



Time is the very form of God... Time wasted is life wasted

*All things happen according to the dictates of time;
Both good and bad depend on time;
Prosperity and poverty likewise depend on time;
Time is the determinant of all things,
There is none who is not subject to time
In this entire world; that's the truth.*

Embodiments of the Divine *atma*!

Time is the embodiment of God. Hence, time is called *samvatsara* (year). The sages have described God as *Kaalaroopaya* (the embodiment of time). All things in the Cosmos, moving and unmoving, are permeated by God. Hence, God is characterized as *Kaalagarbha* (the One who holds time in the womb). Sages have also described Him as *Dheerotama* (Supreme among the valiant). The term *dheera* should not be understood as meaning one who is a great intellectual or highly intelligent person. *Dheera* is the appellation given by the *Veda* to a man who turns his *dhee* (intelligence) toward God. The word *kaalam* (time) is derived from *kaa+alam*. This means that God, embodiment of time, is the One who rewards people according to their deserts. God does not submit to worldly offerings, worldly authority, or worldly power. He responds only to spiritual aspirations.

Realize the true goal of your life

In the world, we are continually experiencing the same round of days and nights. You perform the same ablutions and indulge in the same process of filling the stomach. Thus, you go on from year to year. But what efforts are you making to lead a purposeful and an ennobling life? You are going through the same mill of experiences again and again, doing the same things again and again. If you go on in this way, what is the worth of your life? What is the goal of life? What is its primary purpose? Few care to enquire into this basic question.

Hence what we have to examine is how we can lead an ideal, bliss-filled, and a spiritually-oriented life that will serve as an example to others. People are engaged in *sadhana* [spiritual effort]. But when the outcome of these exercises is examined, it is found to be without meaning. All these exercises are purely designed to provide some sort of mental satisfaction and nothing more.

In my view, neither *sadhana* nor *sadhyam* (fulfillment) exists independently and apart from each other. *Sadhana* and *sadhyam* are one and the same. It is a trick of

the mind to make *sadhana* as the means to *sadhyam* (the Goal). True *sadhana* consists in giving up the *anaatma bhava* (the idea that one is not the Spirit but the physical body). To turn the vision from the physical to the spiritual constitutes real *sadhana*.

Today, we have knowledge of many sorts in the world. All these categories of knowledge do not constitute what is regarded as *jnana* [knowledge] in *Vedantic* parlance. *Atma jnana* (knowledge of the spirit) alone is true knowledge. Ordinary knowledge may be knowledge of material objects, sensory knowledge, or any other kind of knowledge acquired by investigation. But none of these can be *atma jnana*. In the highest sense *atma* (the Spirit) and *jnana* (Knowledge) are not two different things. They are one and the same. That is why the *Vedas* declared: *Satyam, jnanam, anantam Brahma* (Brahmam is truth, wisdom, and infinite). Truth, wisdom, infinity, and *Brahmam* are all different names for the *Paramatma* (Omni-self). They are synonymous. They are not different from each other.

Jnana and bhakti lead to the same goal

What is *jnana*? The awareness of *swaswaroopa* (one's real nature) is true knowledge. Devotion is the means to achieve oneness with this knowledge (when Self-knowledge becomes one with the Self). *Jnana* implies freedom from all thoughts. The *jnana-marga* (the path of knowledge) calls for the control of thoughts by appropriate efforts. Whether one takes to the *jnana-Marga* or the *bhakti marga* (the path of devotion), the resulting illumination is the same.

For instance, the moon reflects the light of the sun. The light from the sun is warm and effulgent. When the moon radiates the same light, it is cool and soothing. It is the same light that is present in the sun and the moon. The principle that illumines both the sun and the moon is the spirit (*atma-tatwa*). The sun's light has been compared to *jnana* and the moon's light to *bhakti*. *Jnana* is effulgent, while *bhakti* (devotion) is blissful. Thus, *bhakti* and *jnana* are the beginning and the end of the same process.

God accepts all that comes from a pure heart

In the phenomenal world, we recognize three entities—*karta*, *karma*, and *kriya* (the doer, the act of doing, and the goal of the action). This is characteristic of devotion. The *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) is the *karta* (doer). The *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) is the *karma* (what he does). Getting the vision of the Divine is the *kriya* (goal). The same process is described as *jnana* (knowledge), *jneya* (that which is to be known), and *jnata* (the knower). In the highest sense all these are one. They appear in three different forms at different stages. People are carried away by what they imagine are their spiritual experiences in their *sadhana*. But what they should really seek is *anatma bhava* (the giving up of the attachment to the non-spiritual). You should not rely on the power and pelf of the world. God accepts only what comes from a pure heart. He does not yield to any mundane offerings. There is a historical illustration for this.

How Shiva accepted Parvati as *Ardha*

Both in the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Shiva Purana* [scriptures about Vishnu and Shiva], Parvati is described as the most beautiful goddess. Conscious of her own exceptional charms, Parvati desired to win Shiva as her spouse. But all her efforts proved fruitless. Learning a lesson from this experience and shedding her ego, she embarked on a severe penance. Facing the rigors of heat and cold, wind and rain, she allowed her body to waste away by her penance. Her mind was solely concentrated on Shiva. Seeing that she had completely rid her ego, Shiva agreed to accept Parvati as *ardhaangini* (one half of Himself).

What is the inner meaning of this episode? Nature is symbolic of Parvati. It is exceptionally beautiful. Feeling proud about its charms, it seeks to attract everybody. As it succeeds in its attractions, its ego grows. Man, who is a child of nature, also develops the ego and leads a life filled with egoism. The ego gets puffed up on the basis of knowledge, physical strength, power, position, handsome looks, and such other accomplishments. Even the pride of scholarship takes one away from God.

Persons filled with such conceit can never realize God. Only those free from self-conceit can be God-realized souls. Valmiki, Nanda, Kuchela, Shabari, Vidura, and Hanuman [all devotees of the Lord] are examples of devotees who realized God, but who could boast of no great lineage, wealth, or scholarship. Their supreme quality was freedom from ego. Hanuman, for instance, was content to describe himself as a servant of Rama, despite his great prowess and knowledge. All the accomplishments and acquisitions in this world are transient and impermanent; lured by them, men get inflated and ultimately court ruin. Hence, giving up the notions of one's own doership, man must regard God alone as the doer. He is the giver, He is the recipient, and He is also the object that is given.

Time is the very form of God. Birth and death are encompassed by time. Everyone, therefore, should regard time as Divine and utilize it for performing sacred actions. You should not waste a single moment. Time wasted is life wasted. The fruits of your actions are determined by time. All your experiences are the results of your actions, whether it is happiness or sorrow, affluence or poverty. Hence, good and bad depend on what you do. As are your actions, so are the fruits thereof. The way you utilize your time determines the outcome.

God is the origin for all *Yugas*

Hence, this New Year, which is a form of the Divine, should be put to right use. You have heard about the four eons called *Krita Yuga*, *Treta Yuga*, *Dwapara Yuga* and *Kali Yuga*. These are not distinct from each other. The divisions are based on experiences. Whether it is *Krita Yuga* or *Kali Yuga*, it has no separate form. According to the conduct of the people at the time, the name is given for the *Yuga*. Even during *Krita Yuga* there were people filled with attachments and aversions. There are even in *Kali Yuga* people wedded to truth and leading virtuous and peaceful lives. For all *Yugas*, God is the origin. Hence one of the names bestowed on

God is *Yugadi* (One from whom the *Yuga* begins). The *Yugadi* festival is celebrated for this reason. Everything is a manifestation of the Divine.

Not realizing this, man becomes elated when he gets something and feels depressed when he loses something. You should develop the state of equanimity that leaves you unaffected by gain or loss.

Engage yourselves in godly actions

Atma is time and time is God. Therefore, you should not waste time. Fill your time with good actions. There is no greater *sadhana* than this. Sanctify the time given to you by good thoughts and good actions. For this, you need to cultivate the company of the good that will in due course lead you to liberation. Fill your mind with thoughts of God. Engage yourself in godly actions. This is true *sadhana*.

People claim to spend hours in meditation. But of what use is it if there is no concentration of mind? It is better if you engage yourself in your regular duties or render social service or participate in *bhajans*. By these means try to bring the mind under control. Also, such work will be transformed into worship. Dedicate all your thoughts and actions to God. "*Sarva Karma Bhagavat Prityartham*" (All actions are done to please God). Then your acts get purified.

If you want to experience God, you have to do it through your duties and actions. This is not so easy. You have been listening to Me for many years. You take down notes and listen to tape records. Has there been the slightest change in you? Such is your life. Only when some change takes place in you, that alone is the fruit of your *sadhana*. You go on spending your days and nights in the same routine, but are you making any efforts to sublimate your life? Endeavour to lead an ideal life. In the absence of any change for the better in your daily conduct, all your so-called *sadhana* (spiritual practices) will be futile.

God resides in the temple of human body

Jnana is God. *Jnana* is *atma*. *Prakriti* (nature) is *jneyam* (the thing to be known). Man is a combination of *jnana* (God) and *jneyam* (nature). The *Bhagavad Gita* says that the *kshetra* (the field, namely the body) and the *kshetrajna* (the knower of the field, namely the *atma*) together constitute the human personality. Similarly, the scriptures refer to the human body as the temple and the indwelling spirit as the God installed in that temple. Even a mere intellectual understanding of this fact will make us happy. But we shall be much happier when we put this understanding into practice in our daily lives. However, it is a pity that we content ourselves with pious resolutions in such matters, without a strong determination to put them into actual practice.

Have your hands in society and heads in forest

Without the courage of firm conviction and strong determination, no purpose is served by routine *sadhanas* undertaken by aspirants who oscillate from moment to moment like the pendulum of a clock. On the contrary, a person who never swerves

from his determination even under trying circumstances is called a *dheera* (a hero) and such a person wins the Lord's grace.

We should try to seek fulfillment in our day-to-day life by basing our mundane activities on spiritual values. As I have been telling you off and on, you must have your hands in the society and head in the forest. That is to say, whatever be the activities with which you are preoccupied in society, you must be steadfast in holding on to the spiritual ideal. This alone is the true *sadhana* that will bestow lasting peace on you.

Whatever may be the change in the various *pratibimba* (reflections) there will be no change whatsoever in the *bimba* (original). Remember that you are that changeless original—the *atma*. All your *sadhanas* should be directed toward establishing yourself in this firm conviction and unwavering faith, culminating in your life's fulfillment.

***Bhajan* and *japa* are one and the same**

All your sense organs should be sanctified offering all the actions performed through them as dedication to God. This is true *bhajan*. "*Bha*" means that which is *bhavyam* (sacred or holy). What is *bhavyam*? The *atma tatwa* (principle of *atma*) is *divyam* (Self-effulgent). The letter "*ja*" in the word *bhajan* connotes *japa* (chanting the Lord's name). Thus, *bhajan* and *japa* are one and the same.

There is a *japa* (that means constant remembrance of God) that goes on incessantly and automatically within you in the breathing process, whatever be the work in which you are engaged. And that is *So-ham*. This is the real *sadhana*, because it goes on without any conscious effort on your part, in the same manner as the process of breathing, beating of your heart, and circulation of blood within you, which take place without any effort by you. These are all-natural processes that go on without any volition on your part. In contrast to this there are some activities that also become involuntary or automatic but because of prolonged practice.

For example, the fingers of one who is in the habit of taking snuff will unconsciously be moving toward his nose. Similarly, because of habit, some people will be engaged unconsciously in *japa*, with their minds wandering somewhere. This is not real *japa*. That alone is real *japa* that goes on in the super-conscious (but not unconscious) state of mind. Do not entertain any doubt about your ability to reach that stage. You can surely attain that state beyond the shadow of doubt, provided you have a strong determination. Unfortunately, you do not evince such a firm determination and tenacity of purpose in respect of spiritual matters, as you do for the sake of mundane things. Man is prepared to put forth any amount of effort to undertake a journey of millions of miles into outer space, but he hardly ever endeavors to go even an inch into his own inner Self. What is the use of all your intelligence and all your worldly acquisitions when they cannot give you *atma shanti* (the untrammelled peace of the *atma*)? God alone can confer such enduring peace on man.

Therefore, O Embodiments of Divine love! Recognize that the *Samvatsara* (new year) connotes God who bears several appellations relating to time. Sanctify the New Year by engaging yourselves in pure, selfless, and ennobling activities. As far as possible, avoid causing harm or pain to others. As you sow, so you reap. Whenever you feel disturbed by a sense of anger, envy, pride, jealousy, and the like, be alert and resort to the contemplation of the Lord.

Source: Divine Discourse, January 1, 1991
Poornachandra Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam

From Doubting Thomas to a Sai Devotee

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I first heard of Bhagavan in 1971, through an uncle who was childless, and it was the desire for progeny that had taken him to Puttaparthi. When Bhagavan called him for an interview and gave him *vibhuti*, he thought he had got a son. Years passed and the state of childlessness continued. Much later, he adopted a child. Even today he speaks of Bhagavan's interference with the *karmic* [action] law only now and then, when a devotee's love moves Him to confer His grace.

I saw Bhagavan for the first time in 1973, when I was posted as Collector of Solan district in Himachal Pradesh. He was travelling to Shimla and He was passing Solan en route. My wife joined the crowd of *bhajan* singers at the open area near the bus stand, while the Superintendent of Police and I stood on the road to look after law and order.

Suddenly, a cavalcade was sighted. There was a pilot jeep, then a car, and then other vehicles. I could see a saffron robe in the back of the car. Bhagavan was seated in the middle with one person on either side. The crowds milled around the car. Bhagavan opened the door and showed Himself for about fifteen seconds. People rushed to take *padnamaskar* [touching the feet of the Lord]. Before we knew what was happening, He had gone back to his seat, the crowds had parted, and the caravan had proceeded on its way.

When my wife and I met I chaffed her, "See, you were singing *bhajans* and could not have *darshan* [sight of a holy man]. We sinners stood on the road and saw Him." She just smiled back. When we reached home, our orderly said that he had taken my son,

then two years old, to see Bhagavan pass by. As they stood on the roadside, Bhagavan stopped His car and placed His hand on my son's forehead. We felt somehow singled out for a blessing.

I continued to hear stories about Baba's miracles. Then I was posted to Delhi. My boss was Bhagavan's devotee. He told me about Bhagavan and His activities. I think that more than anyone else it was he who prepared the ground. One day, he invited me to a *bhajan* session at his house. There he introduced me to an IPS [Indian Police Service] Officer, whose cancer had been diagnosed by doctors of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Having heard of Bhagavan, he got in touch with him and then used the *vibhuti* [sacred Ash] materialized by Bhagavan. The cancer just vanished.

Try as hard as I might, this story shook me. How could cancer disappear without any treatment? It seemed impossible. It could not be magic. It was not something I had read in a book. Here was the beneficiary himself, to attest to the veracity of the story.

Then my boss went on a tour to Bangalore. When he returned, he brought back a small vial full of *amrit* [nectar]. And the story he narrated was just unbelievable. It seemed that there was a man in Srirangapatnam [in Karnataka State], who had a ring given to him by Bhagavan. Day and night, *amrit* oozed from the ring. Pot after pot, vessel after vessel was filled up and yet the limitless oozing continued. My boss had held that ring on his palm and soon his palm was full of *amrit*. My defenses started crumbling. Then I read [Howard] Murphet's book.

Now, for the first time, I had an inkling of the range and variety of Bhagavan's miracles and His influence on people spread over the globe. My attitude to Bhagavan started changing. I was prepared to explore for myself.

While in Shimla, as Education Secretary, in February 1985, I had the opportunity of getting in touch with Bhagavan's program of Education in Human Values (EHV). This was an excellent opportunity to promote this innovative program.

Shortly before this I had published a book *The Science of Spirituality* in which my thesis was that there was a core to all religions that was more or less the same. I had pleaded that this was a science, a body of knowledge that could be tested on the anvil of logic and reason, that there were laws of the spiritual realm that were as real and immutable as the laws of physics and chemistry, and that spirituality should be a subject taught in schools.

Here was the answer to my plea. The Sathya Sai Organization had not only a similar approach, it had also created the pedagogy. Here was spirituality, cast in a secular mold, that could be immediately transmitted to children. There were precious nuggets to be found in the secularization of spirituality. "Meditation" was called

"silent sitting." Mathematical problems, instead of asking how much a shopkeeper would gain by cheating, would now ask how much he should give away in charity.

I was fascinated by the EHV program. A five-day workshop organized in Shimla by the Government in full collaboration with the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, EHV was formally introduced in the schools and a teachers' training program launched. A batch of 100 teachers was deputed to a national conference being held at Puttaparthi.

Professor Shyam Sunder, who was head of the Sai Organization in Himachal Pradesh, wanted me to visit Puttaparthi too. I was reluctant, not sure whether an "official" trip would be in order. Then I learnt that the conference was to be inaugurated by Shri K. C. Pant, the then Union Minister of Education. I stayed at Puttaparthi for just 3 days—1st to 3rd June 1985. But these were days of transformation.

Bhagavan Himself was a surprise. He was so slight, dainty, and delicate. His smile was boyish; His eyes devoted to your welfare. When He came close, He was small and sweet and motherly. When He went afar, His shoulders seemed broad and His face stern, and one could sense the aloofness and majesty of Shiva.

But the biggest surprise was me. When Bhagavan came near me and said His first words, "When did you arrive?" I found myself dumb. Professor Shyam Sunder mumbled something and Bhagavan moved away. But during those 3 days, my throat felt choked all the time, tears rose unbidden to the eyes, and my heart was full. Bhagavan called me for an interview, told me about the monkey mind, materialized a ring, and made me recite the *Gayatri Mantra*. I was in a group that was called in for lunch and saw Bhagavan in the unusual role of a host, hovering around us, asking us to take more of a dish, and generally behaving like an anxious housewife.

I was asked to speak in one of the sessions. Something prompted me to speak each sentence in Hindi and English. This was appreciated by the audience. Then I had to chair a session. While this was going on, I found that the attention of the audience was wandering. They no longer stared at the speaker. They were looking toward me, but not at me. This mysterious behavior was explained, when I looked back and saw Bhagavan standing just behind my chair!

When I returned from Puttaparthi, my attitude toward Bhagavan had changed. I could sense His Divinity, love, and concern. Although I pushed the EHV program in the State, I mentioned that we were collaborating with the Sathya Sai Trust as they had approached us with the complete pedagogy.

Then in July 1987, I had a retinal hemorrhage in the left eye and my sight went down to 6/60. Doctors probing into my systems found no indication of hypertension, diabetes, and so on. The problem was diagnosed as "idiopathic" that to my mind was "idiotic." But Bhagavan's blessing was obviously at work, and

although I had to undergo laser surgery, the eyesight returned to 6/6, an almost unheard kind of cure.

In January 1988, I visited Puttaparthi with the entire family, my parents, wife, daughter, and son. Bhagavan showed complete knowledge about each one of us, our nature and temperament, dreams and desires, strengths and weaknesses. This time I was relatively calm, but my wife wept continuously.

Since then, we have visited Puttaparthi twice, in January 1989 and August 1989. The entire family has taken to Bhagavan. Each of us worships Bhagavan in our own way. Bhagavan's photographs adorn every room. My daughter, a hosteller at Kurukshetra [University], keeps a fast on Thursdays. My son, now in Moscow, writes letters to Bhagavan. So many miracles have taken place that it would be difficult to recount all of them. Let me mention just one, to illustrate.

On New Year's Eve, 1989, I was at Delhi Airport, waiting for the Hyderabad flight to be announced. The flight was late. I found a European youth pushing a wheelchair in which an old lady was seated. He was obviously worried about something, as he went from person to person, but without any success. I accosted him and learnt that the footrest of the wheelchair had broken loose. He wanted a mechanic, who could set it right, or perhaps if a wrench was produced, he could try to repair it himself.

I approached the policeman near the X-ray machine, and meanwhile sent a prayer to Bhagavan. The cop looked sheepish when I told him about the trouble, but suddenly his colleague who was looking at the machine, asked us to wait. He said that a bag, that had passed through the machine soon after I had made my request, had wrench in it. The passenger who came to claim the bag turned out to be proficient in the use of the wrench. Very obligingly, he took out the wrench and repaired the wheel chair within a few minutes.

But more than the miracles, it is the transformation of our personalities that is astonishing. In August 1987, I gave up smoking after 27 years. In August 1989, the entire family gave up the non-vegetarian eating habit of a lifetime. We have become quieter, more introspective, and less argumentative. We tend to pass on all our problems and worries to Bhagavan and He always helps.

These days I am working on a book about Bhagavan. I am trying to read all that he has said and placing it in some kind of logical order. The writing of the book is itself a kind of *sadhana* [spiritual effort], for I find doubts dissolving and sudden flashes of illumination.

Now, at last, I have come to a stage where I am firmly convinced that Bhagavan is what He has proclaimed Himself to be, an *Avatar*. This has imparted a kind of serenity to me. Earlier, I used to fret and fume about what would happen to Punjab and Assam. I would wonder why a tidal wave had killed a hundred thousand people of Bangladesh. Now, I know that Bhagavan is here, and whatever is happening is

happening. That means it has to happen, due to the working of the *karmic* law, the entire ramifications that we are unable to see. So, I do not break my head against the seemingly insoluble problems of the universe. I leave them to Bhagavan Baba, who is infinitely more capable of sorting out the mess that we mortals create.

Suffice it for me that I am privileged to live in the same country as Bhagavan, that I can see Him in human form with these eyes and visualize Him with my inner eye, and that His benedictory presence is always there to protect and guide me.

~ By M. K. Kaw, IAS (Retd.)

Source: *Sai Vandana* (65th Birthday Offering 1990)

The Holy See

Those days, those days
in Prasanthi, not a care in the world
waiting for the Lord of the Universe

Rainbow sequined *saris* flutter like
colorful prayer flags
in the sultry, warm breezes

Women devotees, buzzing honeybees,
breathlessly squeeze into granite window openings
outside the *mandir*
straining to see, hoping their adoring eyes
will be blessed by the nectarine vision of Sai *Avatar*

Seva Dal angels in vivid orange and yellow scarves
manage to bridle the swooning, burgeoning, euphoric
crowds with spirited "*Sairam, Sairams*"

O Baba
what we wouldn't give for a chance to once more
see your airborne Lotus feet floating toward us
on the golden sands of Puttaparthi

Reverently, I press my fingertips to my eyelids
taking *padnamaskar*
these orbs, these orbs
once gazed upon the holy sight of
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

~Sonya Ki Tomlinson

Sri Sathya Sai: Most Loving Master

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A lady was sitting in the verandah of the old *Mandir* [temple] and was musing about Bhagavan. She started asking herself as to what made all these people so reluctant to leave Him. Why were they so attached to Him? It then dawned on her that it could only be the love that Bhagavan gave to each one of them that touched their hearts and made them yearn to be always with Him. As she was engrossed in her thoughts, she heard Bhagavan's voice telling her that she was thinking on the right lines and that if she continued thus, she would reach her goal. She turned back to find the all-knowing Lord standing there. This was my grandmother's experience on her first visit to Puttaparthi about forty year's ago.

What was it that brought my grandmother to Bhagavan? Bhagavan says that when the time comes, He calls His devotees to Him. The instrument responsible for this journey was an insignificant postcard written by a devotee to his brother in Delhi. The latter was a vocal artist working at the All India Radio Station in Delhi. He was teaching Carnatic music to my mother (who was a young girl at that time). It was by chance that my mother came across this postcard which described Bhagavan and His miracle.

Bathed in Bhagavan's love on the first visit, the family kept coming back every summer to Puttaparthi in order to spend the vacation in His loving presence. Attachment had grown. The family would be in tears every time when they were leaving Puttaparthi. In order to tease and make the trickle of tears into a flood Bhagavan used to sing a tearful song in Telugu that described the anguish of the devotees at the moment of leave taking.

The translation of the song is as follows:

However long we may stay here,
Our feet do not permit us to leave this Swami,
Who is born in *Kaliyuga* and showing all these *mahimas* [glories].
We are submerged in this *maya samsara* [illusionary world].
Without any way-out O, Baba,
But O Lord Sai, You are sending us back.
Saying that *mukti* [salvation] lies in this very same *samsara*,
Please bless us that we may go and return again,
Upon you O Swami, lies the burden of
Calling us back to Parthi as soon as possible.

I have had the opportunity of enjoying Bhagavan's *darshan* and proximity periodically ever since I was a child. In spite of this, the materialistic atmosphere of the world did considerably influence my thinking and sense of values.

I recall vividly on one particular visit to Puttaparthi, Bhagavan admonished me for my waywardness. I was touched by the loving way in which He pointed out my faults. I took His words more in the spirit of advice than of rebuke. This was a veritable miracle for I normally never accepted any admonition quietly. This was the beginning of the transforming influence of Bhagavan's love for me.

My joining this Institute as MBA student marked the beginning of a silent but rapid change in my outlook and way of thinking. In His loving way Bhagavan gave my life a new and meaningful direction. What no force or disciplining could ever accomplish in me, was done by Swami's all-encompassing compassionate love.

From the very early days, Bhagavan had told my grandmother to come for festivals like *Dasara* and Birthday and serve as a volunteer. On one occasion *Dasara* was approaching and my grandmother was in a dilemma. My mother and aunt, who were small children then, were taking their examinations and there was no one, other than grandmother, who could stay and look after them. She decided that come what may, she was not going to attend *Dasara* that year. She felt what she was doing was correct.

That night she had a dream in which she saw herself standing on the sea shore and Bhagavan standing nearby. In a small swimming pool, by the side of the sea, some children were learning to swim. Bhagavan turned to my grandmother and asked if she would allow her children to learn swimming in that pool. She replied in the affirmative. Then Bhagavan asked her if she had any objection to their swimming in the sea once they had learnt to swim in the pool. She said that she had no objection. She then told Bhagavan that she too wanted to learn swimming. Bhagavan's reply was "You want to learn to swim, but you are already in the sea."

When she woke up, the meaning of the dream was not clear and so she went to the shrine and prayed. It then dawned on her that what Bhagavan meant was she was already floundering in the ocean of *samsara*. Where was the question of her helping the children cross it? It was Bhagavan who was taking care of all of them. It was better to leave everything to Him. She then decided to go for *Dasara* and leave the children in His care. Just a few days before her departure, a relative arrived and offered to take care of the children while she was away at Puttaparthi.

Once in Puttaparthi, my grandmother and another member of the family were making *chapattis* [flat bread] for their lunch. They did not take particular care to see that the *chapattis* were uniform and circular in shape. They reasoned that, as the *chapattis* were for their own consumption, they need not have to be perfect. At that moment a person came asking for a few *chapattis* for Bhagavan. He said, Bhagavan

had sent him to them as they were from Delhi and were sure to have well-made *chapattis*. My grandmother was at a loss for none of the *chapattis* were good enough to be sent to Bhagavan. Bhagavan, in His inimitable way, was conveying the message that all the work we do should be done as worship and we should strive to perform all our tasks perfectly.

There was a time when devotees used to prepare tasty dishes and after being blessed by Bhagavan, were distributed as *prasadam* [consecrated food] to all present at the end of the evening *bhajan* [devotional singing]. Once, it was our family's turn to prepare the sweets for *prasadam*.

Instead of taking all the sweets to the *Mandir*, a few pieces were kept aside for the children of the family. In the evening after *bhajan*, when Bhagavan was leaving the *bhajan* hall, He told the priest, not to distribute the sweets. My grandmother immediately realized her mistake of retaining a few sweets. She prayed intensely to Bhagavan for forgiveness. Bhagavan had left the *bhajan* hall. He was entering His room when He suddenly turned back, came to the *bhajan* hall and told the priest to distribute the sweets as *prasadam*. When we repent sincerely and pray to Bhagavan from the core of our heart, He responds immediately and forgives us.

Lord, we pray that you teach us to be vigilant and tireless in Thy service.

~By Dr. Naren Ramji
Source: *Sai Vandana* 1990

Q & A with Bhagavan:

Self-Realization

Hislop: One hears about various paths to self-realization. What does this mean?

Sai: There are three paths. There is that of devotion; the *guru* guides and all is left to the *guru* to perform. Then, there is the perception that God is omnipresent; the future comes up to the present and the past falls away from the present. God is omnipresent; so, the present is God; this is knowledge. Then there is surrender to God. But surrender does not mean just doing all actions in His name. Surrender to God is when the entire Universe is known as His body. Surrender is when doer, deed, and object are all God. It cannot be forced. It comes naturally. Faith is the foundation; surrender is the peak.

Hislop: Of the many 'roads' to self-realization, what is the short cut?

Sai: The short cut is this way: God's name is the seed; love is the water by which the crop grows, discipline is the fence that protects the growing crop; the field in which the crop is grown is the spiritual heart; the crop when it comes to harvest, is bliss.

Hislop: Why should one attempt to gain self-realization when one is always self-realized?

Sai: As of now, there is a mixture in the mind of sensory identification. The mind is not fully one-pointed.

Hislop: Swami, time is needed for the plane to arrive in India, but why is time needed for self-realization? Is not an immediate awakening possible, entirely apart from time?

Sai: Immediate awakening apart from time? Yes, it is possible. If faith is full and perfect, then grace comes fully at that very moment—just as the sound and the bullet occur at the same moment.

Hislop: But, Swami, one believes that he does have full faith. Therefore, there must be self-deception.

Sai: As long as one thinks he has faith, he does not. Just as when one knows that he is meditating, he is not meditating. Only when meditation is automatic, all day long, is there meditation. Full faith is reached by *sadhana*, just as Bombay is reached by approaching it.

Hislop: *Sadhana*, as it is described, seems wrong, because it is a conscious effort aimed at getting a reward. It seems to me that *sadhana* is real only when it is spontaneous. That is, when one naturally loves God, then he cannot help but love God, and he cannot help but make enquiry.

Sai: It is as you say, but you have not experienced that spontaneous love of God; it is still just an idea. You have a conviction that love of God exists naturally in you. That conviction is the result of many lives of spiritual practice.

A Visitor: What is the correct *sadhana* for retired people?

Sai: Meditation morning and evening. Spend the days in good work.

A Visitor: What is the *sadhana* appropriate to ladies?

Sai: Ladies have the duty of house, children, and husband. They are very busy. Meditation morning and evening can be done. During the day, all work that previously was done for others should now be done as worship of God. That is the best *sadhana* for ladies.

Source: *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Thought of the Month:

God's Home

When Jesus was a child, during a visit to Jerusalem, he was lost in the crowd. After a frantic search Mary found him in a temple listening intently to the speech of a priest. When Mary told Jesus about the trouble they had gone through in searching for him, Jesus said, "Mother! When I am safe with my father in His home, why should you worry about me? This is the temple of God. It is my father's mansion. Nothing will be lacking here. In this eternal and sacred home I am perfectly safe as well as protected." This shows that even by his twelfth year, Jesus was full of divine qualities and was imparting the divine message to those around him. Christ declared to the world three important things; 1) God is one. 2) He is omnipotent. 3) Do not hurt anyone. God is the indweller in every being. Christ embarked on his mission and went about calling upon people to earn the love of God by developing love toward God.

People professing different faiths, worship God under different names: Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Allah, Christ, and others. The truth is there is only one God. People today try to find God in religions. But God is to be found not in *mathamu* (religions) but in the *mathi* (mind). It is only when the mind is controlled and purified that God will be recognized.

While the Lord is ever by the side of man, he is searching for God all over the world. By exploring the external, you can never purify the internal. It is essential to transform the consciousness. You have to rectify your conduct and actions, because everything depends on your actions. Adhering to the righteous path, with a pure heart, you have to divinize your life. All spiritual disciplines have been designed only for this purpose.

All those who have achieved greatness in any field, education, science, etc. have been able to do so solely because of their conduct. Neither physical strength nor wealth, nor even intellectual ability, can make one respected and honored. It is the way one lives that confers honor and dignity on him. Therefore, it is only through our actions that we should strive to realize the Divine. Without right conduct, all other spiritual practices are of no avail. Hence, all devotees should acquire good and sacred qualities in furtherance of their striving to realize God.

If you entertain proper thoughts, you will realize that all of you are in God's Home. The whole universe is the mansion of the Lord. Once you recognize this truth, how can any differences arise?

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