

The Secret of a Happy Life

The way to happiness lies through a track of pain and suffering, clarifies Bhagavan Baba to His students. Pleasure is simply the interval between two pains.

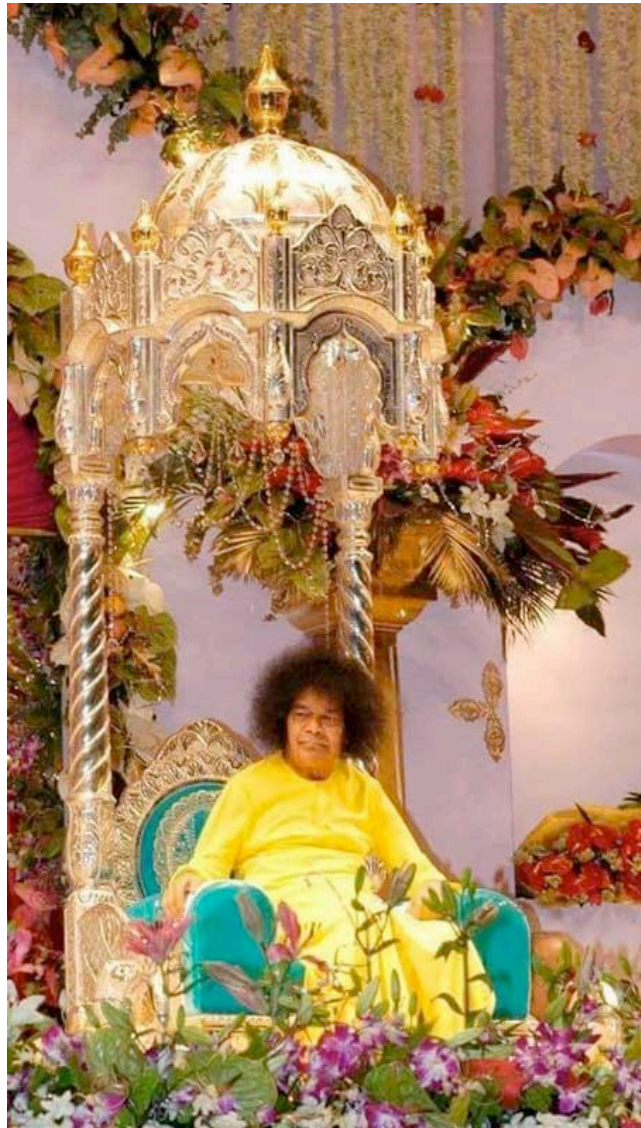
Sometimes certain feelings originate in our heart. Clouds that originate from the sun cover the sun itself. Water that is not used for many days is covered by the moss that has grown in the water itself. Cataract, which is born of the eye, covers the vision of that very eye. Ash that comes out of the fire covers that same fire. So, too, compassion is present in our very heart. But we neglect it or divert our heart in a wrong way. A seed has oil in it, but you should know the procedure of extracting oil from it. Without thrashing the sugarcane, you cannot make sugar out of it. First, you have to crush the cane and extract the juice. Then you have to boil the juice to make sugar out of it. On the other hand, if out of compassion you do not remove the juice from the cane, you will never get sugar. The flower of compassion doesn't work over here. In the same way, our body is like sugarcane. Unless it is crushed by sufferings and pain, it doesn't give the sweet juice of compassion and kindness. This is known as 'samskara' or refinement.

Refinement involves removing all bad qualities and fostering all good qualities. This is the main principle and the secret for leading a happy life. Unless you feel hot, you would not purchase an air conditioner. Unless you are hungry, you won't eat anything. Likewise, unless you face difficulties, you will not remember God. In times of happiness and joy people don't pray to God, but in difficult times they realize the need for God. In times of pleasure and comfort, man becomes egoistic. Pleasure is the interval between two pains. Therefore, first we have to suffer pain and then only can we enjoy pleasure.



Develop Faith in God and Yourself

Since ancient days, *Bharat* [India] had set these cultural thoughts. If you take gold to the goldsmith, what does he do with the gold? He places it in fire and hammers it to mold it into a particular shape. Then he carves it into a particular design of a jewel. If you don't want the goldsmith to hammer your gold, how do you expect to get the jewel? Likewise, we should offer our mind to God and ask Him to make a jewel out of it. In this *Kali* age (age of unrighteousness), if you offer your wavering mind to God, He will surely take care of it. You may be facing serious hardships, but you should not waver. Toward that end, you should develop one-pointed vision and an unwavering mind. But you get these only when you have faith in God. Therefore, first develop faith in God and yourself. You should know the greatness of faith. If you don't have faith in yourself, then how will you develop faith in God?



Who is God? You are God. You are not able to know this truth. Why do you search for God when God is present in you? Body is the temple and the indweller is God. What sort of a temple is this body? It is like a moving temple. And God will follow you wherever you go. That is why God is in you, around you, above you, and below you. So we should have full faith in this eternal truth. We have to live in a manner that satisfies our conscience.

Narada and Sanata Kumara

Practice whatever you learn. You may learn many things in spirituality, but you should try to practice at least one or two. Once Narada [a celestial sage] approached Sanata Kumara [a self-realized sage] and prayed to him for supreme wisdom. Sanata Kumara, in turn, inquired about Narada's eligibility for receiving the highest wisdom. Narada replied that he had studied the four *Vedas* [Hindu scriptures] and the six *Shastras* [Hindu scriptures]. He had understood the secrets of all rituals and the fruits gained by the actions as expounded by the *Vedas*. He also claimed to have understood the meaning of each and every word.

Having listened to all this, Sanata Kumara asked Narada, “It is good that you have gone through all these sacred texts, but how many things have you practiced from the *Vedas*? You would have gained wisdom if you had practiced even one of them.” Bliss or happiness does not lie in education. Modern education is confined to textual knowledge, but it is not enough if you are familiar with texts. You keep on reading all your life. But when are you going to practice all that you have learnt, and when will you attain permanent bliss? All the food served in the plate should be partaken and digested. Only then will it give you strength. Narada was well versed in all the 64 kinds of knowledge, and yet he could not experience bliss. We should, therefore, gain practical experience. We should realize what we are reading so that we practice at least a fraction of it in our daily life.

Students! Instead of lecturing in tons, it is enough if you practice in pounds. One pound of practice can cure all your diseases. You don’t know what is to be taken in. You take into your mind all the happenings in Japan and Russia. All unnecessary material is taken inside, and hence there is no place for necessary material. Stuff your minds only with that which will help you in leading a peaceful life. There were so many great people who were born in this country who excelled everywhere. But do you find their name in the world today? You all know the city of Calcutta [in India]. It is the city of great people such as Bipin Chandra Pal and many others who were highly intellectual and highly educated. But does the present generation remember them? Their names are there only in books. But the name of Ramakrishna Paramahansa [a self-realized devotee], a person who didn’t even learn alphabets, is present in the heart of every person.

Therefore, we should try to enter into the hearts of people and not into books. Students, along with your regular studies you should cultivate spiritual knowledge. Only then there will be harmony. Just as a bird cannot fly without two wings and a car cannot drive without four wheels, you should have perfect balance between studies and spiritual knowledge. The ‘*Grantha* [spiritual texts]’ and the fragrance ‘*gandha*’ are our hearts itself. You should win all praise and acclaim so that people follow you later.

Along with education, refinement is also necessary. Many people like Elliot [a leading philosopher and poet] did research on this topic but could not come to a conclusion. Finally, Elliot concluded that culture is the way of life. What is this way of life? Even bad way is a way of life. Therefore, you should select that path which can directly take you to bliss. You get eternal bliss if you follow the direct path to God. That path is the path of love. This bliss is wisdom and attributeless. Therefore, we should try to reach that God who is attributeless. This whole world is full of attributes. What are these attributes (*gunas*)?

They are *satwa* (the pious), *rajas* (the emotional), and *tamas* (the dull). A violin, for instance, has only four strings, but you can play all tunes on these four strings. In the same way, many things originate from these three attributes only.

Source: *Follow Your Conscience, Discourse 6, My Dear Students, Volume 4*

Sai Mere Praana Sakha Bhagavan

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The clarion call came from the Lord on the 19th of May 2011, when He offered me a seat in His hallowed institution. My joy knew no bounds. I had fervently prayed to Him for this opportunity and He responded. Thus began my journey with Sai, a journey full of bliss, a journey toward self-realization. Things started sinking in slowly as the days passed, for the Lord had started chiseling to sculpt out the shining diamond as He wanted. Let me narrate one of my experiences to validate this statement. It was in my second year in Brindavan (college) that I injured my leg while playing basketball barefoot. The injury was not that deep, but I was advised to take an anti-tetanus injection. Soon after that injection I contracted a high fever. For the next two days I was completely incapacitated. It was the Third Year Students' Day (a day when third year college students are anointed with their batch name).



While all of the students in the Hostel went for the program, I was alone in the room. After the program was over, my room leader came back to the room. He touched my forehead and remarked, "Hirak, you're burning hot." I was anxious because I had already taken two tablets and I did not want to take the third one. I then went back to my sole refuge, my chit box, picked up one chit and it read: 'Your actions in the past are responsible for this, pray to Sai'. Immediately I started praying to Him to make things easier for me. I kept His photo in my pocket (one in which Swami was materializing the *Hiranyagarbha Lingam* [the golden symbol of God]). Believe it or not, the fever went down within 15 minutes, and by the night prayer I was almost normal.

Can I ever understand His ways? Can I ever comprehend the depth of His love and concern? I started experiencing Him more and more and started loving Him more and more. Indeed, the lessons learnt in my *Bal Vikas* [Sai spiritual education for children] days paved the way for His love and concern for me. I had a long-standing desire that Swami should speak to me in Bengali. I know this is something weird, but the mind cannot be devoid of desires, and I forgot about it. One night, Swami appeared in my dream, and the dream was as follows: I was hurrying for a 'Trayee [Brindavan, Swami's abode in Bangalore] session', and on reaching the Trayee gate I saw Swami pacing up and down the side room next to the main room. It was as if He was waiting for somebody. Later I realized that He was waiting for me. I hurriedly rushed to Him and without thinking anything asked, "Swami, *Padanamaskar* [the touching of Swami's feet]?" Then came the Divine master stroke. Swami spoke in Bengali and told, "Nao", which in Bengali means 'take'.

The dream ended there, and the next morning I woke up ecstatic and overwhelmed. I only had His *darshan* [seeing Him] in the physical domain, but through this dream He gave me *sparshan* (touch) as well as *sambhashan* (conversation). He is the one who fulfills even the smallest of the wishes if it emerges from a yearning heart. Can I ever thank Swami for anything? Can I ever reciprocate even an iota of love as a gift to Him for this selfless love? Well, I do not know. My stay in Brindavan for three years was a turning point in my life. The amount of learning that took place is inexplicable. Every day ushered in something new, every Trayee visit was a feast for the soul and the mind.

I remember Sri Sanjay Sahni, the Director of the campus, addressing us thus in the Prayer Hall: "The *nootan* (present generation), in order to reach the *sanathan* (eternity), needs the help of *puratan* (scriptures, *Vedas*)". Taking this as an inspiration from the very first day, I learnt *Vedam*, participated in *Bhajans* [sacred hymns], and tried to shorten my distance between me and Swami in every conceivable way.

I remember once Sri Sanjay Sahni arranged for us an appointment with Dr. Mahesh, an adept at *nadi vaidya* (a natural and ayurvedic blend of healing technique just by touching the veins). I was not very comfortable with the climate at Brindavan and was prone to severe allergic sneezing. That day while treating me, Dr. Mahesh shared something very dramatic. Just the previous night, Swami came in His dream and told him, "Go to Brindavan, two boys are waiting for you." That one statement from Swami made him drive 30 kilometers from Malleshwaram just to treat two unknown students free of cost, and that too at a time as early as 8.30 am. This meant that he had to start as early as 6.30 am in the morning. Dr. Mahesh, while sharing this incident, made a remark that still rings in my ears. He told me, "Do you see Swami's concern for His children? The very fact that He had told me to come to Brindavan today is an indication that you have to do a lot of work for Swami in future. That is why He wants you to stay fit." What greater fortune do I need than this?

Can there be a greater blessing than being an instrument in His Divine mission? Many times I have tried to understand His ways only to end up being baffled and dumbfounded. It is not at all necessary to understand Him because we simply cannot understand Him. Let us all immerse ourselves in that nectarine sweetness of His Divine love.

At this point I am reminded of one more incident. This happened very recently. During the last winter vacation, while returning home I had to board the connecting Jagannath Express from Bhubaneswar toward Kolkata. After boarding the train at 12 o'clock in the night and putting my luggage properly, I went to sleep. The next morning I got up just as the train was approaching the Howrah station. A vague perception of something disastrous swept across my mind when I touched my pocket. The keys were missing!

After some time, I realized that my luggage was alright and the amount of money that I was carrying was also intact. I heaved a sigh of relief, but I needed to find the keys, otherwise I would not be able to open my luggage and my Hostel cupboard. I was tense. I searched everywhere and even asked the attender of the coach and my co-passengers, but none could help. By this time the train arrived at the Howrah station.

After handing over my luggage to my parents I went back again to search in the same compartment looking for the keys. Suddenly feeling my pocket once again I came in contact with something metallic, realizing that they were the missing keys. I had not spared any pockets when I was frantically searching for the keys, and they were not there for sure. The Lord came to the rescue of His child in distress.

Most beloved Bhagavan! Can I ever fathom the depth of Your love? I am ignorant. Why do I love You Lord? Should I love You because You cured my fever or because You got me back my lost keys in the train from nowhere, or because You got my grandfather back from the clutches of death when he broke his shoulder? Those were Your visiting cards Swami, as You call them. There is something subtle and transcendental that encapsulates each of these events. That something is nothing but 'Love' unsullied, unconditional. It is an assurance that there is someone above me who looks after me, takes care of me, and most important of all, He is my '*praana sakha*' (eternal friend).

Bhagavan! As a person of limited resources, allow me to summon up all that You have given me to offer to You on this most awaited 90th birthday celebration. Let me on this day offer myself to You completely.

Source: *Sai Nandana 2015* (90th Birthday Offering)

The Cleansing Process

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, on the occasion of Vishu [Kerala New Year], gave the following discourse in which He explained how to cleanse our minds. He said that man has to prepare himself for the first and the best group—discovering his faults and observing only excellences in others. This is the most desirable sadhana.

*Cleansing the mind of dirt,
Grow in it pure and holy thoughts
You can then view the world
With wisdom vision, as right, and light.*

*No fruit can grow on tree without a flower;
It cannot ripen into sweetness
Without emerging small
Disciplined work alone can grow
Into devotion; and that alone
Can transform into wisdom deep.*

Embodiments of divine love!

As the core of this universe about which we speak and describe, there is a *Paramatma* (Overself) about which we cannot speak, and which is beyond all description. Both the cognizable and non-cognizable have emanated from the same One indivisible consciousness. Each is full and complete in itself. The individual consciousness is the manifestation of the cosmic consciousness. When the material sheath falls off, it merges in its source. The *Vedas* declare, "That is full; this is full. From the full emerges the full. When the full is taken from the full, the full remains full." So the cosmos, the world, and the individual—all are embodiments of the full. Nothing can be fractional or incomplete.

The Pranava

The symbol of the full is Om, the *pranava* (the original sound). The *Vedas* announce, "The one indestructible sound Om is Brahma, the Universal Absolute." The moving and unmoving everywhere are only paraphrasing Om, elaborating its nature, and illustrating its potentialities. The past that has gone, the present that is here, and the approaching future are all three its characteristics. The three *gunas* or modes and the stage beyond them are also Om. The *pranava* is the name (*nama*), and *Paramatma* is the named, (the *namī*). The two are not separate. "*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*" All this is indeed *Brahma* (*Paramatma*). But, this awareness of the immanence of the Universal can come to man only when the I consciousness is forgotten; when the I disappears, we become fit to know the non-I.

In order to delve deep into the principle represented by the *pranava* (Om), four steps have been demarcated in *sadhana* [spiritual practice]. One may doubt how the

eternal unique integral Om can be understood in stages! The steps, however, are designed to help the identification of the principle itself.

Wakefulness, dream, deep sleep, and the "fourth" are the steps. They are known as *jagrata*, *swapna*, *sushupti*, and *turiya* in the *Shastras*. *Jagrata* means "being awake", "exterior alertness", or "outward vision". The consciousness is gross while in this stage. *Swapna* is the stage when the experiences and impacts of the waking stage are recollected or rehearsed by the consciousness in its subtle form. In the waking stage and in dreams, the impressions that impinge on the consciousness are reflections and images of the truth. In the *sushupti* or deep-sleep stage, the individual is not conscious at all; he is just a witness, who acknowledges later after awakening that

he slept nicely. The consciousness is not aware of itself. It is pure unaffected *prajna* or awareness. It has no contact with the objective world or the senses, outer and inner. It is pure *Brahma* Consciousness, "*Prajnanam Brahma*." The last stage is *turiya*. It is the stage when the consciousness is fully aware of itself. It cannot be identified as such by any means! We can try to



delineate it a little by saying that it is the *silence* that prevails after one *Om* and before another *Om* that follows it.

The Deities

These four stages of *pranava* are associated with the deities *Vishnu*, *Brahma*, *Rudra*, and the *Paramatma*. *Vishnu* means that which is omnipresent. The visible universe is suffused with beauty, and beauty is God. Since the universe is the body of God, the Supreme Person, *Vishnu*, is also described in the scriptures as "He who delights in decoration" (*Alamkaara priyo Vishnuh*). The material universe is saturated in harmony, law, and symmetry, and is therefore charming and fascinating. Through this attraction, the external world, the universe, draws man into various paths and exertions. The five elements, the five senses, the five vital airs, and other phenomena teach man various lessons to mold his nature. So the objective world can be taken as his *guru*. *Vishnu* is the deity who fosters and feeds, who molds and masters. Moreover, He is the guardian of the Cosmos, the *Jagadrakshaka*. The scriptures teach man to sanctify the waking hours—*jagrata* stage—for they belong to *Vishnu* and are charged with the *Vishnu* principle. They exhort man to avoid wicked deeds, polluting thoughts, and all types of errors and failings.

During the dream stage, we can experience holiness and bliss only when we engage ourselves while awake in steady pure unselfish activities. In dreams, we see diverse objects and persons, strange worlds of skyscrapers and castles. Wherefrom did these emerge. Through whom were they presented? "*Prajnanam Brahma*" the Supreme Consciousness is the basis for the creation of this variety of dream appearances. *Brahma* is the deity that creates. So the dream stage is the *Brahma* phase of consciousness.

Then is the deep sleep stage. Here the experiences gained during the waking hours or gone through in dreams do not impinge on man. They have all been extinguished. *Rudra*, the deity into whom the Cosmos ultimately merges, is therefore associated with the *sushupti* phase.

Next, we have the *turiya* or the fourth stage, the stage of *atma* consciousness. When the salt doll is dropped in the sea, it reaches the bottom and is dissolved. The same happens to the seeker of the *atma*. He is dissolved. He becomes one with that which he sought to know. He cannot return and describe the experience.

OM

"The A of AUM (Om) is the *Vishwa* [Cosmos]; the U is *tejas* [effulgence]; the M is *prajna* [integral higher wisdom]"—this is another interpretation of the scriptures. *Vishwa* is the waking [stage], *tejas* the dream [stage], *prajna* is the deep sleep stage. The *pranava sadhana* (the spiritual exercise of meditation on Om) is therefore very important for seekers. The *Vedas* prescribe the repetition of the *pranava* while studying holy texts, reciting the name of the Divine, carrying out daily duties, and offering gifts.

The *pranava* is the essence of sustenance, the embodiment of *rasa* [vital essence]. Of all creation, moving and unmoving, the Earth is the *rasa*; of the Earth, water is the *rasa*; of water, physic (*oshadhi*) is the *rasa*; of the physic, the human person is the *rasa*; of the human person, the word is the *rasa*; of the word, the *Rik* (Scriptural hymn) is the *rasa*; of the *Rik*, *Sama* is the *rasa*; of the *Sama* (*Veda*) Om is the *rasa*. These eight *rasas*, the Earth, Water, Physic, Person, Word, Rik, Sama, and OM lead to the ninth *ananda* (bliss). These are the *navarasas*, the nine essences, the nine sustainers. *Ananda* [bliss] is the goal that man is seeking, the aim of his life.

Three Seekers

Man struggles to attain *ananda*. *Ananda* is the height of happiness, the embodiment of joy. It is sought in three different ways. According to the innate quality of the seeker—the *satwic* [pure], the *rajasic* [passion, active], and the *tamasic* [dullness, ignorance]. The *satwic* path is 'poison in the early stages and nectar while coming to fruition.' It involves firm control and regulation of the senses of cognition and action. This will be very hard to accomplish. But as one progresses in practice, the joy increases and bliss is attained. How can such a goal be secured without undergoing hardships? The scriptures say, "Happiness cannot be won only through happiness—*Na sukhaad labhyathe sukham*". Happiness can be won only through

misery. Pleasure is but an interval between two pains. To achieve the *satwic* happiness that is positive and permanent, man must perforce take on trials and tribulations, loss and pain.

Now about the second type—the *rajasic*. In the early stages this path is nectarine, but later it slides into misery, for the happiness is derived through the senses from objects of the external world. The pleasure soon reveals itself as unreal, false, and exhausting. Once the process starts, it drags on with no facility for rest. Man becomes too weak to pursue the goals of *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (prosperity), *kama* (wish-fulfillment), and *moksha* (liberation) that are laid down for him. His intellect, imaginative skill, intuitive faculty—all are rendered lame. Man can even lose his humanness. The blind pursuit of objective sensual pleasure has today resulted in this very calamity. Man has forgotten his true divinity and surrendered his life to unholy activities.

Lastly, we have the *tamasic* path. People who prefer this way of life are unconcerned with the problems of the world, they sleep away their lives, deriving joy in sloth and darkness.

Of these three paths toward the goal of *ananda*, man must accept the *satwic* road, whatever the hardship, the loss, the misery, the anxiety, and the labor. He must attain the awareness of Divinity, the experience of Godhead (*Bhagavan*), and he must establish in *ananda*.

Bhagavan

What is the inner meaning of the expression, *Bhagavan*? The *Vedas* say, "*Brahma iti, Param-Atma iti; Bhagavat iti shabdyate*" (The *Bhagavan* principle is the same as *Brahma, Paramatma*). *Bhagavan* is the ultimate, the full. *Bha* means 'having full auspiciousness and prosperity'. *Ga* means, 'deserving praise and adoration'. In the *Ramayana*, *Bhagavan* is described in clear terms. He sustains the universe using His creative power as the means. He creates and fosters what is created. So He is *sambhartha* or *bhartha*, He who raises, He who rules, and saves. *Bha* also means light and splendor. *Bhagavan* is He who sheds and spreads light. *Bhagavan* is *jyoti-swaroopa*, embodied light, effulgence. Since He can and does illumine all things and beings everywhere at all times, He is *Bha-ga-van*.

When do we need light? Not during the day, but when night prevails. Then we need a lamp, a flame, or the moon. So, too, until wisdom enlightens us, we need *sadhanas*; until we experience the one unified Divine, we have to accept and practice disciplines, regulations, and *sadhanas*.

Ignorance is the night. Knowledge is the light. There are nine lamps that can illumine the mind and free it from darkness—*shravanam* (listening), *kirtanam* (adulation), *smaranam* (recollection), *padasevanam* (worshiping the Feet), *vandanam* (adoration), *archanam* (ceremonial worship), *dasyam* (service), *sneham* (companionship), and *atmanivedanam* (surrender).

Seekers

We must shape ourselves into fit instruments for the spiritual pilgrimage. There are four classes of persons: those who pay attention to their own faults and the excellences of others (the best), those who highlight their own excellences as well as the excellences of others (the middle ones), those who pay attention only to their own excellences and only to the faults of others (the worse type), and those who present their own faults as excellences and the excellences of others as faults (the worst). Each one can discover for himself the group to which he belongs. Only remember this: when one is yearning to become aware of the full, the sacred, the *prema*, the *atma*, the *Bhagavan*, he has to prepare himself for the first and the best group—discovering his faults and observing only excellences in others. This is the most desirable *sadhana*.

Man is suffering today because he is engrossed in the external world, with no *sadhana* or steady faith to correct his vision. What can ten baths a day do to cleanse a person when his mind is fouled by evil thoughts? What can the shaven head and the ochre clothes do to foster spirituality when his mind is riddled by desires and wants? You may rotate a ball of sweets round the mouth, but unless it is put into it and eaten hunger will not be abated. So develop sincere longings, cleanse the mind, purify the thoughts, and put the precepts into practice. In the *Vedas*, this process is mentioned as *karma-marga*, the path of activity.

There is no fruit without a flower; there can be no devotion without *karma*. The fruit ripens and becomes sweet. *Bhakti* [devotion] ripens into *jnana* (wisdom). We must first take up holy activity with clean intentions. One *sadhana* that is cultivated on a large-scale today is *dhyana* (meditation). But, the *dhyana* that is done is not in consonance with the principles of *Bharatiya* [Indian] culture. In the absence of a purified mind, *dhyana* can never achieve the mergence. How can a house be built without brick and mortar? It is said that one can succeed in *dhyana* by indulging in it whenever a little time is available and that one can be engaged in this *sadhana* whatever the habits one is prone to, whatever feelings and thoughts reside in you, and whatever path you follow. But this advice is not correct. If one has to remain quiet for some time without being distracted or disturbed by fear or anxiety, one could indulge in drink or consume opium. *Dhyana* must have far higher aims and far stricter credentials. Or else the culture of *Bharat* will suffer great damage. Therefore, fine virtues have to be cultivated first and good thoughts have also to be entertained. One should uphold the true glory of man.

The Primal Seed

Many people come to me distraught and pray, "Swami! I have no peace. Give me peace." But peace cannot be got from the outer world; it has to be sought in the heart. Wicked desires breed misery; beneficial desires result in joy. The removal of desire ensures peace, *shanti*. When desire after desire multiply in the mind, how can peace be gained? After *bhajan* [devotional singing] and *dhyana*, you repeat *shanti* thrice, praying for physical, material, and spiritual peace. But the awareness of the

atma being the reality-in-all can confer *shanti*. A single mango seed is planted; the tree yields thousands of fruits, and in every fruit you find the seed! The same *atma* is in every being! The Lord is the seed that manifested as thousands of seeds. "*Ekoham* (I am One) *Bahushyaam* (shall become many)," said the Lord. When we posit differences and distinctions due to ignorance of this fact, we are afflicted by fear and *shanti* disappears. When man doubts and disbelieves brother man, how can *shanti* prevail?

The New Year

Nowadays, the mind of man is tending toward evil. The *mati* [mind] has become *durmati* (bad mind). The year that begins today, Sunday, is named *Durmati* and people apprehend that evil may increase. The year begins on the day of Sun who is, according to ancient astrological texts, the King for the next 12 months. The Sun is also the Lord of the people, the Lord of rain clouds, and the Lord of curative herbs. Moreover, the moon is His *mantri* or minister. Since the moon has no independent source of light and energy, the King and the minister will move amicably and so the year will be a happy and prosperous one.

But whatever astrology may indicate, you can direct your mind (the moon) and your intellect (the Sun) into propitious channels of peace and prosperity. By *sadhana*, you can correct your faults and mold your excellences and ensure *shanti* for yourselves, your society, and your country. Pray every day for the welfare of all the worlds "*Loka Samasthaa Sukhino Bhavantu*". That is My message for the New Year.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, May 1981

At Thy Feet

Let me pray at Thy feet
For, here are love, bliss and benevolence;

Let me learn at Thy feet
For, here are truth, knowledge, and prudence.

Let me ail at Thy feet
For, here is the great physician;

Let me disappear at Thy feet
For, here is the omnipresent magician.

Let me sing and dance at Thy feet
For, this is the center of every art;

Let me grieve and weep at Thy feet
For, here resides the kindest heart.

Let me rejoice at Thy feet
For, here is the priceless pleasure;

Let me beg at Thy feet
For, here is the inexhaustible treasure.

Let me work and struggle at Thy feet
For, here my efforts are secure;

Let me play truant at Thy feet
For, here's One who'll all endure.

Let me bathe my soul at Thy feet
For here rumbles the Ocean of sanctity;

Let me 'live' and 'rest' at Thy feet
For, here exist both heaven and eternity.

~Donn Dungaji, Jabalpur

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, June 1964

Sai on *Sadhana*

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

tenths of *sadhana* is Inquiry.

Devotee: In the West, *sadhana* [spiritual effort] is generally taken to be a process of self-improvement. But that implies identification with the changing personality?

Sri Sathya Sai: First, there may be the urge to self-improvement. But the next stage is inquiry, the inquiry into the reality of 'this' and 'that'. Seven-

Devotee: *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 to say, as when one naturally loves God. He cannot help but love God. And he cannot help but make inquiry.

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

Devotee: I have the conviction so strong that it is the very marrow of my bone that Life is One; that others, Swami, and myself are One. The *atma* [soul] is that One and it is fully here at this moment; and I am constantly engaged in *sadhana*. So the question remains: Why do I not actually experience that unity as no other than myself?

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: Your conviction of unity is an idea, a thought. It is not experience. For instance, when your wife has pain in the head, do you have it, too? If not, where is the experience of the unity? The unity must be experienced, not just felt as an idea or entertained as a thought.

Devotee: Swami! If *sadhana* and conviction do not bring the experience, how is one to get it?

Sri Sathya Sai: Through steady *sadhana*. Just as with ourselves now, in this car. We need concern ourselves only with the careful driving of the car; in due course we will arrive at Anantapur, wouldn't we? With correct and steady *sadhana*, the actual experience of the One will naturally come about.

Devotee: How does one really experience that he is the same as another? Because now, one feels for another through compassion. Compassion is idea, understanding it is not direct experience of unity. When someone hit a dog, Sai Baba of Shirdi had the bruises. That is the actual experience of unity.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: All is divine. When you are firmly established in the fact of your divinity, then you will directly know that others are divine. Compassion for others is felt so long as you consider yourself as a separate entity, as a consequence of the body-consciousness. The story of Shirdi Sai Baba that you have heard about is not fully correct. The facts are: a lady cooked and got ready a plate of sweets for Baba, and a dog ate them. The lady drove the dog away with blows. The lady then carried another plate of sweets to Baba, who refused them saying that He had eaten the sweets she previously provided, and His hunger was satisfied. The lady pointed out that this was the first time that she was offering the sweets, so how could he say to the contrary? Baba said, "No. You offered them and while I was eating them, you have also beaten Me." Thus, He gave a lesson that He was omnipresent and that there was only One universal life.

Devotee: What does Swami mean by 'omnipresent'?

Sri Sathya Sai: Omnipresent means everywhere at the same time all the time.

Devotee: Swami says that at a certain stage in *sadhana* the exterior nature ceases. How is that?

Sri Sathya Sai: There are ten stages in *sadhana*, each cognized by sounds of various types, ranging through different vibrations—bell, flute, conch, *Om*, thunder etc. The tenth stage is reached when the senses are transcended. Beyond the senses, it is the state of bliss.

Devotee: Is that state of bliss experienced only for a time? What happens in the daily round of life?

Sri Sathya Sai: That state remains always. Then it is always bliss. He thinks God, eats God, drinks God, breathes God, and lives God.

Devotee: Does everyone pass through these ten stages?

Sri Sathya Sai: No. One may go direct to the tenth, the transcendental state, or to stage six or seven, or not progress at all. It is not uniform for all.

Devotee: What should be one's attitude to these stages in *sadhana* as one encounters each stage one by one?

Sri Sathya Sai: The states change, but the 'attitude' should be unchanging.

Devotee: But what value should one give to the various states?

Sri Sathya Sai: The *sadhaka* will not be satisfied with any of the states. For, complete union is the goal. Desire remains strong until the transcendental bliss is realized, and then desire ceases. At that state, all is God. Thoughts, desires, all are God.

Devotee: These thoughts that stream through the mind, are they material?

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. They are matter. All matter is impermanent.

Devotee: Where do thoughts come from?

Sri Sathya Sai: They come from food and environment. If you have *satwic* [pure] food and desire only for good things and atmosphere around you, good thoughts only will come.

Devotees: Where do thoughts go?

Sri Sathya Sai: They go no place. Because thoughts do not flow through the mind. The mind goes out and grasps and gets engaged with thoughts. If the desire is for God, the mind does not go out. The best way is not to get involved in the problem

'How to get rid of thoughts?' See all thoughts as God. Then only God-thoughts will come. The entire mechanism of body, mind, intelligence will work in a coordinated manner for the benefit of the higher goal.

Devotee: Then for whom should the entire mechanism be functioning?

Sri Sathya Sai: For the *atma*. A small example: The Earth turns on its own axis, but at the same time it is revolving around the Sun. The various faculties of man should do their own work, but the *atma* is the center of their universe.

Devotee: Swami! How can one bring these faculties under the control of the *atma*?

Sri Sathya Sai: When one realizes that the *atma* is the reality, the One, then everything will function smoothly. It is a question of surrendering all to the *atma*.

Devotee: But Swami has said that we should ask ourselves, "Who am I that I dare talk of surrendering my mind and intelligence to God? They do not belong to me." How can I surrender that which I do not own, and cannot even control?

Sri Sathya Sai: It is not a question of surrendering or giving to some other one. One surrenders to oneself. Recognition that the *atma* is one's self is surrender.

Devotee: Then Swami means that surrender is really a putting aside of that which one perceives as incorrect or false.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes.

Devotee: I now understand. "Surrender" implies a person offering himself or his possessions to another person. But, really, it is more like the abandoning of ideas and concepts for which one has no further use, or which one sees as inadequate or wrong.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes.

—From the Notebook of An American Devotee

Source: Sanathana Sarathi, March 1974

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Cultivate Mental Calm and Courage

Thought of the MONTH

Today we bid farewell to the year gone by and welcome the new year. We pray that the new spring should confer on all beings longevity, health, and goodness. Pleasant experiences and unpleasant memories of the previous year that linger in the mind contain many good lessons. When one reviews the past year within oneself, one can realize how much time was spent selfishly and how much in service. It is not good to keep quiet when there are people around in the society facing hardships. If need be, you should give up *japa* (repeating God's name) and *sadhana* (spiritual practices) and uplift such people through service and sacrifice. You should feel that *Jana Seva* is *Janaardhana Seva* (service to people is service to God). Those who seek the joy of liberation should burn selfishness in the fire of *jnana* (spiritual wisdom).

—*Divine Discourse, Mar 28, 1979*

Grief and joy, pain and pleasure alternate like the dark and bright fortnight by God's decree to foster equanimity and to lead man toward reality beyond both. If you do not attempt to transform yourself but resort to blaming God for your sorrows, it is incorrect! You blame... God because you announce yourself as a devotee too soon and expect plentiful grace. Grace cannot be claimed as such; first God must accept you! Use your talent of discrimination to sift the trash and discard it in preference to the valuable. Engage in selfless service; flee from bad persons, and win the friendship of the good and noble, who will cleanse you and heal you. Man is consumed by time; God is the master of time. So take refuge in God. Let God be your *Guru* [teacher], your path, your Lord.

—*Divine Discourse, July 2, 1985*

Today you are like a mouse caught inside a *Mridanga* (Indian percussion instrument). When the player beats on the right, the mouse runs to the left—if the left is beaten, it runs in terror to the right. So, too, you are running between God and the world, reluctant to stick to God and at the same time retreating from the denials and disappointments of worldly activity temporarily. *Namasmarana* (remembrance of the Lord's name) will make you stick to God persistently. A lost child regains joy only when it finds its mother—so, too, you will attain joy only when you find God within you and merge in Him. The ocean drop that rose as vapor joins the congregation called cloud, falls on earth, flows along the ravines, and at last reaches the ocean. Reach, likewise, the ocean you have lost.

—*Divine Discourse, Oct 17, 1966*