

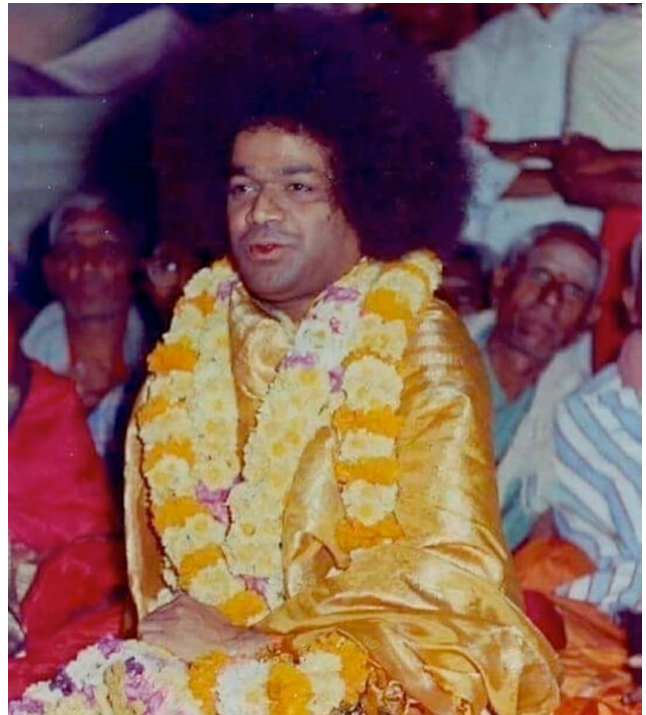
How to Cultivate Friendship With God?

Sneha [affection] is the eighth of nine stages of *bhakti* (devotion) described in the *Bhagavatam* [scripture] and other texts. It is usually translated as 'friendship', a term that has been understandably vulgarized by application to certain transitory relationships between living beings. Friends come together as a result of a variety of reasons and circumstances that are mostly of worldly and temporary interest. People who have ample resources gain friends quickly, as do also those who have a great deal of patronage in their hands or can distribute favors. Those in authority also gather friends who, of course, stay on during fair weather but disappear when the authority fades. Most friendships are based on selfish considerations and last only as long as selfish interests are promoted thereby. As the proverb goes, "When the lake is full there are also frogs in plenty, but when it runs dry not a single croak is heard."

Friendship ought to be a spiritual bond, a heart to heart kinship based on full understanding of and pure dedication of one to another. Students should be vigilant against false and fleeting friendships and not be simply led away by hellos and handshakes. Do not cultivate close friendship with anybody unless you know that the motives on the other side are pure, unselfish, and spiritual.

Unique friendship between Krishna and Arjuna

Genuine friendship can only be possible between one *atma* [soul] and another, that is to say between two persons who have each realized that *atma* is the core of their being. Nowhere on the mundane plane can you get the genuine *sneha* that is declared as the penultimate stage to *sharanagati* or *atma nivedana* (total surrender and dedication to God) among the trivial, transitory friendships of world-lings.



Arjuna and Krishna had this genuine *sneha* between them. Arjuna saw Krishna as his *sakha* (friend), and therefore had the temerity to use words of jesting irreverence during 'play, or while in repose, or when seated by him, or at meals' (*Vihaara Shayyaasana Bhojaneshu*). The two often ate meals from the same plate and were ready to help each other under all circumstances. Do not be under the impression that Arjuna was insidiously overpowered by Krishna. He was mature in character, well-versed in the *Vedic* lore, and a redoubtable warrior and Bowman full of courage and heroism. Krishna was the *Purushottama* (Supreme Being), Arjuna the *narottama* (best human). It was a friendship between the embodiment of the highest and the embodiment of the best. Krishna was the *Avataric* (incarnated) Person; Arjuna was the *anandic* (blissful) person; it was a coming together of the *Avatara Murti* and the *ananda murti*. Arjuna was often addressed by Krishna as *Kuru Nandana*. This name has a deep significance. *Kuru* means 'act, activity, *karma*'. *Nandana* means 'happy, delighted'. *Kuru Nandana* therefore means he who is delighted while engaged in activity. Throughout the 18 chapters of the *Gita*, Arjuna is alert and active, participating vigilantly in every turn of argument.

Krishna's assurance to all who offer their self

Ramakrishna Paramahansa [an Indian mystic] was fascinated by the *sneha* that was exemplified by the Krishna-Arjuna relationship. He learned from the *Bhagavata* and the *Bhagavad Gita* how the *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) can go through all the nine stages of *bhakti* (devotion). He was also determined to emulate the *Gopis* (cowherd girls) and earn for himself the *viraha* (passionate) type of *bhakti*, *madhura bhakti* (sweet devotion), that the *Gopis* had. When he read the *Ramayana*, he decided to emulate Hanuman and practice his *dasa bhakti* (devotion of servitude). Of all the *shlokas* (verses) in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Ramakrishna was especially impressed by the one that emphasized the attitude of *atma nivedana* or *sharanagati*.

One day, while Ramakrishna was going to Kamarpukur, night overtook him and he was caught in heavy rain right in the center of a burial ground. Of course, he was in such an ecstatic mood that the time, place, or weather mattered little to him. When he awoke, Ramakrishna called upon God by various names — Rama, Shiva, Krishna, Kaali, Hanuman. Then he suddenly realized that the names all referred to the One, and he repeated within himself the verse from the *Gita* that reminded him of *sharanagati* (absolute surrender) to the One.

Surrender absolutely to God to get peace

Many interesting incidents took place at Dakshineswar. When Ramakrishna was once asked to go to the temple office to receive his monthly salary, he was very upset, for he never wanted any wages for being given the chance of worshipping his Mother. At another time, thieves broke into the Krishna temple. When Ramakrishna and Mathuranath came by there and discovered that Krishna's idol was absolutely bare and that every jewel had been stolen, Mathuranath fell into a rage and began blaming Krishna Himself. "You are adored as the Guardian of the 'fourteen worlds,' but you cannot guard even the jewels on your own body," he said. Ramakrishna

reprimanded him soundly for this sacrilege, saying, "Krishna has Lakshmi as His Consort, and for Him your gold and gems are as cheap as dust. As a matter of fact, what is gold but dust in another form?" He made Mathuranath repent for his silly outburst, making him aware of the true nature of Godhead.

If only you surrender your wish and will, your fancies and fantasies to God, He will lead you aright and give you peace and joy. You must not run after diverse ends and flitting pleasures. Leave everything to God; accept whatever happens as His Will. Ambareesha was a King who stuck to all the *Vedic* injunctions and observed all the rites and rituals laid down in these texts. He was noble, sincere, and very devoted to Vishnu, the form that embodies the fostering and sustaining aspect of God.

True devotion of King Ambareesha

Fasting on *Ekadashi* [11th Lunar day] and breaking the fast as soon as *Dwaadashi* [12th Lunar day] came in was one of the important rites that Ambareesha observed meticulously every fortnight. *Ekadashi* is the 11th day of the Moon and *Dwadashi*, the 12th day. The fast has to be broken with prayers to Vishnu and the partaking of the offering made to Him as soon as, according to the lunar calendar, the 12th lunar day has started. On one occasion, a few hours before the approach of *Dwaadashi*, the great sage Durvasa, reputed for his frequent fits of fury and bursts of uncontrollable temper, arrived at the palace of Ambareesha. He was heartily welcomed by the King. Ambareesha pleaded with him to proceed to the Ganges, finish his ablutions, and return in time for the breaking of the *Ekadashi* fast. But the sage took his own time and was nowhere evident when the crucial moment arrived.

Ambareesha was in a fix. He consulted his preceptor who advised him to sip a few drops of sanctified water, since that could be considered breaking of the fast. On *Ekadashi* day, even water is taboo during the period of fasting. He said that Durvasa had no reason to get angry since the drops of water were taken by him only as a token to keep the vow. But when the sage came and learnt about it all, he became so wild that he cursed Ambareesha for having broken the fast in his absence and started the meal. As the curse took form, the *Chakra* (discus) of Vishnu appeared on the scene and confronted Durvasa.

A devotee takes the curse as a gift from God

Ambareesha took the curse as a gift from God; he submitted himself to it in the spirit of *sharanagati*, for he had no will of his own. Thus, God came to his rescue. Ambareesha did not call upon Vishnu and pray that he may be saved from the anger of Durvasa. He accepted that, too, as the will of Vishnu. The *Chakra* pursued the terrified sage over all the three worlds, and when Durvasa fell at the feet of Vishnu, He directed him to approach Ambareesha himself to pardon. The attitude of surrender or *atma nivedana* (offering the self to God) makes a person dedicate his entire personality at the Feet of the Lord.

In the *Ramayana*, too, we have an episode that illustrates this. Rama and Lakshmana were combing the forests to discover where Sita was. They were tired and thirsty.

Suddenly they came upon a clear pool and, while placing their bows on the ground, dropped their arrows, which partially sank into the wet bank. After slaking their thirst, they put the bows on their shoulders and pulled the arrows out from the bank. Rama noticed a stain of blood at the tip of his arrow and was curious to find out how it came there. Lakshmana discovered a little frog that had been hit by Rama's arrow when he dropped it on the ground.

Rama told the wounded frog, "Poor thing! Why did you not cry out when you were hit?" The frog replied, "Whenever in trouble, I cry out to you, Rama. But when Rama Himself inflicts pain, whom am I to cry out to? I accepted it as His Grace." Bheeshma adored Krishna even when He was rushing toward him with His *Chakra* to take his life. His sense of *sharanagati* (total surrender to Divinity) did not desert him at the point of death at the hands of the very Person whom he revered as God: "Kill me or save me, I shall not falter in my loyalty," he said.

See God in every being, *sneha* will blossom

Ramakrishna had the same sense of total dedication. He was in great pain as the result of a cancer, and his disciples asked him to pray to the Mother for alleviation of the pain. Vivekananda was desperate when his master refused to ask this little favor from the Mother with whom he was literally on speaking terms. But Ramakrishna replied that if it was the Mother's Will that he must suffer, he was not going to pray for palliatives. But his disciples were adamant. They bothered Ramakrishna so much that one day he prayed to the Mother that he may be helped to take a little food in spite of the cancer in his throat. Ramakrishna told his disciples that at that time he heard the Mother admonishing him for his ignorance: "Are you not eating through all these billion throats? Why regret that one throat is incapable of taking down food?" (*Vaasudevassarvamidam*). This truth was brought home to the disciples by this revelation.

The *sneha* (friendship) stage of Arjuna is the stage when all distinctions between the devotee and God disappear and the two friends are One. When this stage of utter trust, unshakeable faith, and complete absence of doubt, fear and anxiety is reached, the next stage of *atma nivedana* is natural and easy to cover. This is real friendship to which the youth must aspire. See God in every being and then true *sneha* will blossom. This type of true *sneha* can come only when you follow the advice of Krishna. 'He who has no trace of hatred toward any creature, who is friendly and compassionate toward all, who is free from the bondage of 'I' and 'mine,' who takes pain and pleasure as equally welcome, and who is forbearing in spite of provocation...'

Develop these qualities in you, for they are the signs of true *sneha*, for it is only when you are proceeding on the Godward journey along the nine stages of *bhakti* (devotion) that you can attain this divine ideal of true friendship.

Source: Divine Discourse on August 20, 1978, at the Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Brindavan

The Lazarus of Sai Baba

O Christmas Season of recent past—
Blessed by a drama that Baba directed:
As Lazarus was raised, after breathing `his last',
Walter Cowan was thrice `resurrected'.

When spirit left the body's brace
Sai appeared at Walter's side;
O to look upon that Effulgent Face
In life, and when one's died!

(His promise is our Treasure Grand:
He will never desert a devotee—
And through Death's Portals holds our hand;
We are never parted from Thee!)

King David sang with steadfast faith
To the Shepherd of Human Flock:
"No evil shall I fear, when through
The Valley of Death I walk."

Walter's experience proved this Psalm
To be a prayer of Truth—
Swami is there, with the Balm
When Yama smites without ruth.

To the Hall of Judgement Baba led
This man now serene, released;
They met the Accountant of the Dead;
Walter felt, not dismay, but Peace.

Chitragupta, kindly and wise,
Scrolls in hand, proclaimed,
"Your works and character are here, column-wise,
From ages forgotten, un-named."

Two hours of reading brought to light
The good lives of our friend;
His Soul felt Bliss of heavenly might—
Though, on earth, grief had, no salt.

Sai Baba announced at this crucial time,
"He yet has My Work to do;

His soul must now reverse its climb
For a mission of mercy and truth".

The Lord got custody of this Man
For return with Him to Earth!
The Judge had to change the karmic plan
And say, "So be it. A re-birth."

Only God's Love could eclipse Death's Might
And bring with It, he that Death's borne;
Soul returns to flesh, with new-won Sight,
Much to the joy of those who mourn

Walter's wife, at the body, dressed rose-hue,
Saw breath moving him that was 'sleeping'.
Walter whispered, "In pink! So lovely are you!"
And she fell into sanctified tearful thanking.

To have this Fortune, unique, to talk
With one who has died in the Lord,
Erases our fear of the unknown walk
All must take through Transition's Door.

Generations will hear of this Story
That beckons to all human-kind:
"Feast upon Sai's Arch-Glory!
Marvel at His Love Divine!"

—Karen Shultz

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, June 1973

Learning in the Presence of Bhagavan

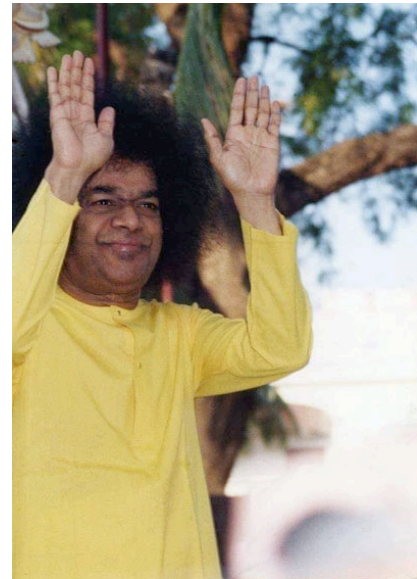
We came to the presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in 1948, and since then Bhagavan has been guiding us. In the presence of Bhagavan we have learned so many things; in fact, just by sitting at His lotus feet one is transformed.

India became independent in the year 1947. At that time, we were the rulers of the Sandur state [in Karnataka]. The new Government of India decided that all the Indian states should accede to the Union of India and thus Sandur merged and integrated with the Union of India. At that time, we envisioned bleak prospects. How

to live without any work was a big question before us. We had to chalk out our children's future. Young children could learn new things and settle down to the new way of life, but it was very difficult for those of the older generation like us to adjust to the new way of life after leading a princely life.

In Indian states, Maharajas never used to engage in business enterprises. After the merger of our state, we had to do something. My husband Maharaja Yeshwantrao Ghorpade went to meet Bhagavan, seeking His guidance and blessings. At that time, Bhagavan was a young boy of about 21 years old. Bhagavan told my husband to start an industry in our hometown and advised him not to leave the place. Accordingly, my husband started thinking along that line. Running an industry is quite different from governing a state. To run an industry, one must have practical knowledge in that field. As it was Bhagavan's command, my husband decided to establish a mining and metallurgical industry in Sandur and applied to the Government of India for a grant of mining lease. There was lot of competition to get mining leases in Sandur because rich deposits of manganese and iron ore are in the Sandur Valley.

One day my husband went to Delhi to meet Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru [he was the Prime Minister at that time] to explain the situation and to request him to help in the matter. The people of Sandur state were also to be protected by providing work for their livelihood. Pandit Nehru was kind enough to listen and graciously told the concerned department to pass the orders for a grant of a mining lease. The department brought forward many difficulties, but, Nehruji said, our "*Rajas*" (rulers) want to work, therefore they must be given first preference. By Bhagavan's guidance and Panditji's help all formalities went through smoothly, and we were able to set up a mining and metallurgical industry. Bhagavan visited our mines and ferro alloy industry in 1974 and blessed us. Bhagavan always says:



Life is a challenge meet it
Life is a game play it
Life is a dream realize it
Life is love enjoy it

My husband took it as challenge and succeeded in it.

We learned many things just on one word of advice from Bhagavan. In the presence of Bhagavan, one received peace of mind that was the highest gift. People came to Prasanthi Nilayam from all over the world to pay their homage to our beloved Bhagavan because their minds were transformed, because they got peace in their lives. We are really fortunate that we were born in this world at a time when the

Lord took a human form to help mankind, and that we were able to take full benefit of His presence.

One day during the first summer course at Brindavan, a devotee had brought some Alphonso mangoes from Bombay. Bhagavan distributed those mangoes to all the devotees standing there. One mango remained in Bhagavan's hand with which he was just playing. Everyone was looking at that mango thinking who would be the fortunate one to get that fruit. That day, we were a little late in getting to the ashram because the railway gate was closed on the way. As soon as Bhagavan saw my husband, He came straight to him and gave him that mango. It was clear that Bhagavan was waiting for my husband to give him that mango. The devotees said that my husband was lucky to receive that mango from Bhagavan's hand. Next day, Bhagavan was leaving for Bombay to attend the Dharmakshetra annual day function. After Bhagavan's discourse, we came back home.

My husband told me, "See, Bhagavan gave me a mango, he did not give you." I said, "I am happy that you got the mango from Bhagavan's hands. Bhagavan has always some purpose in doing things." My husband wanted to share that mango with me as *prasad* [blessed food], but I said, 'No. Bhagavan has given it to you, and only you should have that full mango. It was given to you and not to me.' We were soon to discover why.

The next morning, when my husband got up and went to the bathroom to wash his face, to his utter surprise when he looked in the mirror his face was crooked. He had had a facial paralytic attack. Doctors came and examined him and told him that they couldn't say how long it would take to cure; it might take a month or even more. The doctor started treatment and advised my husband not to go out in the open and to be in a warm room.

After a two-day visit to Bombay, Bhagavan returned to Bangalore. I took my husband, against the doctor's advice, to Whitefield in a closed car. Bhagavan saw my husband from a long distance and came close to him and asked, 'What has happened to your face?' My husband said, "The doctor says that it is a facial paralytic attack." Bhagavan laughed and gave a slap on the affected part of his face, and at once his face became normal! After listening to Bhagavan's discourse, we returned home. Next day in the morning, the doctor came as usual for a check-up, and he was surprised to see that my husband's face was absolutely normal. The doctor had no words to say except to do *namaskar* [bow down folding his hands] to Bhagavan's image. He folded his hands in prayers to Bhagavan and said, only Sri Sathya Sai Baba can perform such a miracle.

In another instance of Swami's grace, my youngest daughter-in-law was expecting a child, but she was not normal from the first month of the pregnancy. The doctors who were examining her were of the opinion that the pregnancy would not last. Hence, my daughter-in-law wanted me to go to Bhagavan and bring *vibhuti* [holy ash] for her. I went and brought Bhagavan's attention to my daughter's health

problem. Bhagavan said, 'don't worry'. I came home and gave her Bhagavan's *vibhuti* and told her that Bhagavan has said not to worry. She was on bedrest the entire time, and in the beginning of her ninth month she gave birth to a healthy baby boy. It was nothing but Bhagavan's grace that my grandchild was born safely. One day Bhagavan Himself named that boy "Gautam". He is about 14 years old now.

Again, just by the blessings of Bhagavan incurable diseases were cured. In my husband's case, once he had a malignant tumor on his intestine that doctors said was cancer.

My husband and I went to Puttaparthi. As soon as He saw my husband, Bhagavan asked him, "Why have you come?" My husband said, "Bhagavan, doctors says that I must undergo an operation." Bhagavan blessed him and told him to go. I could not keep quiet. I told Bhagavan that it was cancer. Bhagavan looked at me and said, "Bhagavan has cancelled the cancer. Go, nothing will happen to your husband." Bhagavan gave us *vibhuti* and then we returned to Bangalore.

The operation day was scheduled, and all my sons and daughters were informed. They all came to Bangalore for their father's operation. They all knew that he had a cancerous tumor. The operation was successful and after his recovery, my husband came back from the hospital and lived for about 11 years without any further sign of the cancer. Bhagavan Baba had indeed "cancelled the cancer." This was another way that we learned to have firm and full faith in Bhagavan.

We should learn to live like a Lotus flower that grows in muddy water. Bhagavan says:

*"The Lotus is not defiled by mud nor is it wet by water
Yet it cannot survive even for a second without mud and water
Man's accumulated samskaras [mental impressions] of past lives are like mud
The present life can be compared to water."*

Like that, Bhagavan teaches us to live like a Lotus. Bhagavan always guides us with love, teaches us with love, talks with love and He explains:

"Only through love one can have the vision of God. One can see one's own reflection in the mirror only when a particular chemical is coated on the other side. Likewise, coat the chemical of love on your hridaya [heart] in order to have the vision of God. Fill your heart with love, then there will be no place for evil qualities like jealousy, anger, and hatred."

He teaches us so clearly with simple language. If, in spite of His message, we do not learn to love, we will become lesser than the mud, and not at all like the Lotus.

Bhagavan has always told us about the moral and spiritual uplift of humanity through *satya, dharma, shanti, and prema* [truth, righteousness, peace, and love] and

that we should learn to adopt them in our daily life. Only then we will definitely enjoy the essence of peace and bliss in our life, and our *atma* [soul] will merge in the lotus feet of Bhagavan.

~Smt. Sushiladevi Ghorpade Rajmata of the Royal Family of Sandur
Source: *Sai Vandana* 1990

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Should you ask God for things?

Hislop: Is not praying to God the same as begging?

Sai: To beg from an equal puts you down and him up. But when you ask God, you rise up to His level. You must ask God. To ask God is perfectly all right. It is not begging.

Hislop: But I had thought that since God knows each problem, that if it was appropriate to remedy the trouble God would do so without being asked.

Sai: Important answer! No. It is your duty to ask God. Words must be said, and the words must correspond to the thought. The thought must be put into a true word. It is true enough that the Divinity knows all. But He requires that the true word be said. The mother may know that to maintain life the child requires food. But milk is given when the child asks for it.

Hislop: It is not clear when one should ask God and when one should not. For example, there is a headache that doctors seem unable to cure. I do not ask Swami to cure the headache; I do not pray for a cure. However, in a letter, Swami wrote, 'How is your health? Do not worry about that. Your God is always with you, in you, around you.'

Sai: That is right. What Baba said is enough. For you, body identification is weakening. You have a headache today, a stomach pain tomorrow. Let it go. Don't worry about it. You are not the body. Once Baba has told you not to worry, there is no need to ask Him about it. Don't identify.

Hislop: Does Swami mean that for those persons still fully identified with the body, a continuous headache might be a proper subject for prayer?

Sai: Yes, but why bother Swami about a mere headache? You may tell others the same.

Hislop: Then, it is really all right to ask God?

Sai: When there is a real need, God should be asked to provide. A child asks parents for peppermint candy, and the parents give it. When older, it asks the parents for property, and receives it. It is by right that the child asks, and it is by right that it receives. A child may ask a stranger for peppermint once or twice and expect to receive it. But even if he asks for it, he may not expect to receive property from a stranger. God is not bothered by a multitude of small requests, and He will certainly give property (things of great value). Therefore, one should always ask God to meet needs. It is the individual's right to ask. There is no question of begging.

Hislop: Swami said that in praying to God, the petitioner raises himself to the level of God. In order to make such a prayer, in what state or condition should one first put himself?

Sai: It is not necessary to put oneself into any particular state of meditation.

Hislop: Usually, the idea is that one should go to a quiet place and be in a quiet mood when he wishes to pray.

Sai: Whenever and wherever you put yourself in touch with God, that is the state of meditation. You may feel that 1 p.m. in California is not a good time to call Me, for I may be asleep in India and I should not be disturbed. I know you have felt like that once or twice. But I am omnipresent; I have no such limitations. I never sleep. In the middle of the night, I turn off the light and rest in bed because if the light is on, devotees will gather. I have no need of sleep. But you need at least four hours of sleep.

Hislop: If I am walking in the street with people around and my mind is engaged with things I must do, is that a good time for prayer?

Sai: At the beginning, one might need some special set of circumstances for clearing the mind for concentration on God. But after a while, if one finds that God is omnipresent and becomes aware of Him and one's thoughts are centered on God, then no matter where you are it is the same. Prayers may be addressed to God and the prayer will reach Him.

Hislop: Swami says that God is omnipresent. What meaning does Swami give the word, 'omnipresent'?

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

Hislop: If a person does not have any material or worldly needs, then what is the proper subject for prayer?

Sai: Peace of mind. One should pray to God for peace of mind.

Hislop: I am surprised. I thought Swami said that peace of mind has to be secured by oneself working on desires and getting rid of them. And now Swami says we can pray to Him for peace of mind!

Sai: How can you be free of desires? Now, at this moment you are with Swami, and you are free of desires. As soon as your wife has a pain, you have the desire that she will be well, and you pray to Swami to cure her. At any time, a desire may come up and where is your peace of mind? Whereas, if God answers your prayer for peace of mind, He must, by having granted that boon, automatically fulfill your needs and desires. First you want a chain from Baba, next day you want something else, a ring; both are made of gold. Why not ask for the gold and then all the desired objects are from that gold.

Hislop: When Swami says, 'peace of mind,' what is the meaning He gives to that phrase?

Sai: There is some small confusion in terms, for there is no mind as such. The mind is a web of desires. Peace of mind is no desires, and in that state there is no mind. Mind is destroyed, so to speak. Peace of mind really means purity, complete purity of consciousness. All spiritual practices are aimed at purification of the heart.

Hislop: Swami, please excuse this question, but it is in everyone's mind. Will Swami come to America soon?

Sai: Baba will delay until a further base is built in America. However, I can go informally anytime. The devotee need only call Me and I will appear at once. Swami has His work to renew India. This must be finished before He is willing to do the same in a foreign country. People generally go to a foreign country with a desire of some sort. Baba has no desire. Of course, foreign individuals come to Baba.

Source: Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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To submit text or photos, please email them to "editor@SaiSarathi.com."

Thought of the MONTH

I Am I

Be he a student, a celibate, a householder, or a renunciant, the goal is one and same for all. Contemplate on the principle of *so-ham* [that I am] that your inner voice teaches. Say *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman). There is nothing wrong in this statement. Some people have a mistaken notion that, to say so is a sign of egoism. In fact, that is not ego at all. It is your right. To think that you are a mere human being amounts to demeaning yourself.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 35, Ch. 13, "Develop Broadmindedness to Experience Divinity"

Question yourself, "Who am I"? You will get the reply, "I am I." When you understand and experience this truth, nobody can cause any suffering to you. You cannot escape from suffering as long as you are immersed in the dualistic feeling that you are a mere mortal and God is separate from you. The feeling that "I am separate from you" is your own imagination.

You will be haunted by worry as long as you don't realize Hari (God). You are worried because you identify yourself with the body. Once you identify yourself with the Self (God), you will be free from all worries. Hence, you should make every effort to realize your true Self. Under all circumstances, do not shed tears of sorrow. One will be free from sorrow when one gives up body attachment. In order to be free from worry and fear and to attain everlasting peace, you should realize that "I am I." When you have firm belief in this statement, nothing can shake you. Do not develop undue attachment to the body and material possessions. You will be redeemed only when you lead your life with a spirit of sacrifice. What you should achieve is *tyaga* (sacrifice) and not *bhoga* (pleasure). To consider something as yours ('mine') is *bhoga*. To realize that nothing is yours ('not mine') is *yoga*. This *yoga* bestows on you the true strength.

~Divine Discourse on Christmas, December 25, 2003, "You Yourself are God"

Each one of you may undertake a different *sadhana* (spiritual practice). Whatever may be the *sadhana*, it should be performed with *atmic* feeling. You should make efforts to understand the principle of oneness. That alone constitutes true *sadhana*.

You are in the light and the light is in you. Bear this in your mind. Ultimately, you will realize that "I am I". If you want to understand the principle of *atma*, you should not give scope to multiplicity. All that you see and hear in this world are merely reflections, reactions, and resounds. The reality is within you.

~Divine Discourse on, March 1, 2003 "Experience of Unity is real Satsang"

You have to finally make a firm resolve "I am I." You should not identify yourself with the body and say, "I am a child," "I am a young man," "I am an old man," etc. These differences relate to the age factor. What is the next stage after old age? Nobody knows. But, "I" principle exists in the child, youth, and old age. This is the

fundamental and changeless principle. Therefore, when somebody enquires who you are, you reply, "I am I." If he is unable to understand this principle, do not bother; you hold on to your principle. It is only when you develop such firm conviction that you will be able to achieve anything in life.

~*Divine Discourse on, October 20, 2004, "Who are you? I am I"*

In this manner, Buddha enquired deeply and ultimately got the experience of "I am I." That is true realization. You may do penance for many years, you may do meditation and perform many yogic practices. But all these spiritual practices give only temporary satisfaction, not everlasting bliss.

Some people talk about meditation. Even Buddha advocated the practice of meditation. What is that you have to meditate upon? What is meant by meditation? Does it mean concentrating upon a particular object? No, no. That is not meditation at all. To contemplate upon the principle of "I am I" is true meditation. No other *sadhana* (spiritual practice) can match this.

As long as you have the dualistic feeling of "you and I", you cannot experience unity. Buddha recognized the principle of unity and based his life on this truth. Under the direction of many yogis, he had performed various kinds of meditation and penance, but ultimately, he found them to be a mere waste of time because none of these could lead him to the ultimate experience of oneness...

~ *Divine Discourse on, May 13, 2006, "Attain enlightenment by renouncing desires"*

I am I. I am not Sathya Sai Baba. Sathya Sai Baba is the name given to this body. I don't have any particular name.

In this way, people today are deluded by their attachment to their body and senses. But you are not the body, you are not the senses, you are not the intellect, you are you. You should realize, "I am I." That universal "I" principle is only one. *Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti* (truth is one, but the wise refer to it by many names). But the individual "I" represents ego. When you cut this "I," it becomes the cross that is worshiped by the Christians. It means: when you give up your ego, you become your true self.

~ *Divine Discourse on July 26, 2007, "Only Love for God is True Love"*

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