankara said to the scholar, “Who came with you at the time of birth; and after death, who will follow you? No one came with you when you were born and no one will follow you after death. You came here all alone and you will depart all alone. You consider everything as sorrow, but it is not sorrow altogether.”



*Punarapi jananam punarapi maranam punarapi janani jathare sayanam
Iha samsare bahu dustare krupaya pare pahi murare*

You are born again and again, you die again and again, and you come again and again into the womb of the mother. It is so difficult to cross this ocean of life; you have to pray to God for his grace to cross this ocean.

When one departs from this world, his near and dear ones, who will cry, will surround him. Seeing this the person says, “Why do you cry?” the relatives reply, “You are leaving this world, you are leaving this body, you will not be with us any longer, hence we are crying thinking about that.” The man replies, “O foolish ones, you are getting deluded thinking that I am leaving all the wealth and achievements of mine. All the property that I leave behind, is for you, I am going empty handed. Are you bothered of my plight? You all are worried about your position and anxieties, but none is thinking about my plight.”

He, who is a true human being, should put a question to himself, ‘Who am I?’ On the contrary we go on putting a question to others, ‘Who are you?’ All your sorrows are of your own imaginations and making. Before marriage who was he, after his passing away, who will be with you? Nobody will come; none would exist. We go after this ephemeral and transitory world. Each one should think of his own self (*yavariki vaare yamuna teere*). We have to think of our own truth, our own nature. We have to experience peace, which is in our hearts. Unmindful of the peace within, you go on searching for it in the outside world. You can never get peace in the outside world. All over the world there is agitation and restlessness. The peace that you really desire is within you.





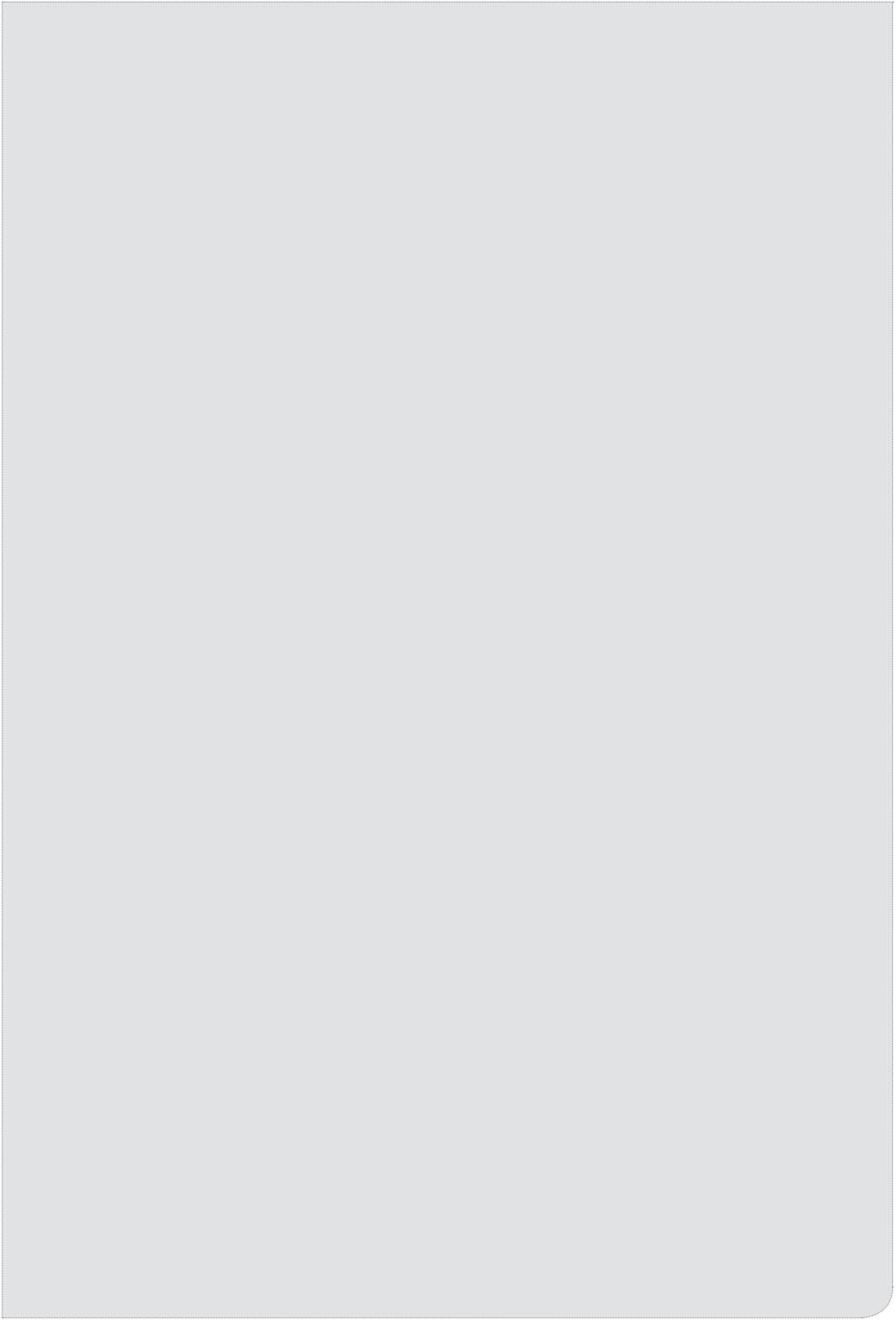
Today, we are forgetting the divinity that is within us. You are running after the peace that is outside, which is temporary, artificial and ever changing. Stop thinking so, here after.

You should make every attempt to think of your own identity; your nature, which is peace. All that you seek is within you. There is nothing outside that is not within you. The moment you open your eyes, you see thousands of people; once you close your eyes, you can't see even one. So whatever you see is temporary and ephemeral. You can see all these sights so long as you have these physical eyes. Once the physical eyes are non-functional, you can't see any of these.

Whether you open or close your eyes, there is one thing that you can see – divinity. God has no change whatsoever. God has neither birth nor death, neither beginning nor end. You are that eternal truth. So, you should make every effort to know that truth which is your true identity.

Dasara Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam, 10 Oct 2002





Inner refinement – The very essence of the Dasara festival

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Let me begin with a *chinna katha* narrated by Bhagawan. In a village, a dispute was going on between two rival groups for one reason or another. One resident of that village, who had two acres of land, was selling grapes to earn his livelihood. This man was pressurized to join one of the groups. So under compulsion, he joined a group of people which had more number of evil-minded people and therefore was imprisoned after some days. In jail, this person would get one letter every week from his wife. The rules and regulations of the jail were such that the letters received by the prisoners would not be censored but the one posted by the prisoners would be censored.

Once his wife wrote to him-

You seem to be well looked after in jail, but have you thought about our miserable condition without food. Since you have left, the grape garden has dried up, there is no one to look after it and plant the next crop. So if you can kindly suggest some method by which I can take care of the dried grape plants, we can have some food in the near future. Please let me know.

This person read the letter and felt very sad. He hit upon a plan and wrote in reply-

Do not worry, I have never told you about a treasure pot containing a lot of gold coins which I had buried in the grape vineyard. Please dig it up and make use of the coins.

The superintendent of the jail censored this letter. He didn't post it. Instead, he gathered all the prisoners and asked them to dig the grape garden, in order to unearth the treasure. The superintendent didn't find any treasure but there was a heavy rain resulting in a very good yield. The wife was very happy. She sold the grapes and got plenty of money. The husband was released from jail after six months. The wife eagerly questioned, "How could you send so many men to plough the land?" The husband replied, "I thought of a plan and made them believe that there was a treasure in our garden. That is how you got so many grapes and you could prosper."

Swami explains the inner meaning of the story. The cultivator had two acres of land and we have two inches of heart. In our heart we have two groups – the good and the bad. In between is the owner of the heart, the atma, which initially didn't take sides but later was pulled towards one group and hence was imprisoned. He realizes that the field of the heart has to be ploughed or cleansed to get the wisdom of gold. After digging, one enjoys the harvest of bliss.

Swami says that the purification of the field of the heart by the process of refinement is essential. Just as man extracts various metals like gold and silver from the mines, he should extract the sacred qualities from the mine of divinity – the heart. This is the inner refinement.

The inner significance of the Dasara festival is the victory of the good over evil. Swami explains, 'Bend the body, mend and senses and end the mind'. Bend the body means to get over laziness, lethargy and passivity and work hard with all perseverance. Swami gives a beautiful analogy of a pot. The potter collects clay from the riverbank, mixes water in it, places it on a wheel and shapes it into a pot. The pot can't hold water as it has not gone through the *agni samskara*, the process of baking in the fire of hardships. Just as clay becomes pot, man becomes God after refinement in the fire of hardships. So, Swami says that if you want to be valued you should work hard for it.



Heated gold becomes an ornament, beaten copper becomes a wire, and depleted stone becomes a statue. Similarly, we need to work hard to get refined. Once we get over the attachment of the body, the second one is the getting over of the attachment of the mind. We have to withdraw the senses from its source. Thinking the ephemeral and transient world to be real man is lost in delusion. Swami says stop searching for happiness in the external world and turn inwards to experience peace – that is your nature. There is nothing outside which is not inside. When we close our eyes, we see nothing but as soon as we open our eyes we see many heads in this hall; but there is something that we can see both with our eyes closed and opened, which is divinity.

Swami recently narrated a story in one of His discourses. A dog found a dry bone and started biting it. After some time, the bone pierced its gums and blood started oozing out. The dog was under the impression that the blood was oozing out from the bone. It went on biting the bone with the illusion that the taste came from the bone. In the same way, man is in the illusion that he is able to derive happiness from the external world. He forgets in the process that the true source of happiness is within.

I am reminded of an incident that happened during one of the Diwali celebrations, when students would celebrate with Swami, bursting crackers in front of the Poornachandra Auditorium. Swami would come and distribute sparklers to the children of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School. Devotees would enjoy the spectacle oblivious of the fact that Swami is present right there in front of them. Swami commented, “Seeing the creation, you are forgetting the creator.” We forget that He created everything. The goldsmith is forgotten and we focus on the gold, which is his creation.

The next level is to attain the state of desirelessness. Swami says, “Master the mind and be a mastermind; *mana yeva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh.*” Mind is responsible for both bondage and



liberation. Swami gives the analogy of the lock and key. If we turn the key towards God, the lock opens and when we turn it towards the world, it closes. Swami says that man is ruining his life due to limitless desires. These desires are responsible for his gain or loss. He says, 'less luggage more comfort, makes travel a pleasure'. An increase in thoughts hides the intellect and blurs the vision. Swami further says that our path is spiritual but our goals are worldly. We run after name and fame, and at the same time want all the kinds of benefits by following the spiritual path like coming to Prashanti Nilayam. Therefore, we are confused and unhappy.

Our spiritual goal should be to go beyond want and desire. Desire to be desireless, that is the main purpose of life. Swami says that our desires should be like salt and pepper on our dining table. They should be subsidiary to our food; we should not take more salt or pepper than required for our food. Likewise, health and comfort should be just enough to sustain spiritual practices – no more, no less.

Why should we get refined? What is the purpose of refinement? Human life is the greatest blessing. Having been born as a human being, we should realize our identity with God. I want to exemplify this with a short story.

A king went to the forest for hunting. He went too far and lost his way. He saw a tiny hut where lived a poor woodcutter and his wife. He went to the hut seeking food and water. The woodcutter didn't have anything except a piece of bread, which he gave the king. The king ate it avidly. By then, the soldiers traced the king and reached the hut. The woodcutter was astounded to learn that his guest was the monarch himself. The woodcutter apologized profusely for the poor food offered. The king didn't utter a word of complaint. The next day men came from capital to take him to the court. Now, the woodcutter was sure that we would be punished. The king welcomed the woodcutter and his wife and gave them a seat. They were given a sumptuous meal.



The woodcutter thought that this is the honour that is given to the sacrificial animals.

Contrary to the expectations of the woodcutter, the king requested them to ask for a boon. The terrified woodcutter said, "Please let me go home and don't cut my head." The king answered, "I am not such an ungrateful wretch to treat you so cruelly. I thought if I give you an estate, it would ruin you as you do not know agriculture; if I give you riches, thieves will steal them as you stay far away alone in the jungle; so, I shall give you thirty acres of sandalwood plantation – make use of it and prosper." After a period of six months, the king went to the same forest for hunting and remembering the woodcutter, went in search of him. He found the woodcutter very happy and contented. The woodcutter told the king that he is selling charcoal by burning the sandalwood trees and making his living. The sandalwood was converted into charcoal because he didn't realize the value of the gift he had received from the king. He frittered it away for temporary and trivial benefits.

This is the tragedy of human life everywhere. Human life is the rarest and blessed of all gifts. Life is meaningless and purposeless without God. After all, we are gifted with human life only to realize and recognise the divinity within. Mother Yashoda was once searching for Krishna but was not able to locate him. In the process she came across tiny footprints smeared with curd. She implicitly followed the footprints and could locate Krishna. In the same way, we should follow the teachings of Bhagawan in order to locate or gain him. We are so fortunate to be guided by Bhagawan in every step. Who will tell us about duties and responsibilities today? Everybody is busy finding faults in others. Many of the stories narrated by Bhagawan are like flashes of light that illumine- like jokes that tickle, tablets that alleviate and showers that cool. It is very easy to follow Swami's messages as He communicates the toughest subjects in a very simple and practical way with love and patience. It is our time now to follow His message.



Baba's messages are injunctions and timely reminders to all of us that we are basically divine and to realize this truth is the main purpose of every human being.

In His physical absence, it is our primary responsibility to get involved in His mission. Let us put whatever talent we have to use and contribute in a small way in his divine mission. We should not miss this great opportunity. We should understand this principle that if we do Bhagawan's work, He would do our work in a much better way than if we had done it ourselves. Let us work for a cause and not applause. Let us all work thinking about Him and chanting His name. Sailing through good and bad times is a part of life but sailing through all times with a smile is the art of life. Let us live in accordance with His plan, asking for strength to pass all screen tests and to become instruments in His divine mission. Our aim should be to make Bhagawan happy and to see a smile on His lips always.



Sai Jagannatha

Sri Garikapati Narasimha Rao

Hon. Telugu Pandit

I bow down to the Divine mother for giving me the courage to stand in front of this august gathering and speak a few words. I bow down to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who gave me my mother tongue Telugu and my Bharatiya culture, which has reached every nook and corner of the globe. He incarnated to establish Vaikuntha – the abode of Lord Vishnu – on earth in Puttaparthi. The devotees who stay here and the ones who come here are really blessed. This state of Andhra Pradesh is like the ocean of milk; Puttaparthi is like Adishesha and Lord Mahavishnu, i.e. Bhagawan Baba reclines on it. The spiritual knowledge that envelops Him is Goddess Adi Mahalakshmi.

We worship the divine mother Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati during Navaratri in ten different forms on ten different days. The basis for all these ten forms is Atma, and Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the embodiment of that Atma. One might pose a question. Why do we worship God in so many different forms on festivals like Ramanavami, Mahashivaratri, Dasara or Vinayaka Chaturthi? The reason is that by continuously worshipping all these forms for a long time (with patience and perseverance), we will understand that this form of ours is also divine. This will confer Self-realization or knowledge of the Self and we will understand the meanings of the dictums:

Tat Tvam Asi- Thou art That
Aham Brahmasmi- I am God

Bhartiyas worship the same God in different forms and not different Gods. Bhartiyas see unity in diversity. Bhartiyas, from time immemorial have been worshipping different forms, hence they live in complete harmony with so many different castes, creeds and religions in our country.

Bhagawan Baba incarnated to show this to the entire world.

He also took up many service activities. He provided potable drinking water to the people of this rocky and dry terrain of Rayalaseema. In places where there was no access to drinking water, he spent crores of rupees and provided safe drinking water. Through the Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospitals, He created a faith and belief in the sick and suffering people that healthcare can be provided free of cost.

In God men there are two types- Tyaga Yogis and Bhoga Yogis. Shiva is a Tyaga Yogi whereas Vishnu is a Bhoga Yogi. Shirdi Sai Baba is a Tyaga Yogi and Sathya Sai Baba is a Bhoga Yogi.

Let us see the description of Lord Vishnu in vaikuntha as described in the dhyana śloka of Vishnu Sahasranamam:

*kshirodanvat-pradese suchi-mani-vilasat-saikate mautikanam
mala-klipta-sanasthah sphatika-mani-nibhaih mautikaih manditangah
subhrai-abhrai-adabhrai upari virachitaih mukta-piyusha-varshai
anandi nah puniyadari-nalina-gada-sankha-panih mukundah.*

May Mukunda, with the discuss, mace, conch and lotus in His hands, purify us- Mukunda who is seated on a seat of garlands of pearls, in the region of the milky ocean with the sand shining by the light from pure gems; who is adorned by pearls transparent like crystals; and who is enjoying ecstatic bliss on account of pure white clouds overhead, raining showers of nectar.



He who has a dark complexion is reclining in Vaikuntha surrounded by pure white objects so that we can recognize him. In the Krishna Avatar as well, Gopikas would sing to each other enquiring about the whereabouts of Krishna. They describe that he, who is having the complexion of a dark rain cloud, is hiding in an orchard of jasmine flowers. This has a very deeper meaning.

God is the knowledge and wisdom that we have to find in this world of illusion. In 2002, I got an opportunity to read the book *Jnana Vahini*, written by Swami. It is a book that makes the abstruse topic of *advaita* and *jnana* very easy to grasp and understand. Swami explains that even if God is in front of us, we are asking him for trinkets like marriage, job, wealth, promotions and health and not Atma Jnana, the knowledge of the self. Bhagawan has given a beautiful story to illustrate this present state of affairs.

Once there was a king who had seven sons. All the seven sons went for hunting and got seven fish. They dried all the seven fish but only six dried, the seventh one didn't dry. They asked the seventh fish, "Why you have not dried?"

The fish replied, "Dry grass came in the way."

They asked the dry grass, "Why you cast your shadow on the fish?"

Dry grass replied, "The cow didn't eat me."

They asked the cow, "O! Cow, why didn't you feed on the grass?"

The cow replied, "The cowherd didn't feed me."

The Princes asked the cowherd, "Why you didn't feed the cow?"

The cowherd replied, "My mother didn't give me food to eat."

The Princes asked the mother, "O, Mother! Why didn't you feed your son?"

The mother replied, "My younger son cried."

The Princes asked the younger son, "Why did you cry?"

The younger son replied, "an ant bit me."

They asked the ant, "Why did you bite him?"



The ant replied, “If someone puts his finger in my anthill, won’t I bite him?”

This story has been passing down from generations to generations from our grandmothers and mothers to us. Stories narrated in our country Bharat are not mundane stories. There is a deep and profound truth hidden in these stories. They are not recited merely to put the baby to sleep by the mothers and grandmothers. Our culture has the special characteristic of telling these profound truths to the children in a simple and clear way. In such stories we have to catch the lacuna to know the meaning of the story. Whenever any king goes for hunting, he hunts a lion, a tiger or a deer, but never a fish. The mention of fetching fish in the story actually points to a deep spiritual truth. The six dried fishes are the six internal enemies of lust, anger, avarice, attachment, vanity and jealousy. These six fishes can be dried by effort like following the teachings of Swami. The seventh fish is the mind or our will, which doesn’t dry. When the seventh fish was asked, ‘why didn’t you dry?’, it said that the dry thatch obstructed it. This dry thatch is ignorance. A blade of grass or a collection of grass blades can be removed, but a thatch or a bale of grass can’t be removed easily. The only way of removing this obstacle is by burning it with a small matchstick of *jnanagni*, the fire of wisdom. Hence, the ignorance in the form of the grass obstructs the mind in the form of fish, making it still wet with all the *samskaras*.

Our mind is not getting annihilated; it is still thinking that this is Mahasamadhi of Swami and He is not present here. He is very much here. Swami is omnipresent; He is ever present like Lord Venkateswara in Tirupati. The festivals, regular worship, the daily prayers and the coming of devotees — nothing has stopped in Prashanti Nilayam. I never expected these many devotees to come and witness the festival of Dasara. I am getting the same experiences here as I used to get earlier when Swami was physically present. This place is suffused with the same divine splendour as it used to be earlier. We have to try and



realize Him within. The obstacle is the bundle of grass, which when asked why it got accumulated said that the cow of wisdom didn't eat it.

In Indian culture, the cow is symbolic of wisdom. The cow replies that the cowherd didn't come to feed it with grass. Here the cowherd represents the *sadguru* or the preceptor who takes us to wisdom. There is a similarity between this cowherd and the *jagadguru* Sri Krishna, who also was a cowherd. The cowherd in the story replies that mother didn't give food to him. Here the mother is the Divine mother. When the Divine mother decides to shower her grace on someone, she sends a *sadguru* to that person's house.

The Divine mother says that she didn't come as another boy was crying. Mother says, "Another devotee is pining and yearning for me, more than you. Hence, I am concentrating on him. You are still interested in worldly desires and honours. So, I have not sent the *sadguru* to your house."

Bhagawan Baba used to come for darshan and would stop at some places, looking intently at some devotees, whilst talking to others. This was a special shower of grace, which was needed by the devotee for his spiritual progress. Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita:

*Manushyanam sahasreshu kaschid yatati siddhaye
Yatatam api siddhanam kaschin mam vetti tattvatah*

Millions of people live in this world. Do they all want God? A very few even think of God. Very rarely do they put forth any effort in the direction of knowing and realising God. There is a small percentage of humanity which desires God, and they would very much like to practise yoga for the sake of the realisation of God; but among those who strive, even ardently, all may not reach God. *Yatatam api siddhanam kaschin mam vetti tattvatah*: "Even among those who devoutly seek Me – even among those – only a very few really do reach Me."



We should ask questions like why Swami was with form but has now left it? Should I also have to leave this body? Why was He considered God in human form when alive and I have still not understood the essence of His teachings? If we have intense thirst for such questions, we will get the answers.

On 13 August 1886, Shirdi Sai Baba decided to give up his life. He called his intimate devotee Mhalsapati and instructed him, “I have decided to leave this mortal coil as no one is asking me about wisdom and Self-knowledge. They are asking me for trinkets.” Mhalsapati cried a lot but Shirdi Baba didn’t pay heed to his prayers. Baba added, “Mother has to give permission for me to leave the body. I will leave the body; request Her. If she accepts my prayer, I will not come back. If I don’t come back for three days, please bury me in the open ground (which He pointed out to them).” Mhalsapati sat for three days keeping Baba’s body in his lap. It was a wondrous event, when on 16 August, at 3 in the morning, Shirdi Baba came back to life. All the devotees were overjoyed.

Mhalsapati asked Baba, “Why did you go away from us?” Shirdi Baba replied, “A devotee in Bengal wanted to merge in the Mother and as his yearning was more than me, mother asked me to go back and accept his request.” If we carefully study the life story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa we will come to know that on 16 August 1886, exactly at 1 in the morning, Ramakrishna Paramahansa took Mahasamadhi. All our positions, wealth, fame and worldly achievements are as valueless like the blade of grass in front of the Mahasamadhi of our Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Bhagawan always wanted to drive home this point that all the worldly honours and achievements fade away in front of spiritual knowledge and spiritual wealth.

Coming back to the story; the boy, when asked why he is crying, replied that an ant has bitten him. In this context, the ant is the world. When the ant was asked the reason for biting the boy, it replied, “This world,



which is worthless, if man gives it value and thinks it to be everything, I bite him to remind him of its worthlessness.”

This world is really worthless but we give it importance. If one notices, the anthill is made of soil, but when we put our finger in it thinking it to be gold, i.e., when one thinks that this world is real and run after its tinsel; it reminds us that it is unreal and ephemeral. If we don't pay heed to the warnings of the ants and put more fingers in the ant hill, i.e., try to entangle further in the world, the snake of this worldly existence that sleeps in the anthill, will inflict a fatal bite. In the end, this is a result of the precious human existence running after temporary pleasures.

When one gets an ant bite, one should turn to God, take to his worship and try to remove the entanglement of the finger from the anthill. Swami says that if a donkey carries a load of sandalwood, it doesn't get its fragrance. In the same way, if we just read all the religious texts mechanically without understanding them and putting them into practice, we defeat the purpose of human birth.

For example, people chant the Vishnu Sahasranamam mechanically without understanding the meaning. The first two words: *Vishwam Vishunuhu*, meaning the whole world is pervaded by Vishnu, gives the essence of *Vishnu Sahasranamam* and the remaining 998 names are just the commentary on these two names. The purpose of the 1000 names (of Vishnu) is to make a person devote a concrete amount of time on God.

The best example of turning to God is the story of Gajendra Moksham in the Bhagavatam. Gajendra went to a pond for drinking water. The strange thing in this story is that it felt thirsty only after seeing the pond. Our predicament is very similar. We develop desires not based on our needs, but our wants. We develop these wants by seeing the objects from our senses. We develop the desire to buy objects after



going to the shopping mall.

Once, the great philosopher Socrates of Greece set out with his wife to a bazaar. They found a big shop while going around the market. His wife said complainingly, “There are so many beautiful things here in the shop, but we don’t have even one of them in our house. Socrates rejoined, “I am surprised how we are living with so much of contentment without any of these objects in our house.” This is the correct way of thinking about life.

Gajendra went to the pond to drink water. It had a powerful trunk that can be used to drink water even whilst standing on the bank. Regardless of this, it entered the water, broke the embankment of the pond, destroyed countless lotus flowers and made the water muddy. He undertook all these feats to grab the attention of around a dozen female elephants that were standing behind him. These exploits of the elephant provoked a crocodile and it came and seized his leg. Gajendra struggled a lot to let go the grip of the crocodile, but was not successful. Thinking that it is not possible for him to release himself from the clutches of the crocodile, Gajendra prayed to Lord Narayana. But his prayer still had a tinge of arrogance, which delayed the arrival of Lord Narayana. He didn’t develop the yearning like that of the Gopikas, Radha, Draupadi or Kuchela.

He prayed:

I was the king of countless herds of elephants, displaying the arrogance born out of power and position, which is known as *rajas ahamkaram*. I had 10,000 female elephants as my spouses, which shows the arrogance born out of lust, which is *tamas ahamkaram*. He said that due to his efforts, countless sandalwood trees have grown in this forest, which is the arrogance born out of boasting one’s achievements and can be called *sattvic ahamkaram*. Until the time we shed these three types of egos, God will never appear in front of us.



When Gajendra got rid of these three types of egos and prayed fervently to Lord Narayana from the bottom of his heart, Narayana appeared.

He prayed:

“There is not an ounce of strength remaining in my muscles. All the courage I vested has drained off. Living tissues across my limbs and arms are all dying. I am about to faint. My body is tired. It is demanding me to put excessive efforts to sustain further. There is no one for me; You are the only One I have! I surrender totally unto You! Please have mercy on this weakling of me. O Vishnu, the Saviour of the distressed! Is it not time yet for You to come? Will not You save me, my Lord? O Protector of all beings, kindly come and rescue me with Your Divine grace!”

This is known as the *sarvasva sarangati* or the absolute unconditional surrender. Until we develop this virtue, we can't be released from the clutches of this illusory world. Gajendra uttered 32 verses prior to this, but Lord Narayana didn't respond; but when he became egoless and chanted this verse, Lord Vishnu came without a moment's delay.

Potana¹ describes this very beautifully:

Vishnu, in his eagerness to save the life of Gaja, does not tell his wife (Siri), does not take his *sankham* and *chakram*, does not call any of his servants, does not listen to garuda (vehicle), and does not leave the saree of Lakshmi that is in his hands. Our Sathya Sai is also ever ready to come to the rescue of His devotees.

Shiva adorns all the things that symbolize inauspiciousness. He wears elephant skin as his garment, has human skulls and snakes as his garlands, applies ash that is fresh from a funeral pyre and doesn't apply oil to his hair. This has a lot of semblance with the present day youth. They never apply oil to their hair and wear a pair of jeans, which is akin to the elephant skin worn by Shiva. These jeans are never washed,

1 A Telugu poet in the fifteenth century, best known for his translation of the Bhagavata Purana from Sanskrit to Telugu.



similar to the elephant skin and also both have holes in it. Hence someone who wears jeans and doesn't apply oil to his hair; he is jocularly addressed as Shiva.

In contrast, mother Parvati wears dazzling jewels, deep red garment, a simmering red vermillion dot and is the repository of beauty, sweetness and grace.

There is a profound lesson in this apparent contrast. Even after having totally different appearances, they always live as an ideal couple and hence inherit the epithet '*aadi dampatulu*', the ancient couple. In the same way, husband and wife have to stay together life-long after taking the sacred vows of marriage, even if their natures and temperaments are different.

We all knew about the story of the seven fishes but it is only Swami who explained to us the inner meaning of this story. I realized after hearing Swami that it is not a bedtime story to put children to sleep, but rather a clarion call to wake up the ignorant and take them to the destination of God realization.

Just before closing, I want to draw all your attention to the difference between *maya* and *mahima*. What a magician does is *maya* or sleight of hand, but what a great being does is *mahima* or monumentality or grandeur. I recollect that in my childhood, one magician used to do a trick of making one rupee appear in our palms but the strange thing was that he would ask us for money after performing the trick. This is not the case with *mahima*. If Bhagawan creates something as a gift, it is for our spiritual growth and elevation. I was recipient of such an act of grace when He created a gold chain from nowhere and put it in my neck. On the same day, He created a gold chain for one more scholar, but it was small for him. Swami took it back, kept it in His palm, blew on it and transformed it into a bigger chain, perfectly fitting this scholar's neck. An avatar displays these *mahimas* or acts of grace to



attract people and exhibit divinity.

Recently, I read in a magazine where some sceptics mentioned that the humanitarian and philanthropic projects of Bhagawan Baba are monumental but not His miracles. I feel that without these miracles people will not get attracted to Him and contribute in these noble endeavours. There is an Australian devotee who was ready to contribute an amount of ₹250 crores for one water project on the condition that Bhagawan has to take it up without the interference of government. This is His power of love, which draws devotees from across continents irrespective of caste, creed, religion and nationality.

Let us march forward with doubled vigour and spread His message of love and service all over the world.







Excerpts from Divine Discourses

There is a wide scope to know and visualize divinity. There is sweetness in sugarcane and spice in chillies. Whose effect is this sweetness in the sugarcane and the chilliness in the chillies? Every object in this world has an attribute or quality, which is the life principle of the very divinity enshrined there in. How do you explain the bitterness in *neem* and fragrance in a flower? It is the manifestation and expression of the divinity in every cell of these objects and the creatures. We have many more ideals to comprehend the divinity. How is it possible to experience the fragrance in the flower? We conclude that it is its natural quality. But where from this natural quality has come? You feel delighted to see lofty mountains. Seeing the incessantly flowing rivers, our heart also flows with it in joy. Seeing the forests, our joy increases manifold.

Is it the wonder and grandeur of divinity or the law of nature? God manifests Himself in this nature in a manifold way.

How can you see the bird within the egg? These are all signs of the divinity, to understand and comprehend the divine. We don't need to go anywhere in search of God, nor do you need do any spiritual practice either. God is present in every atom and in every cell. Where do you get the sweetness in sugarcane? This very sweetness is the nature of God. The hot nature of chilli, the bitterness in *neem*, the sourness in lemon; these are all expressions of God. The creation of God is only to make us understand His manifestation and expression in myriad ways.

The majesty of the mountains, the beauty in rivers, the elegance in the raging waves; all of them are the magnificence of divinity. The splendour of God is beyond narration. It is not possible to estimate God's power and ability. Because of your narrow-mindedness you are not able to comprehend His glory. How can you understand the



infinite and vast nature of God?

Embodiments of Love!

God is beyond the faculties of mind and speech. You can't impress Him by speech or by thought.

Yato vacho nivartante apraapya manasa saha

Speech and mind fail to understand God.

You make an attempt to describe to the extent possible within the framework of your understanding; the moment you don't understand, you keep silent. You don't have words to express it. You can't understand even if you are highly educated. The nature of God, the engineering skills of God are best known to God Himself and none else. So, don't make an attempt to comprehend the divine attributes. First realize your own true qualities. Know your true nature. You are not able to understand even the tiny matters of your mind. How can you understand that which is infinite? Never make an attempt to understand God. Make an attempt to know yourself first. That is why in Vedanta it is said, 'know thyself'.

The modern boys put such silly questions like, why should I make an attempt to know God? You can give answers like, I am so and so's son, my name is so and so, I am doing this job, I am from such and such county and so on. You can give many such nice answers but these answers are all physical and worldly answers related to the body consciousness and not related to divinity. This body is the son of that particular person, it is working in a particular office, this body has taken such and such degree, this body has come from this country. Enquiry reveals to you that all these are related to the body consciousness and





not atmic consciousness.

If a question is to put to you, 'know thyself', it is not correct to furnish your name, height and complexion. You are not just an individual. You really encompass the wholeness of creation, i.e. *samsthi*. What is present in the wholeness is verily present in you.

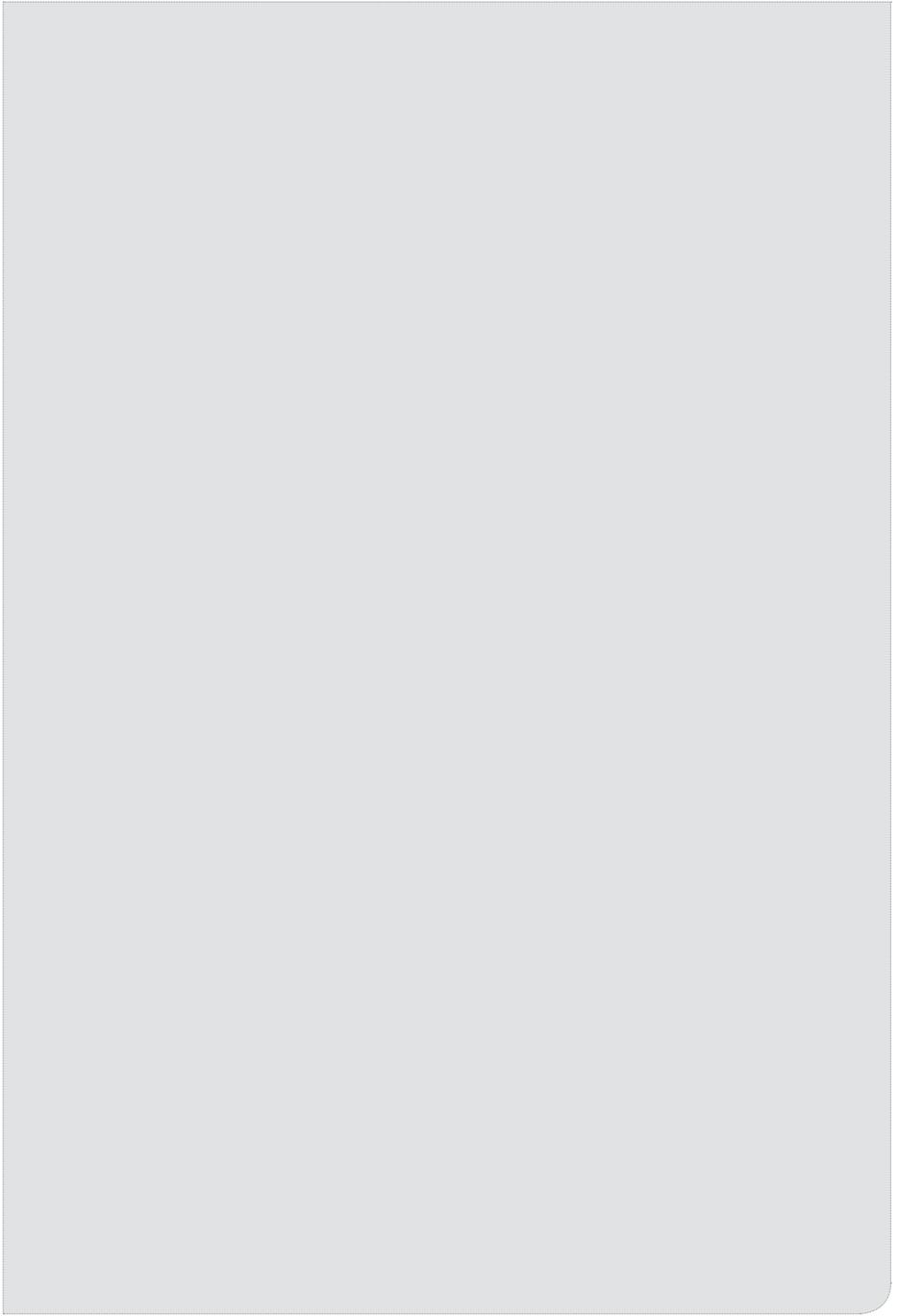
sarvatah pāni-pādam tat
sarvato 'ksi-śiro-mukham
sarvatah śrutimal loke
sarvam āvrtya tisthati

Meaning- With His hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and faces everywhere, hearing all; that reality exists pervading everything in this world.

Therefore the atmic principle is all-pervasive, it is one and uniform and not multiplicity. The body might be different, there may be differences in name and form, differences in nature and education, but the atmic principle is one. We should determine to know the oneness of divinity.

Dasara Celebrations, Prasanthi Nilayam, 11 Oct 2002





Fleeting moments, eternal memories

Dr. Deepak Anand

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We are all co-travellers on a spiritual journey where the goal is right in front of us. But between the goals and us there are some fundamental questions that we have to answer, sooner or later. We can avoid them, but they will appear again before us and say, “First give us the answer, only then can you move ahead on the spiritual path.”

What are these fundamental questions?

The first big question which Swami says we must ask ourselves is- Who am I? When was the last time we asked this question to ourselves, and how sincere was the quest? It was in the upper portico in 1997, during one of my first physical interactions with Swami after I joined Sri Sathya Institute of Higher Learning. He asked me, “Where do you come from?” I said, “Swami, I come from the Sri Aurobindo institutions, the Mother’s International School. Year after year on 24 November, since 1926, we have always celebrated this day as the victory day. This is because on 23 November, the day you incarnated, Sri Aurobindo came out of more than a decade of deep meditation and said, “Celebrate, this is the day of victory, the Krishna Consciousness has taken birth on earth in physical form.” I added, “Bhagawan! Sri Aurobindo knew that you are God incarnate.”

There was a few seconds of silence and Swami looked deep into my eyes, smiled and said, “That I am God is half the story, the better half of the story is that you also are God. The only difference is that I know

it and you don't have faith in these words of mine. So always think that you are God, always think that you are one with Swami."

I took it as a spiritual instruction and thereafter, I started feeling and trying to pretend that I am Swami within. I had a problem as all spiritual seekers have. I wear spectacles. How can I wear glasses when Swami doesn't wear them. How can there be a bespectacled Swami was the question that came into my mind. Fortunately, Swami took me that year to Kodaikanal and one day when He came out of His room, I happened to be the first one sitting there that day. He started speaking to boys and without any premonition, He took out my glasses and put them on His eyes bent forward, raised His eyebrows and looked deep into my eyes as if asking me, 'now can there be a bespectacled Swami?' In those moments of silence, I got my answers that if the photographs are embodiments of Bhagawan; if the metals, rocks and idols can manifest God in fullness; if we have faith, why can't the human body, which is the highest embodiment of divine consciousness, manifest divinity? Yes! There can be a bespectacled Swami as well.

We should fold our hands and pray to the photographs of Bhagawan placed in the hall; we should wave camphor at them; we should offer incense sticks at them, but that is not the end. Swami says that these are not my photographs for you to fold your hands, pray and pass your time, but these are your vision statements. These are what you really are; you are all Sathya Sai Baba's in the making. This is the answer to the first question- who am I?

The second question that follows is- where am I?

Once a senior devotee asked Bhagawan in my presence, "Bhagawan, we do so many spiritual practices like morning *suprabhatam*, three times sandhya, nagar sankirtan, grama seva, night prayer; how do I know where I am, so that I can progress to where I want to go?" Swami replied, "Ask yourself, how deep, how selfless and expansive is your love – that is where you are." If we have to encapsulate the teachings of the



entire life of Bhagawan in one word, then that is love.

One day, whilst I was an MBA student here (almost ten years ago), I was sitting in the Sai Kulwant Hall with a particular boy who was in his 1st year M.Sc. Mathematics course. Bhagawan came out taking letters all through the way and came towards us and asked this boy, “How are you?” I don’t know what came over him. Did he have a family problem, or was he overwhelmed with difficulty of calculus, algebra and real analysis? He told Swami, “Swami, I want to merge in you.” I was taken aback by this request of his. Swami said, “Okay, come and merge in me but first become like me; and I am only love.”

If you take a cup of sandalwood oil and put a drop of water and try to mix it by churning it for a million years — it is impossible, but if it is a drop of sandalwood oil is mixed into a cup of sandalwood oil, immediately it will merge and become one.

But what is it that comes between the truth and us? Swami says that it is the mind that is responsible for all this. In the beginning of time, God gave us all equal amounts of love. The external orientation of this mind divided and diluted this love into so many pieces that it never remained love anymore.

What do we have to do? We must bring all this love back into our hearts and offer it to God. This is the process that we are undergoing in this spiritual sojourn. Swami says, “If you are not able to find how deep, expansive and selfless your love is, follow one more formula and you will know where you are. The formula is: Before you go to sleep ask yourself, ‘How many more desires does my heart still entertain?’ The desires can be of people, money, power, and position. If you still have desires left, you have not loved God enough.”

This is because to remove the veil of the mind between the Atman and Paramatma, we have to master the mind. The only formula according



to Swami to master the mind is to love God more and more.

The third question that we have to ask on the spiritual journey on this day of Vijaya Dasami (so that we can be victorious and reach him in this very lifetime) is, what is the best path to follow to expand our love and make it universal?

In the Bhagavad Gita we have been given so many paths. We have the path of karma (action), the path of bhakti (devotion), the path of jnana (knowledge) and the asthanga marga (the eight-fold path). Which is the best path to follow?

During one Navaratri celebration, Swami was giving discourses every day. On the first day, Bhagawan gave a discourse talking about the greatness of the path of karma. He said, “All the past karmas remain embedded in the flesh like the thorn. So, take the thorn of good actions and remove the earlier thorn, throw both of them away and walk on the spiritual path and you will be able to reach me. That is why the path of karma is most important.”

The very next day, Swami said, “Today everybody is tainted by ego of one kind or the other so even if you do good actions with egoism, the actions bind you with a golden chain. Hence, the path of devotion is the highest path. This is the path that Radha, Meera, Gauranga and Ramakrishna followed. It is the royal path to divinity in the Kali Yuga.”

All of us heard this discourse and appreciated it. The very next day He gave a discourse on the jnana marga and said, “karma marga is like walking on the road to destination; bhakti marga is like travelling by a car, but jnana marga only takes you to the destination by air and hence it is the best path.”

The following day we went to pick up prasadam and Swami was sitting on the sofa. I dropped the box of prasadam and asked Swami,



“Swami, I have a question to ask you. In the previous three days you have declared that the karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga as the best paths. How is it possible that all three are the best?”

In reply, Swami posed a question, “Have you seen a ladder?” I didn’t understand, but said, “Many times I have seen ladders, climbed them and fallen down also.”

Swami asked, “How is a ladder made?”

I replied, “Swami, we have two big poles on the side and small poles in the middle for climbing.”

Swami said, “The two poles on the side are the paths of bhakti and jnana and the middle rungs on which you have to climb up is the path of karma.” He added, “Don’t worry, choose the path to which you have a natural inclination and that is the best path for you. If you were a karma yogi in your past birth like Swami Vivekananda, the bhakti of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the jnana of Adi Sankara will be added unto you and when you reach the summit, you will realize that all the four paths take you to the same goal. You will have the essence of the knowledge of all the four paths.”

The fourth question that we have to ask is: which form of God is most ideal to meditate upon? Many of our brothers and sisters are coming from different parts of the world. They have been brought up in different cultures. We all have different family deities and when we come to Bhagawan, we get confused as to which form is best for us to meditate upon and pray to?

In the year 2001, when we were doing our Ph.D., one day, Bhagawan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall from Poornachandra at 6:15 in the morning. It was twilight time; the lights were not switched on and only sevadals were on duty. Swami walked alone in the Kulwant Hall in the dark, cutting across the lines, folding His robe with the left hand, and mysteriously waving the right hand in the air entered the



interview room. He summoned the research scholars and we all ran from the hostel.

When we entered the interview room, Swami didn't even acknowledge our presence for forty-five minutes. He was totally still with eyes closed for forty-five minutes, I was not sure whether he was breathing or not. Then, He took a deep breath, opened His eyes and looked at us. I was sitting in the front and Swami asked, "What is the date today?"

I replied, "Swami, 6th of August."

He asked another question, "What happened on this day?"

We had no answer so we remained silent. Swami himself said, "This was the day when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima." He revealed further and said, "Right now, thousands of my children in Osaka are praying to me that such a holocaust, such a catastrophe should never befall humanity again. I listened to their prayers and came."

The question here is whether those devotees in Osaka were praying to Sathya Sai Baba's form? The answer is no. They were praying to their own Gods and Goddesses, but who responded? Any sincere prayer for the welfare of others, wherever it emanates from, to whichever form it is addressed to, the response comes from only place in the world, i.e. Prashanti Nilayam, from Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The last question that we have to ask ourselves is: What is the best mantra? What is the best formula to remain hooked and embedded to our goals of life?

One of our ex-students spoke in the prayer sessions in the morning. As I organize these prayer sessions, I had a few rehearsals with him. He said that he asked Swami for a mantra. Swami asked him as to why he needs a mantra.

The boy replied, "Swami, you are God and I have come to you. My



father has told that I must get a mantra from you.”

Swami replied, “The mantra has already been given- Love All Serve All, Help Ever Help Never.”

The boy was adamant, “Swami, I want a specific mantra for myself.”

Swami said, “Nothing is personal. If Arjuna says that the Bhagavad Gita is a personal discourse given to me, what will happen to the remainder of humanity? It is not personal but I will give you a personal mantra.” Swami said, ‘*Lavvu, Navvu, Navu*¹- meaning ‘love’ and ‘smile’ in the ‘present moment’. When God comes on earth, He spreads love and smiles to everybody. When we see Him we smile. This is because His life is His message.

Once during Paduka Pooja Mahotsvam, Swami asked us the meaning of Pada Pooja. All of us replied that it is serving His lotus feet.

Swami said, “That is different sir! The real meaning of Pada Pooja is that when God incarnates on the earth, He keeps His feet on the sands of time, which are love and service, greater love and greater service, still greater love and still greater service. Keep your footsteps on those footprints and reach Him. This is the real meaning of Pada Pooja. This is the real meaning of serving Bhagawan.”

In our spiritual life there is nothing personal. It has to be shared and distributed because it increases by sharing. Let us pray on this Vijaya Dasami day – the day of victory to our mother Sai – that we become victorious. We will ask ourselves these questions, we will follow these tenets from our hearts, and then we will not only understand the essence of spiritual life, but also experience and express it in our daily lives. This is the spiritual victory that Bhagawan wants us to achieve so that we can live our lives like His dedicated instruments till breath pervades our body and thereafter merge in Him forever and ever.

1 In Telugu, Lavvu means love, Navvu means smile and Navu means in the *now*, i.e. the present moment





Surrender

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Just as a traveller wanders through the desert sands in search of water, each one of us is a traveller on the spiritual journey of life. Just as every journey of life has a destination, the realization of God is the destination of life. Today, we were witness to the culmination of one such journey, the *Poornahuti* of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagnam. The *Poornahuti* literally means complete surrender, or in Swami's words- the culmination of actions of the ten senses, the five *karmendriyas* and the five *jnanendriyas*. It was on this day when Swami used to materialize precious stones, pearls and stones and offer it into the sacrificial fire. This act of Swami was symbolic for us so that we too offer our desires, our ego, our joys and sorrows and attachments into that sacrificial fire.

Surrender of the self is like acquiring an express ticket to self-realization. But one question arises in my mind. Swami says that He is the embodiment of fullness.

Poornamadah poornamidam
Poornaath poornam udachyathe
Poornasya poornamaadaaya
Poornameva vasishyathe.

That (Brahman) is whole,
This (Creation) is also whole
From that whole (i.e. Brahman), this whole has come out (Creation)

But even though this whole has come out of that whole, yet that whole remains whole only.

How can we offer our desires, our joys and sorrows into Him who is already complete? How can we offer anything to the one who has everything? Swami gave a very simple solution to this in the year 2007 during his visit to Chennai. Swami revealed a very thought provoking definition of surrender to a group of select students and teachers at His residence in Sundaram.

Swami said, “Surrender means giving nothing.” Developing the understanding that we cannot give anything to the one who has everything, to the one who has created us from His sankalpa and accepting whatever we receive, as His sankalpa is true surrender.

Swami has also beautifully composed it in a song:

*Yatna prayatnamu maanav dharmamu
Jayapajaymulu daivadheenamu*

Meaning: Put in your efforts O man and leave the results to the will of God.

But this intriguing concept of giving nothing, and to give up everything was difficult for me to understand. As an answer to disentangle my befuddled thoughts, Swami gives a very beautiful analogy:

He says that life is like a car journey. In the car the most important aspect is the gear system. When we start the car, we put it in the first gear, which gives us a limited amount of speed after which we shift to the second gear and for more speed respectively to the third and fourth gears. If we start the car in the second gear itself, the whole car wobbles.

Similarly, life is a car. The first gear is joy, the second gear is sorrow, the



third gear is joy and the fourth is sorrow. Life oscillates between pain and pleasure. Man is an adaptable creature. When in joy he accepts happiness and when in sorrow, he reconciles with it. The problem occurs when there is a transition from joy to sorrow or from sorrow to joy; when the gear shifts. A man living a life full of happiness is overwhelmed by a sudden sorrow. Similarly, a sudden stroke of luck is unreal and unfathomable for a man living his life in full despair. How do we overcome this transition problem?

Swami gives a very simple solution to this. When we want to shift gears very smoothly and seamlessly, we press the clutch. Similarly, in life we too must press the clutch of faith and surrender to him. Only when we press the clutch of faith we can accept both joys and sorrows as His prasadam. Only when we realize that the creator, the bestower and the destroyer is Bhagawan, and that it is His divine will that guides our lives, we become mere mediums; mere instruments through which His divine drama is enacted and we attain true *sharanagati*. Swami taught me this concept in his own inimitable style.

It was in the year 2007 when I joined the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. I was going through a rough time (with apparently many difficulties) as I was getting used to hostel life the first time. It was an emotionally harrowing period for me as Swami also decided to ignore my prayers at that point of time. Whenever I would get a beneficial position in the student's block, He would purposefully direct the chair away from me. This continued for a long time and I could not contain myself. One night, sleeping in the room, I looked at the photo of Bhagawan in the room altar and lashed at it with my tumultuous emotions. I blamed Him completely for my predicament and went to sleep.

The next day I got a chance to sit in the first line at the bottom of the portico slope. Swami came in the chair and I expected Him to dish out the same treatment that He had been giving previously. Half-



heartedly, I raised my letter but He went by without even taking it. I felt very dejected, but the moment Swami had crossed me, He turned around and looked into my eyes. To my utter shock, there were tears in those beautifully eyes. I was confused; it was me who was going through the difficulty, then why was Swami crying? It was later when my mother was able to interpret this silent gesture of Bhagawan that I was able to really understand what He meant.

When we join His hostel as His students, Swami gives an implicit promise to our parents that we will be given the same tender love and care that we would have received at home. So, even if one of Her children suffers under Her own protective gaze, the mother feels extremely sad. When we still believe that we are the doers and receivers for all that happening around us, we have not understood the true significance of surrender. We must accept whatever joys and sorrows we get as His will. In simple words, if you cooperate, I operate; if you operate I can't cooperate. But true surrender comes with a clause, i.e. we should implicitly obey His command.

I am reminded here of a story of Sri Kutumba Rao, the former caretaker of the ashram. On the occasion of 55th Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan, Narayana seva was arranged on a grand scale. When the feeding was in progress, suddenly there was a shortage of *sambar*. Sri Kutumba Rao immediately rushed in a jeep to the canteen to procure the item. A huge vessel containing steaming hot *sambar* was being loaded on to the jeep, when it overturned and fell directly on Sri Kutumba Rao's legs. He was immediately rushed to the hospital where the doctors treated him for severe burns on the legs. After the treatment, the doctors covered the legs with bandages. That afternoon, Kutumba Rao went limping to the mandir. When Swami saw him, he joked, "What is all this show, nothing has happened to your legs." Swami even gave him some guest badges and asked him to distribute them personally to some flats in ashram. Sri Kutumba Rao accepted this obediently and went limping to all the premises and distributed



the badges. The following morning, when Sri Kutumba Rao's wife was uncovering the bandages on his legs as they were severely burnt; to their utter astonishment, the skin was perfectly normal. That evening when Sri Kutumba Rao went for darshan, he walked normally, much to the amazement of the doctors and others who had witnessed the accident the previous day. The moment Swami looked at him, He said, "Did I not tell you, nothing has happened to your legs."

Sri Kutumba Rao was the epitome of total surrender.

Throughout history, we would have come across many devotees like Lakshmana, Hanuman or the gopikas of Brindavan, who lived a life of total surrender to the Lord. They performed their actions in accordance to the Lord's will, and accepted both love as well as his chiding with equal fervor. Therefore, it is man's job to perform the action with discrimination while it His job to distribute the rewards.

But in today's goal-oriented society, we perform actions solely based on the rewards that we are likely to receive from them. I am not saying that having an aim is wrong. But the batsman when playing keeps looking at the scoreboard waiting for it to change will surely miss the ball and get out. Instead, he should concentrate on the ball and hit it, and the score will automatically change. Similarly, life is like a bowler who throws a number of challenges at us and we must be ready with the bat of faith to hit the ball for a six.

I am reminded of the words of advice that Bhagawan had given to the legendary cricketer Sachin Tendulkar, "Look at the ball and not at the bowler." This concept of *karma phala tyaga* is but one aspect of Nishkama karma.

While going through the experiences of Prof. Kasturi, the first editor of Sanathana Sarathi, in the book Loving God, I came across a wonderful experience which he encountered in his life. One evening, Swami



sent a message to Prof. Kasturi that the editor of a very famous daily newspaper wanted to publish an article in Sanathana Sarathi and he required a very good photograph of the editor (Prof. Kasturi) alongside it. Swami instructed that Kasturi garu gets ready immediately, for He will take the photo Himself with a new camera. Prof. Kasturi's joy knew no bounds. He went home and rushed within minutes, well groomed and neatly dressed. Swami placed him in front of the camera and even complemented him on his photogenic face. Prof. Kasturi was elated, as more than 30,000 readers of Andhra Pradesh would see his photo. When Swami clicked after saying ready, steady...a black, hairy creature pounced on Prof. Kasturi from the camera. He screamed and jumped to the side and to his utter shock, he found that it was a toy rat that was concealed in the camera. Swami was having a hearty laugh at his panic.

Later, Swami reprimanded him, saying that being the editor of the magazine is not the news that the world wanted. Then Swami asked, "What greater status can you attain than being a medium of posting and packaging my message to thousands of followers every month." Through this incident, Swami shows us that how lucky we are, to be a small part of His mission and to be associated with His institutions. Name, fame, position and posts are not at all important. True *karma phala tyaga* is enjoying this opportunity that Swami has given us, and not desiring the fruits thereof.

In the first discourse in this mahasabha, Swami said that this yagnam is being performed for *loka kalyanam* and not for selfish purposes. Similarly, we too perform our actions for the welfare of others and not with the anxiety of the fruit of the action.

Initially, I felt that these concepts of *karma phala tyaga*, acceptance of His will and *poornahuti* were poles apart. But on delving deep into the essence of surrender, I realized that there are varied routes that lead to the same destination. It is when we develop an attitude that everything is His gift that we will develop love for the action and not expectation.



Love purges our desires, joys, sorrows and attachments in the sacrificial fire. Once the fire has done its duty, all that is left is calmness- shanti. Then, even if our lives shift from the first to second to third gears, our minds will be neutral and we will be equanimous. In that equanimity, we will be able to hear the voice of God.

Swami has said in His own words, “Without love in the heart, there cannot be surrender in the action. It is only through *sneham* that we can reach *Atmanivedanam* and it is only when we attain *Atmanivedanam* that we experience true Prasanthi.

Today, thousands of devotees have gathered here taking long arduous journeys to reach the abode of peace Prashanti Nilayam. But it is the journey of surrender that will take us much closer to the Lord. It is only when our atma takes to the path of surrender that we will be able to reach that supreme abode of peace that Prashanti Nilayam, which is present in each one of us. In that very Prashanti Nilayam, our Lord Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba resides and we will realize Him.





Practical tips on steps in self-evolution

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*Sarvajna sarvavarade sarva dustha bhayankari
Sarva dukha hare devi narayani namostute*

Dasara is the time when we realize that *devi* pervades everything by her nature of energy. It is by sending our prayers to her in this period that we receive the three-fold power of *Ichhashakti*, *Jnanashakti* and *Kriyashakti*.

*Devarshi gana sanghata stuyamanatma vaibhava
Bhand'asura vadho'dyukta sakti sena saman vita
Maheswari Mahakali Mahagrasa Mahasana
Aparna Chandika Chanda mundasura nishoodhini*

Bharat is a holy land where the holy *shakti* has manifested from time to time for a noble purpose. We have Durga as *Mahishasura mardini* (slayer of the demon Mahishasura) and Chamundi (slayer of Chanda and Munda). Shakti took the form of Lalitha for slaying the demon Bhandasura. Dasara commemorates the victory of good over evil. The best part of Bharatiya culture is that it reminds us of our goal of God realization. One such ritual that is followed by the South Indians is 'Golu'. It is a tradition where *bomma* (idols) are kept on the steps in odd numbers, signifying the evolution of a human from embryo to divine.

The first step symbolizes the worldly pleasures that a man enjoys.

Corresponding steps are his efforts to become divine. Let us consider this ritual as an analogy. The first step that we have to take in the ladder of evolution is the aspect of service, which is needed to curb our desires. All of us have a fundamental urge to find meaning in life and this urge usually translates into a desire to reach the divine by serving others. If we serve thinking that our action is primarily for the benefit of others, then we are incorrect, for service holds the greatest benefit for the one who serves.

Let me narrate an incident to prove this point. I belong to the dispensary in the hostel self-reliance departments, and as a result, service to the sick is a humble offering to our beloved Lord. Last year one of my juniors got a severe hit on the toenail and the nail split into two. It was bleeding profusely and it took almost an hour to dress her wound. Later when I went to dress her wound, she said that I am the best doctor she has ever met. This might be a mere coincidence or a praise of others, but it meant a lot to me for I always wanted to become a doctor and Bhagawan made me the best doctor without an MBBS degree. The exalting fact of service is that it drives us all away from too much of self-concern.

This takes us to the next step of sacrifice. Sacrifice doesn't mean giving up our life for the sake of others but rather giving up of selfish desires and ego for the welfare of others. When we try to practice it, there are bound to be many tests put forth in front of us as the Lord tests whether our selflessness is strong and genuine. Despite all the criticisms and obstacles that come to us in the form of tests, the mirage of desires must not delude us.

The third step in the ladder of evolution is love. Bhagawan says, 'Duty without love is deplorable, duty with love is desirable and love without duty is divine.' The whole universe is an enterprise, a very busy factory whose product is love. By means of sadhana, one can manufacture love and export it to millions and millions of people in need of it. The more



it is shared, the deeper it becomes, the sweeter its taste and greater its joy. Spreading our love to millions and millions of unknown people might sound an impractical task, but this task has a simple solution if it is offered to our beloved Lord. When that is done, He will take the responsibility and work through us.

My mother is an ardent Shirdi Baba devotee. Even when she has to travel to a school two hours from our house, she engages in communication with her Baba. In my tenth grade, she suddenly felt that she has no time to spend with me and that she had to continue to work for the poor village children out there. She took promise from her Baba that He must always be with me as a friend, as a mother and entrusted me to Him. That Baba of hers did take me into His fold and showered on me not just one mother's love but that of a thousand mothers. I learnt that complete surrender earns God's love. This forms the last but one step in our evolution.

But there arises a question. How long should we wait for the results of this act of surrender? Patience comprises an integral part of persistence. If one believes that he has completely surrendered to God's will, only patience and persistence can validate his effort. When we put this effort, we are eligible for the final step which is the end, and yet a new beginning.

Most of us sitting here feel that liberation is an extraordinary experience usually achieved by super human devotion. This is not the case. This experience is our natural and ordinary way of being. In fact, life in the world is a better training ground for reduction of egos and desires. When we are surrounded by temptations and we perceive them to be unreal, then liberation lies close at hand. We need not wait for our hair to turn grey or our hair to fall off, as there are no prerequisites of age and educational qualifications for liberation. It is our weakness to believe our inability of this achievement during this *janma* (birth). Hard though it may be, we need to remind ourselves in times of strife



of His wisdom and His plans for us.

I am sure we are not in the embryo stage and we are not far from the goal. As tough as it may seem to hold on to this belief in these ordinary rigours of daily life; we need to remind ourselves that He is with us. Our task is to make ourselves ready for His work. He is our Ghanashyama, we are His *murali* (flute) and His mission our music.

Let me end with a prayer:

Dearest Bhagawan, at first glance you are a small frame in an orange robe; sometimes stern but always smiling. You smiled at me and that smile gave me a glimpse of your radiance. The next time when I saw you, love enveloped me and unconsciously a tear caressed my cheeks. I pray to you O! Lord, come into our hearts and show us that we are one with thee.



Excerpts from Divine Discourses

We can't understand Vedanta. The quintessence of Upanishads is Vedanta. The essence of Upanishads is wisdom. '*Advaita darshanam jnanam*' - experience of non-dualism is wisdom.

This non-dualistic experience is not possible for everyone. Today, everyone is drowned in a dual mind. It is said, 'A man with a dual mind is half blind.' Such a man whose is half blind can never know sacred things. It is not possible for everyone to understand Vedanta but the sanctity found in Vedanta is not found anywhere else. If you enquire and investigate deeply into each śloka, you will find boundless bliss. Even if you transform the water of the entire ocean into ink, you can't explain the meaning of a single śloka. That is the greatness of each śloka. Man is not able to understand the inner meaning of the śloka or canto and hence he is drowned in *shoka* or misery.

Sage Valmiki declared, "I have included all the knowledge in the Ramayana. It is not possible to estimate the inner significance of Ramayana."

Who can understand the true divinity? Only a true devotee can comprehend the nature of divinity. A mean-minded man cannot comprehend divinity.

Janaka came over there with Sita having a garland in her hand. Janaka declared, "Whoever is able to lift the bow of Shiva and break it will be given the hand of Sita in marriage." Rama has the quality of wishing good for every being; He is the mine of all virtues. Such a person went to that assembly of Janaka.

Rama told Janaka, "O Janaka maharaja, I am not ready for the marriage yet; I need the command of my parents. Without the



permission of my parents, I will not even look at the face of Sita.” Janaka felt very sad. He thought to himself, ‘How is this boy talking like this?’ These days, at the name of marriage, boys get ready; they forget everything, even the permission of the parents.

Sage Vishwamitra came forward and said, “this is the promise of King Janaka, please accept it.” Rama said, “I am not prepared to accept it. I will accept that which is my liking and that is the principle of Atma. I want people who have all the virtues. So, until my father comes here, I will not accept this proposal.” Janaka sent for King Dasaratha. Vishwamitra told Rama, “You can wait until your parents come, but you can look at her once until they come here.” Rama went on teaching Dharma here. He said, “until I am married, I will not look at any women. Until marriage, all are like my mother.” So saying, he retired to his room. Vashistha came and Rama preached Dharma to him as well. He said, “Dharma has taught me these principles; I will follow Dharma only and not the command of people. Still, I will respect everybody.” All kept quiet, as they were not able to convince him.

Three days passed thus. Dasartha and others came from Ayodhya. He was asked his consent for the function to be held the next day at 8 a.m. Rama wanted to meet his father and take his permission. Dasaratha said, “Son, we have all come for the sake of your marriage only. It is acceptable to all of us.” Rama said, “As you have permitted me, I am ready for the marriage.”

But Rama didn’t agree for the coronation, even after repeated requests from Dasaratha and Vashishta. He said, “It is my vow to follow the word of my father. If I follow the command of others, it will be disrespectful to my father. I don’t want to put down my father,





I don't want this coronation, I will go to the forest." But with respect to marriage, he followed the command of his father.

Whist the marriage is being performed, a screen is put between the bride and groom. Once the screen is removed, the boy should see the girl and the girl should see the boy. Sita is also a noble and virtuous lady. When the screen was removed, they were not looking at each other, but were looking at the ground. Vishwamitra came and accosted Rama, "O, Rama, why are you looking at the ground, look at Sita who is the daughter of the Bhoomi(earth)." Rama didn't look at Sita even after this. The reason being, the marriage was not yet over. It was the belief of Rama that looking at the face of a woman before marriage is the worst of sins. The marriage was over and after the parents forced him, Rama saw the face of Sita finally.

The determination of great personalities is very sacred. Each one has its own eligibility. If the husband is virtuous and wife is not, it is useless and in the same way, if the wife is virtuous and the husband is not, it is again useless. Each one should be good to each other.

The *Mangalasutra* was not yet tied. Rama thought to Himself, "until it is tied, she is like my mother." The other couples garlanded each other with flower garlands, but Sita didn't garland Rama and Rama didn't garland Sita. The bride should garland the bridegroom first and then the bridegroom should garland the bride. Sita got the garland and was holding it for a long time but Rama didn't bend his head. Vishwamitra went and asked Rama to bend his head. Rama replied, "Guruji, in such a mighty assembly, if I bend my head to a woman, what will be the respect of my father and my lineage. I will not bend my head." Sita said that she would not garland until Rama bends his head.





When such a conversation was taking place, Rama silently informed Lakshmana of the situation, as he was the right man to be contacted then. He was asked by Rama to lift that part of the earth a little bit. Lakshmana has a very keen and sharp intellect. The devotion that he has to Rama is unparalleled. He has his heart in Rama. He said that it is not possible to lift the earth, but he said that he would tackle the situation. All of a sudden, Lakshmana came running and fell at the feet of Rama and didn't get up. Rama bent to lift Lakshmana. Immediately, Sita garlanded Rama. Rama didn't bend in the ordinary way; he bent to pick up Lakshmana. Sita had a sharper intellect, she saw the opportunity when Rama bent down, and garlanded him. That is how they are made for one another. Each one knew the other. We should have the eligibility and power to know divinity. This is true spirituality. This is the essence of the Gita and the Upanishads.

If you have earned God's grace, if you have understood the essence of the Upanishads, everything will be subservient to you. The one who knows the Upanishads, becomes the knower of the form of the Upanishads. This energy or Shakti has no form like Rama, Krishna, Govinda or Narayana. This Navaratri is the symbolization of this shakti. Shiva and Shakti are the very symbols of Jnana and wisdom. It is total awareness and nothing otherwise. This power has no dearth or shortage. If we want to behold such power, we have to acquire such sacred power. If you acquire temporary grace, it is not possible to experience this wisdom and shakti. There is no place for a short-term plan here. Permanent devotion is needed. Stability and steadiness have to be inculcated to acquire this devotion. Purity and good qualities should also be cultivated; selfishness has to be given up, then you will be able to see this divinity.

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