

The Universe, Our Guru

"The true guru is not a human preceptor. It is the cosmos itself, prakriti, creation, the objective world around us. The universe and all its components are to be looked upon as one's preceptors and lessons learnt from each. Revere the universe as your guru. That is the message I wish to give you on this Guru Poornima," observed Bhagavan Baba, in a soul-filling discourse on July 17 [1981] at the Poornachandra Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam. A vast gathering of devotees from many countries listened to Bhagavan with rapt attention. For many it was an unforgettable experience.

"Isa vasyam idam sarvam" All this is enveloped by God. All this is soaked in God, saturated by God. Everything is the substance of God.

We are on the Earth; around it revolves the Moon. Both the Earth and the Moon are illumined by the Sun. Dependent on the Sun, the planets like Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, Saturn, dutifully move along the prescribed orbits at different speeds. Their satellites, too, belong to the solar family. When we lift our eyes up at the sky at night, we notice stars beyond numbers. And in the Milky Way, we see thick masses of starry clusters. There are in space more than ten thousand crores of stars and of galaxies in the Milky Way, and elsewhere we have more than ten crores. Without being lost in numbers, we must ponder over the mystery of the unity and harmony of this cosmic projection.



The Sun is about 90 million miles distant from our Earth. The most distant planet so far known is Pluto, which is nearly 3670 million miles away from the Sun. It takes 248 long years to make one journey round the Sun. Well! Has God planned all these heavenly bodies out of sheer caprice? Or does He intend to convey any lesson through these happenings? God will never produce an effect without any cause or purpose. Nor will He manifest any substance without value. Why? The rotation of the Earth on its own axis, for example, causes night and day; its circumambulation round the Sun causes the seasons, the formation of clouds, the falling of rain, the growth of crops, the harvest of grain, and the fostering of living beings. God has graciously willed to establish peace and prosperity on Earth. Let us see the purpose behind the alternation of day and night. After the

activities of the day, night is provided to man and animals for rest and recoupment. Sleep refreshes the mind as well as the body; without sleep man is in danger of being too exhausted. Night, which restores health, is a gift of God to man. Placing faith in God's compassion, one can measure the benefits one derives even from stars and galaxies, waves, and the sea.

In fact, the best teacher is one's own heart. Time is the best preceptor and awakener. The world is the best scripture. And God is the best friend for man. So there is no need to wander in search of a *guru*. Learn lessons from every living being, everything that you find around you. Learn faithfulness and gratitude from the dog, patience and fortitude from the donkey, perseverance from the spider, foresightedness from the ant, and monogamy from the owl.

It is not possible to consider creation and the creator, nature and God as different or separate. Can we say that waves are separate from the sea? They are of the sea, with the sea, and from the sea. Even man, too, is of God, with, and from God. The bubble is born in water, stays in water, and is lost in water as water. The cosmos, too, is a bubble born in the Absolute, exists as the Absolute and merges in the Absolute or *Paramatma*. *Nara* (the human) is the bubble; God is the sea. Recognize this truth: As the waterbubble cannot be conceived without positing water, the cosmos, this world, cannot be conceived as without God. Of course, waves rise and fall, advance and recede, but the sea has no such agitations. The movements of the waves do not affect the sea. As a consequence of human activities, man has ups and downs in life, growth and decay. But the God in him is not affected at all.

Action, inaction, and action against rules

Activities (*karma*) are of three kinds: *karma*, *akarma*, and *vikarma*, (action, inaction and action against prescribed duties or rules). Of these *vikarma* is the most subtle of activities, for it is neither sloth nor action motivated by desire. It is simple awareness, deepest experience. It is neither *tamasic* [sloth] nor *rajasic* [passion]. Action is *rajasic* urged on by selfish motives. Inaction is *tamasic*. But un-action is *satwic* [purity]. Based on these three types of 'activity', the nature of humans can also be distinguished as characteristic of three types—the beast-man type, the man-man type, and the God-man type.

Those who do not pay any attention to anything other than their own selfish ends, these belong to the beast-man level. They have no trace of devotion and dedication. They do not share in helping others. They have no concern with the sorrows and sufferings of others. They do not take them to heart. They do not worry over the children they have borne or the life-partner they are wedded to.

The man-men, however, involve themselves in the welfare of their wives and children and the small circle of their kith and kin. They spend their lives in this restricted sphere. Of course, the nature of these people is not laudable; but there is at least the possibility of the little spark of love becoming brilliant and expansive through contacts with society, or impact of saints, or participation in some projects of selfless service. Man-men can raise themselves up into God-men.

The God-men are described in the *Bhagavad Gita* as "*Sathatham Yoginah*"—"Always associated with God." They are never apart from God. They experience God in and through all things at all times. Whatever they see or do, they believe it is in God and for God.

From I to We

In order to rise to the full height of his glorious destiny, the only equipment that man has to strive for is *prema* (love). Man is not a mere bundle of skills and acquisitions. Man has in him the yearning and the capacity to proceed from the narrow circle of I to the wide horizon of we. The essence in man is divine. It leads him from *aham* (I) to *Soham* (He I am). It urges him to give up the tiny I with its petty little desires and seek the vast limitless He that is the reality.

Giving up the little I is what renunciation or *tyaga* means. *Tyaga* does not mean running away from hearth and home into the jungle. It means sublimating every thought, word, and deed into an offering to God, saturating all acts with divine intent. This is the best *sadhana* [spiritual effort] to cultivate *prema*. *Prema* gives itself forever; it never asks another to give. Shower it and you will be showered in return. Stop sharing *prema*, there will be no more to share. *Prema* thrives on *tyaga*; they are inseparable.

The essential reality of man rejects the ego as a blemish. When we investigate into the problem, "Who am I?" and find that everyone is I, love expands limitlessly. In the Sanskrit alphabet *a* (as in master) is the first letter and the last letter is *ha* (as in hard); the two together form *aham*, meaning 'ego'. The ego should not be allowed to express itself, as it smothers the spring of love.

God is love; so all things created by God are filled with love. A silver cup is all silver; it is silver with an identifiable name and form. The cosmos has a name and form; God became the cosmos; God is love and so the cosmos is love. From the silver cup you can never separate the silver as a distinct entity. So, too, God cannot be distinct from creation. Nothing is mean or low, ugly or disgusting; everything is adorable. To get fixed in this universal God consciousness, one has to tame one's impulses and educate one's desires.

Lessons everywhere

But, unfortunately, man is fast losing steadfastness in spiritual pursuits. Learn from the poor little spider this lesson of inflexible determination to succeed. It struggles again and again, in spite of repeated failures, to fix the basic threads of its web so that it can weave it taut and strong. Man, however, loses heart at the first disappointment, either forgoing faith in God or incensed at Him and applying for a 'writ' against Him. Is this fickleness characteristic of human nature? No. Even a dog is steady in loyalty. Give a dog a morsel of food for two days in a row; it will serve you faithfully for long. Man, however, eats out of God's hand for a whole lifetime and yet has no gratitude in his heart. He behaves worse than a worm.

Man has been enslaved by money. He lives a superficial, hollow, artificial life. This is indeed a great pity. Man should seek to possess only as much money as is most essential for his living. The quantity of riches one must own can be compared to the shoes one wears; if too small, they cause pain; if too big, they are a hindrance while walking. Money, too, has to be with us but just enough for a life of physical and mental comfort. When we have more, it breeds pride, sloth, and contempt for others.

In pursuit of money, man descends to the level of the beast. Money is of the nature of manure. Piled up in one place, it pollutes the air by its foul smell. Spread it wide, scatter it over fields—it rewards you with a bumper harvest. So, too, when money is spent in all the four quarters for promoting good works, it yields contentment and happiness in plenty. But today, such deeds of renunciation and such holy thoughts are absent. We pride ourselves today as being 'modern'. Does modernism involve giving up morality and justice? Or, allowing the senses to run amok? Or, blindly running after countless desires? No. Modernism means self-control and self-confidence.

The true guru

This day, we are celebrating the holy *Guru Poornima*. Many people celebrate the day by garlanding the *guru* and placing costly offerings before him. But the true *guru* is not a human preceptor. It is the cosmos itself, *prakriti* [nature], creation, the objective world around us. Life must have an ideal before it, it must proceed toward a goal; it must be a constant march. Life has as its sole purpose the divinizing of man, the transformation of the 'man' we profess to be into the God we really are. *Gu* in the word *guru* indicates the quality of *guna-ateeta*, that is unaffected by attributes and attitudes, not associated with any one particular characteristic. And *ru* means *rupa-rahita*, that is not limited to any form, pervasive in all forms. In this context, the universe and all its components are to be looked upon as one's preceptors and lessons learnt from each.

The proof

What is the proof for having learnt such lessons? The proof [first step] lies in wholehearted service, in sweetness of speech, which reveals the divinity in man. Vidura [from the Kuru Kingdom] once advised Dhritarashtra [the blind Kuru King], "A tree when it is axed might yet put forth leaves, but a heart axed by a bitter word can never sprout again."

The next step is hard work. A Telugu proverb says, "Work until your bones ache, and eat until your teeth ache." We clamor for food today because we do not work until our bones ache. A person who does not work has no right to consume food. Only those who labor with both their hands can exercise the right.

The third step is prayer. It may be said we are praying every day. But prayer is not the pronouncing of words. Prayer is the yearning one experiences to awaken the divinity latent in the heart. Embodiments of *prema*! A heart without words is far more precious than words without a heart. Words cascade from the tongue, but they are mere froth. People blabber a billion words but never do a deed. Be examples in doing, not doling out.

The duty

Well, the past is past. Begin life anew from tomorrow. Revere the world as divine; do not underestimate it as unholy. "*Yaccha kinchith jagath sarvam drsyathe srudyathepi vas;*" says the *Upanishad*. It means, "All that is seen or heard is God." "*Antar bahischa, tat sarvam, Vyaapya Naaraayanah...*"—the inner world and the outer world are both immersed in God. "*Om Tat Sat,*" the *Upanishads* declare. "*Tat*" is that, the cause. "*Kim yat tat*"—these three words are to be thought over. *Kim* (what?) *Yat* (which?) *Tat* (that). *Tat* is the *Brahma* principle. *Twam* (you) is the effect, the *jiva*, the individual. Prayer must emerge from the effect to the cause.

The individual self has to yearn for the Supreme Self. It must emerge from a pure heart. The drinking cup must be clean both on the outside and the inside. Prayer should not arise out of the tongue as music rises out of a gramophone record. When the song does not come from your depth, when you are not involved in it, how can it draw God unto you? Your 'self' must achieve confidence. Then that self-confidence will lead to self-sacrifice and self-realization.

Man means he who marches from the status of self toward the all-inclusive self, from *atma* to *Paramatma*. Toward the success of that march, all nature can provide advice and guidance until the very end. The real *guru* one must rely upon is nature saturated with God. God does not teach us directly; He teaches us through nature that surrounds us. When we teach *Om* to children, we pronounce it loud and at the same time write the letter *Om* on a slate. God has written *Om* on every speck of nature; that is the slate from which we have to learn of Him.

The message

So do not renounce the world or condemn nature. Do not restrict the God of the universe to any one name and form. Love all names and forms. Expand your love worldwide. Just consider, when boiled *daal* (legumes dish) is served for lunch, if it has less salt you do not relish it, if it has more salt you set it aside. We take such great care about a moment's sensation on the tongue. Well, when we have to spend 70 or 80 years of life on earth, imagine the care we must take to see that we realize that purpose of life. Virtue is the salt of life. Love is the highest virtue: Develop love by sharing it. Revere the universe as your *guru*. That is the message I wish to give you on this *Guru Poornima*.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi, Sept. 1981*

Birth and death are two high cliffs between which the river of life flows. The force of atma-shakti [self-power] is the bridge that spans the chasm, and for those who have developed that force and faith, the floods are of no concern. With atma-shakti as their safe support, they can reach the other bank, braving all dangers.

~Sri Sathya Sai

God is Love, Live in Love

Here is another poem by Kanaga Ranganthan, who recollects her response to the Sai call to His devotees, and how in just one darshan her life was changed forever as He came near her, looking deeply into her eyes while she was seated in the first row.

Waking up one fine morning, I was gifted with a gem so rare,
It shone on me with its brilliance, darkening all else to fade.
As its meaning dawned on me, my true soul danced in glee,
My childish innocence and my later ignorance retreated full,
My mind expanded with a glow, with freedom from bonds,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, truly divine.

His call from afar beckoned me, beckoned with an urgency,
His voice chided me with love so gentle, wake up, He said,
Do you realize the gift of a human birth? Why then this sloth?
Why this utter waste of a life that is meant for a glorious goal?
Why groan and grumble with no knowledge of what is within?
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, truly divine.

Come to Me, my dear child, He said, I shall teach you the Truth,
Free yourself from the darkness around to see beauty in all,
Cast away your gloom acquired from birth to birth, sad indeed,
You are divine truly full of love within, let it spring forth to all,
I ran to Him breathless and panting, adored His brilliant beauty,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, so truly divine.

As His eyes locked in mine with a gaze beyond time and space,
I sat transfixed as His look seared my soul, deep into my depth,
Unlocking the tight closed doors of my hidden soul open wide,
Sending raptures of bliss in silence, He gazed and moved away.
I sat enraptured with no sense of self, alone amongst so many,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, so truly divine.

He truly taught the meaning of Love, God is Love, He thundered,
Love is God, He said, live in love, God does not reside externally.
Search not for Him in caves or mountain tops, nor anywhere else,
Deep within you, in the sanctity of space, free of all dross and dirt,
He resides, that pure gem of love exists, in one and all, unknown,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, so truly divine.

As I set forth into the world, looked around, saw love in abundance,
Saw the dazzling divine halo in everything I espied, I looked in wonder,
The sun that arose tirelessly every morn to give love and light to all,
The rain that splattered the roofs to grant life and energy to plants,

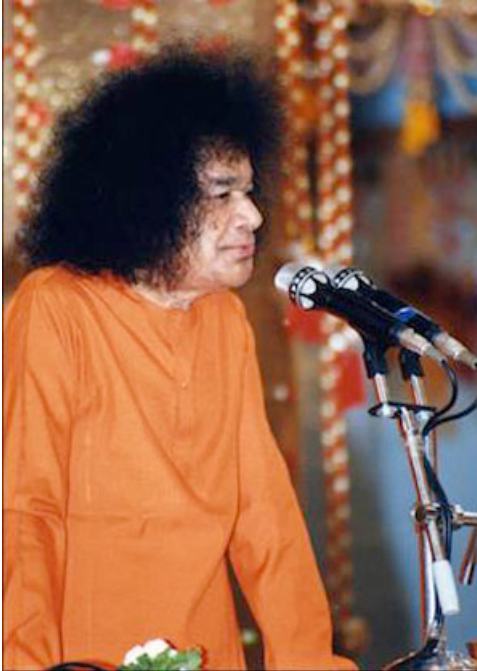
The wind that embraced us all to give a cool breeze to all humanity,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, so truly divine.

Walking further, I looked with amazing eyes, ocean alive and loving,
Birds twittering merrily on the boughs, blooms in a jocund dance,
Squirrel mounting the steps for crumbs, dog with its pleading love,
Our home, the planet earth, abounding in a bewitching, green mantle
All send forth a joyous message of love and life, enough to suffuse us,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, so truly divine.

Turning around, I saw the beauty and love in all I meet every day,
My own children and their children united in a bond of deep love,
Friends and companions whom I meet in the humdrum of daily life,
The stranger who passes me with a smile after a day's long work,
In every single entity there awaits the joy of love eager for release,
My Lord is here to teach me the beauty of love, so truly divine.

~Kanaga Ranganthan, May 1, 2020

The Bubble of Pride



Man is a pilgrim toward Dharmakshetra (abode of righteousness), the pride of dharma, which is the abode also of shanti (peace]. But on the way he is led into the by-lanes and alleys of objective pleasure by the senses to which he has become a slave. Man is eager to know about all kinds of trivialities, like the details of other lives and other places, but he has no keenness to know about himself or the place from where he himself has come. Man is sunk in ignorance about himself, his source and substance, his goal and fate. He reduces himself to just one individual; he, the inheritor of unlimited wealth and fortune, feels himself a pauper. Remove this ego boundary, then only can you recognize the vastness of yourself.

This microphone before Me must have been made by someone, is it not? He is not seen or known by you, but of his existence there can be no doubt.

Besides, it is certain he must be knowing all about this microphone that he has made. So, too, there must be a creator for this universe, and He must be knowing all about it. This universe is composed of the five elements, and He is the master of all the five, their manipulator, aware of their subtle characteristics, and properties. He is the Kshetrjna

(indweller), He who knows this kshetra (field). When I speak into the mike, all of you can hear Me clearly; but the tape recorder here, the fan, the bulbs, the tube lights, all operate on account of the self-same unseen electric current that animates each of them.

Diwan Bahadur Ramaswamy Sastry, Yogi Suddhananda Bharathy, and others addressed you now, each one on a separate note, but all described only the self-same Kshetrajna, the Universal Knower, who is known by all names and who is in all forms. He is the impersonal person described in a hundred different ways in the Vedas, the Sastras, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, and the Bhaagavata. Hold on to Him and live your lives; you will not slip. Build your activities on that basis; your career will not cave in. You will also develop courage, consolation, and faith in yourself and in your destiny.

Krishna's lessons to control the ego

Krishna addresses Arjuna in the Gita sometimes as Kaunteya. Now, what does that appellation mean? It means, "one who assimilates quietly" as you are doing now. You are seated comfortably under this pandal [temporary shelter], in fine weather and you can afford to listen in silence. But, remember, Arjuna was between two opposing armies, eager for the fray for which they had prepared for years with unquenchable vengeance. It requires extraordinary self-control and yearning to command concentration at that time. Krishna addresses him as Kurunandana, which means that he takes delight in karma [action] dedicated to the high ideals he had in view. Every mode of address of Krishna has an inner meaning and appropriateness, as well as a lesson for others.

Arjuna was trained by Krishna without break to control his egoism. Before the Mahabharata war, Arjuna once happened to be at Ramasethu, near Rameswaram. Arjuna spoke of the bridge with some scorn in the hearing of Anjaneya, who was there, and said that he would have built a bridge of arrows single-handed and not bothered about subduing the sea and getting monkeys to pile up rocks one over the other. Anjaneya asked him to build one. When Anjaneya walked gently over the bridge, the arrows broke under his weight!

Krishna suddenly presented Himself and suggested that it should be done in His presence, for there was no witness when the challenge was made and accepted. In order to save Arjuna from humiliation, Krishna bore the second bridge on His back when Anjaneya walked on it, so that Arjuna saw the telltale streaks of red where the arrow points had pierced the Lord's back. Thus, Arjuna's pride was humbled. He prayed to Anjaneya to fight on his side at Kurukshetra. But Anjaneya said that the Kaurava army would be too infinitesimal a foe for his prowess; it would not be fair to pit him against such a weak enemy. He would only watch the fight from the flag of Arjuna's chariot, he said; and the offer was gladly accepted.

Egoism is a tough enemy

Arjuna's pride was humbled during the war in another interesting manner by Krishna. Around the end of the war, one evening Arjuna felt proud that Krishna was his charioteer, and thus his 'servant.' He felt that as master, he should get down from the chariot after Krishna and not before Him. So, that day he insisted that Krishna should get down first,

that he should come down only afterward. But Krishna was adamant; Arjuna must come down first, he said. After wasting a long time, pleading and protesting and praying, Arjuna got down very unwillingly, swallowing his pride. Krishna then came down, and immediately the chariot went up in flames!

Krishna explained the reason. The incendiary arrows and missiles that had stuck on the chariot were powerless so long as He was on it; but when His presence was no longer there, they set the chariot on fire. Thus, Krishna showed that every act and word of the Lord had significance and a purpose, which mortals cannot gauge. Egoism is a tough enemy and it requires constant vigilance to conquer it.

Conquer the foes of the inner realm

Pride raises its head in every stage and state. Like grass that covers the earth with a green carpet as soon as the rains fall even in places that appeared dry waste, pride thrives upon opportunity. King Sikhadhawaja got a feeling of extreme renunciation and left for the forest for ascetic practices. His queen Choodala had the spirit of detachment in greater measure, but she did not make a show of it as her husband did.

The queen put on a male attire, wore ochre, spelt a rosary, and sought him in the jungle. Discovering him at last, she asked him who he was. The King replied that he was the ruler of the realm, that he had given up his riches, his treasure, his army, his court, etc. "For the sake of what did you give up these?" asked Choodala. "For the sake of peace," replied the King. But he had to confess that he had not attained it.

Then Choodala taught him that the giving up of "things" will bear no fruit, that the desire for things, the pride of possessing things, of having once possessed them, has to be given up. That one must be detached from the objective world so that he might turn his eyes inward and conquer the foes of the inner realm and become a master of himself. When the King attempted to fall at the feet of the new guru that had come to him, Choodala revealed her identity. She was a sati (virtuous wife) who was the guru of her pati (husband); there were many such women in ancient times, when they were honored and educated much better than today.

Tremendous power of mind over body

You must develop the devotion of the gopis, of Radha, of Uddhava, of Hanuman. Ramakrishna Paramahansa did intense sadhana, transmitting himself into the attitude of Hanuman, and even his physical attributes changed to suit the role. He developed a small tail during the period; such is the tremendous power of mind over body. Many husbands and mothers-in-law tried to scare away the gopis from Krishna by spreading scandals about Him. But how can anyone keep the jiva (individual soul) and the Jagadeeshwara (Lord of the universe) apart? Vyasa, the great saint, says that words are inadequate to describe the intensity of that devotion, the devotion of the gopis for the Lord. They had no egoism left in them, and that is why they became the supreme devotees of the Lord.

Learn the art of overcoming the ego from the Shastras [scriptures], whose repositories are here before you in the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha [Academy of Vedic Scholars]. There

are still many such in our land, in spite of decades of neglect and the glitter of other studies. You must have heard of Bhojaraja, the great patron of the pundits such as these. He was at first not so considerate, but an incident happened that turned his attention to this essential task.

The pundits of his realm had God's grace in good measure, no doubt, but they were extremely poor and had to struggle to keep their families above starvation. One pundit was so down and out that he decided to turn thief and steal, not from any poor man's house, but from the King's palace itself, for the King cannot be made poorer by the loss. He crept into the private apartments at dusk and though he had access to a large quantity of silverware and gold cups and plates, he felt that he should carry away with him only what he needed most, and so, he stole only a few seers [kilos] of wheat flour. While moving about with the bag of flour in a dark corridor he heard noises, and so he entered a room whose door was ajar and hide himself under a cot. It was the King's bedroom!

Scholars must have faith in their learning

The pundit spent the night under a cot, unable to move or cough or sneeze or even breathe aloud. An hour before dawn, the King rose and sat upon the bed, reciting aloud a stanza he had composed at night while trying to sleep. There was a gap in the last line that the King could not fill; the appropriate word was evading him. The pundit heard the stanza; he had the word on his lips, and he could not but shout it out from underneath the cot. He forgot for the moment that he was a thief with the telltale bag in his hands. The King peeped under the cot and welcomed the pundit and honored him for his scholarship and poured largesse on him in sympathy for his plight.

It was thus that Bhojaraja [the King] learnt of the misery in which the scholars of his kingdom lived. The pundits also must have this faith: that their learning will never injure them, never destroy them, that it will sustain them, provided they follow them strictly, gladly, sincerely, and in the fear of God. The faith in God will be instilled by namasmarana (the repetition of the name of God)—the remembering of the glory of the Lord and of His infinite mercy and power.

When a mother is feeding her child, you can see her with the child on her hip and the plate in her hand, inducing the child to eat by means of harsh words or a smile, a joke, a threat, or a story, diverting its attention, showing the child a dog or a flower or the moon. I have also to adopt the same tactics to make you listen and assimilate the valuable food that is so necessary for your growth. That is the reason why I relate stories, sing, recite poems, etc., in My discourses!

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 4

Vinayaka Worship Ranks First

*One may have mastered the pedantic texts
And perfected the art of expounding them;
If his mind is not well filled with good qualities,
His scholarship is like the crop grown on barren soil.
If you cannot comprehend the Swami in front of you
And wander in search of God all over,
You are like the man who went in quest of ghee
While having butter in his hand.*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

The phenomenal world (*prakriti*) is what is directly apparent to man and that deludes him. It is an aggregation of objects. In its natural state, every object is mutable. Such impermanent objects are incapable of giving enduring bliss (*ananda*). The object that gives you pleasure is transient. The individual who experiences that pleasure is also impermanent. How can an impermanent being derive lasting bliss from a perishable object?

It is, therefore, necessary at the outset to forget the impermanent so that one may be qualified to experience the eternal and unchanging reality.

The entire cosmos is a manifestation of the three *gunas*: *satwa* [pure], *rajas* [passion], *tamas* [ignorance or dullness]. They have been identified with the three colors: white, red, and black. It is impossible for man to conceive of a world without these three qualities. It is not possible to find in nature a situation in which these three qualities are present in equal measure. When the *satwic* quality is predominant, the *rajasic* and *tamasic* qualities are quiescent. When the *rajasic* quality is dominant, the other two are subdued. When the *tamasic* quality is dominant, *satwa* and *rajas* are subdued. It is seldom that all the three qualities are equally balanced and in harmony with each other.

Likewise, in the human body these three qualities are present in every limb. It will be clear that these three qualities are manifest in the physical universe, in the human body, and in the human mind. The sacred texts (*Shrutis*) have also declared that the universe is made up of these three qualities.

Three states of man

With reference to man, there is the view that there are three states: *prakriti*, *avidya*, and *maya*. In course of time, the term *prakriti* was applied to man's body. In some parts of the country, people are in the habit of referring to individuals as "*prakriti*". In North Canara, people say: "My *prakriti* is not well", when they want to convey that their body is not well. "Prakriti" refers to that which is subject to all kinds of "*vikriti*" (distortions and changes). This "*prakriti*" is the basis of all creation.

The second term is "*avidya*". *Avidya* means that which is the opposite of knowledge. "Avidya" makes one treat what is unreal as real and what is real as unreal, and thereby

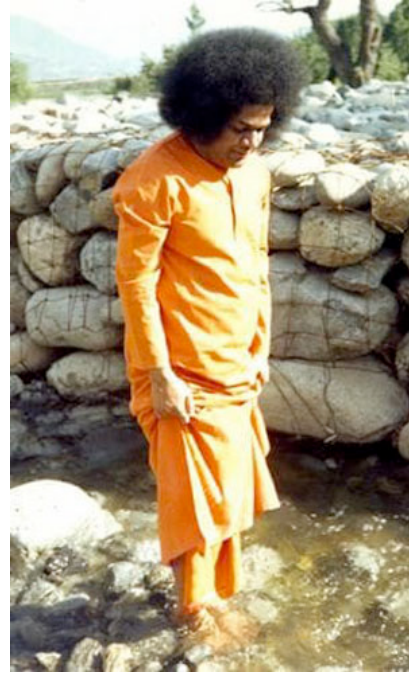
deludes him and makes him pursue sensual pleasures. This "avidya" follows "prakriti" in the world as a shadow. Because of this "avidya", man is unable to recognize his true nature. *Avidya* is the cause of man's inability to comprehend his true form. As long as *avidya* remains, man can never be free from troubles.

The third term is "*maya*". *Maya* is the delusion that makes one imagine the presence of that which is not present. As long as this state of delusion (*bhrama*) remains, it is impossible to comprehend the *Brahmam* (Omni-Self).

What is this delusion? Here, for instance, is a rope. But in the twilight of dust, one mistakes it for a snake. When a lamp is brought, it is found that there is only the rope. The snake was never there, and the rope was always there. Only the momentary delusion caused the appearance of the snake and the absence of the rope. This is called *maya*. It makes one imagine the presence of what is not there and not perceive what is really there. To believe in the existence of that which is nonexistent and in the nonexistence of that which is the real truth is the effect of *maya*.

It is the combined power of these three—*prakriti*, *avidya*, and *maya*—that accounts for man forgetting his true nature.

Man often imagines that he has accomplished many things. Presuming that all that he achieves are entirely due to his own efforts and abilities, he deludes himself and forges his own bonds. He forgets the truth that there is a higher power that is the driving force for action as well as the author of the results thereof. This is the primary nature of "*bhrama*" (delusion).



The prayer to Vinayaka

To get rid of this delusion and enable man to comprehend his inherent divine nature, the ancient sages taught a prayer. This prayer is the one that is addressed to Vinayaka.

Who is Vinayaka? In the *shloka* (Sanskrit verse) beginning with the words, "*Suklaambaradharam Vishnum*", only the form of the deity is described. But there is another inner meaning for the name Vinayaka. "*Suklaambaradharam*" means one who is clad in white. "*Vishnum*" means He is all-pervading. "*Sasivarnam*" means His complexion is grey like that of ash. "*Chathurbhujam*" means He has four arms. "*Prasannavadanam*" means, he has always a pleasing mien. "*Sarvavighnopasanthaye*" means for the removal of all obstacles. "*Dhyaayeth*", meditate (on Him). Vinayaka is the deity who removes all bad qualities, instills good qualities, and confers peace on the devotee who meditates on him.

This is how the theistic believers interpret this prayer. The atheists have made a parody of it by construing the prayer as a description of a donkey which carries white clothes on its back, is ash-grey in color, wanders everywhere, has four legs, and has a bland look.

No master above Him

The Vinayaka-principle, however, has only one meaning, which is relevant to everyone irrespective of whether he is a believer or a non-believer. "Vinayaka" means that He is totally master of himself. He has no master above Him, He does not depend on anyone. He is also called *Ganapati*. This term means he is the lord of the *Ganas*—a class of divine entities. This term also means that he is the master of the intellect and discriminating power in man. He possesses great intelligence and knowledge. Such knowledge issues from a pure and sacred mind. This knowledge leads to wisdom (*vidyana*). Because He is the master of *buddhi* (intelligence) and *siddhi* (wisdom or realization), He is described as the Lord of *buddhi* and *siddhi*. *Buddhi* and *Siddhi* are referred to as the consorts of Vinayaka.

The mouse is the vehicle of Vinayaka. What is the inner significance of the mouse? The mouse is a symbol of the attachment to worldly *vasanas* (tendencies). It is well known that if you want to catch a mouse you place a strong-smelling edible inside the mousetrap. The mouse also symbolizes the darkness of night. The mouse can see well in the dark. As Vinayaka's vehicle, the mouse signifies an object that leads man from darkness to light. The Vinayaka-principle, thus, means that which removes all the bad qualities, bad practices, and bad thoughts in men and inculcates good qualities, good conduct, and good thoughts.

"Prathama Vandana"

Another name for Vinayaka is "*Vighneshwara*". *Easwara* is one who is endowed with every conceivable form of wealth: riches, knowledge, health, bliss, beauty, etc. *Vighneshwara* is the promoter of all these forms of wealth and removes all obstacles to their enjoyment. He confers all these forms of wealth on those who worship Him. Vinayaka is described as "*Prathama Vandana*" (the first deity who should be worshipped). As everyone in the world desires wealth and prosperity, everyone offers the first place for worship to *Vighneshwara*.

It is only when the inner meanings of various aspects relating to the Divine are understood that worship can be offered to the Divine meaningfully. Unfortunately, as only the superficial and worldly meanings of the scriptural texts are expounded these days, men's devotion is growing weaker continually. It is essential for everyone to understand the inner meaning of the *Vedantic* texts.

Faith in God should never waver

One may have immense faith in God. But from time to time, the power of *maya* may undermine this faith. In *Mahabharata* even staunch devotees of Krishna like Dharmaja and Arjuna displayed hesitancy in acting up to the advice of Krishna and had to be taught their duty through Bhishma and Draupadi respectively.

Unwavering faith essential

Faith in God should never waver. In no circumstance should anyone go against the injunctions of the Divine. Whatever worship one may offer, however intensely one may meditate, if one transgresses the commands of the Lord, these devotional practices become futile. The reason is that the Divine has no selfish objective or aim. It is out of small-minded selfish motives that people act against the sacred commands of the Lord. Even small acts of transgression may in due course assume dangerous proportions.

Like the clouds in the sky that are brought together or dispersed by the winds, the passage of time brings about for man the union or separation of associates and happiness or sorrow. Time is the form of God. It should not be wasted. It is to understand such sacred truths that festivals like *Ganesha Chaturthi* are celebrated.

Ganesha's intelligence

How did Vinayaka acquire *siddhi* (supreme powers)? His parents held a contest for their two sons—Ganesha and Subrahmanya. They said they will offer their grace in the form of a fruit to whoever came first in circumambulating the universe. The younger son Subrahmanya set out immediately on His peacock to go around the universe. On seeing Subrahmanya approaching his parents, almost at the end of his trip, Vinayaka, who had been quietly sitting all the while, got up and went around the parents and sat down. Parvati observed that Subrahmanya, who had taken so much trouble to go around the universe, should be declared the winner.

Parameshwara asked Vighneshwara what the inner significance was of his going around the parents. Ganesha replied: "The entire universe is permeated by both of you. The entire creation is a manifestation of the Shiva-Shakti form. It is an act of delusion to attempt to go around this phenomenal universe. To go around both of you is the true circumambulation of the cosmos." Then Parvati exclaimed, "Yours is the fruit." Ganesha became the Lord of the divine hosts (*Ganas*). Easwara was so much impressed with the supreme intelligence of Vinayaka that He told Him "All those who wish to worship Me will offer their worship first to you."

Such was the grace showered on Vinayaka. What is the reason? Ganesha's faith in the Lord and His omnipresence. The right path for all people is to develop faith in God and lead godly lives.

Vighneshwara is also regarded as one endowed with the wisdom of the elephant ("*gaja thelivi*"). The elephant is noted for its supreme intelligence. It is also known for its absolute loyalty to its master. It is ready to sacrifice its life itself for the sake of its master. The direct proof of this is Sai Gita (Bhagavan's elephant). Ordinarily hundreds of cars will be passing on the road. Sai Gita will take no notice of them. But when Swami's car happens to pass that way, it will instinctively notice it. It will rush to the road raising its familiar cry. What love for Swami! It will be no exaggeration if faith is equated with the elephant.

When an elephant moves among the bushes, its path turns into a regular passage for all animals. It is thus a pacesetter for all animals.

Vinayaka is a leader for all deities. Faith in Vinayaka should be developed as the exemplar for all deities, and He should be worshipped as the embodiment of Divinity.

Bhagavan then sang three *bhajans*: "*Hey Sivasankara, Namaami Sankara*", "*Hari bhajana binaa*", and "*Subrahmanyam! Subrahmanyam!*"

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, October 1991

Q & A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Obstacles to *Moksha*

- Q. Even those, who proceed along the path of spiritual progress toward the goal of *moksha* have, it seems, big obstacles, Swami.
- A. Yes, the past, the present, and the future obstacles.
- Q. What are they? What is the obstacle from the past?
- A. Recollecting and remembering the past and getting affected by it.
- Q. And the obstacle from the present?
- A. That itself operates in four ways! *Vishaya-ashakthi* (attending more to the peculiarities of textual criticism than to the sense of the teaching), *Prajnaa-maandyam* (dullness of the intellect that prevents one from grasping the words of the elders and of the wise), *Kutarka* (crookedness), and *Viparyayaduraagraha* (justifying one's own statement as correct through an exaggerated conceit).
- Q. What is the nature of the obstacle from the future?
- A. The future creates obstacles since you anticipate troubles and worry about them even before they come.
- Q. I have heard people speak of four types of beings; but I am not quite clear what they are.
- A. *Andaja*, *Swedaja*, *Udbijja*, and *Jarayuja*.

- Q. What do these words mean?
- A. *Andaja* means egg-born; *Swedaja* is sweat-born; *Udbijja* is earth-born, and *Jarayuja* means mammals. Birds are good examples of the first group; lice etc. of the second; ants, plants, and trees of the third; and men, cattle, etc., of the fourth.
- Q. Well, Swami! Among those who are theists and adore God are there special types?
- A. Of course! There are four types among them too.
- Q. Their names?
- A. *Dwijas*, *Munis*, *Alpabudhdhis*, and *Vidithatmas*: the Twice-born, the Ascetics, the Dull-witted, and the Knowers of the *atma*.
- Q. Why are they called so? What is the special feature of each type?
- A. The Twice-born recognize God in the fire they revere; and with that conviction they worship Him.
- Q. The *Munis*?
- A. They recognize God in their hearts.
- Q. What about the Dull-witted?
- A. They require images, pictures, or some other visible representation of His beauty and glory. They worship such.
- Q. And the knowers of the *atma*?
- A. They recognize God as immanent in the universe and see only Him wherever they turn.
- Q. May I ask who among these are the greatest?
- A. Each is great in the stage he may have reached, but naturally those who can experience the Lord everywhere at all times are the greatest.
- Q. Swami! What are the traits of character that we have to avoid, that is to say, which are the obstacles in the path of one who seeks liberation from the cycle of birth and death?

- A. The six, the *Arishadvargas*: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, and *matsarya*; these are to be avoided.
- Q. What exactly is *kama*?
- A. Desire for riches, property, honor, status, fame, children; why list the lot? Attachment to all things of this sensory world, this false, temporary, impure world.
- Q. *Krodha*?
- A. Yearning to harm others and cause ruin to them.
- Q. And *lobha*?
- A. Determination that no one else should partake of even a small fraction of what one has earned or what one has; also that even in times of distress one's possessions should not be diminished by use.
- Q. What is the meaning of *moha*?
- A. The delusion that some people are nearer to one than others and the desire to please them more than others, leading to exertions for earning and accumulating for their sake.
- Q. *Mada*?
- A. *Mada* means the swagger that develops when one feels that he has either scholarship or strength or riches or fame, more than others. Even when one has not got these, *mada* makes men move about without reverence for elders and consideration for other's feelings and craving only for one's own comfort and security. *Mada* is extreme egoism.
- Q. The last that you mentioned is *matsarya*. What does that mean, Swami?
- A. When others are as happy as yourself, *matsarya* makes one miserable; one cannot tolerate it.
- Q. There are certain other traits, too, called *dambha* and *darpa*. What do they indicate?
- A. *Dambha* prompts people to do *Yaga* and *Yajna*, to give away vast sums in charity, in order to win the applause of the world. *Darpa* is the pride that haunts man when he is rich and happy.
- Q. What is the meaning of *eershya*?

- A. The desire that others should get the grief, the misery and the worry that one is suffering from.
- Q. So, it is different from *asuya*?
- A. Yes. *Asuya* means thinking always of doing evil to others; the preparedness to put up with any trouble in order to satisfy this desire to harm others. All these are called Inner Foes. So long as man is caught in this net of delusion spread by these foes, the yearning for liberation will not dawn in his mind.

Source: *Prasnottara Vahini*

Thought of the MONTH

Duty of Resistance to Adharma

Only in the nation in which the goddesses of *dharma* (righteousness) and *shanti* (peace) are adored will genuine prosperity and happiness exist. Today many are indulging in actions opposed to *dharma* and truth, and on the basis of their caste or community are promoting strife and conflict in the country. Elders in the nation are remaining mere spectators of all the unrighteous and violent actions that are being done by the evil elements. Even the scholars and intellectuals remain silent. Persons holding high office are merely watching what goes on. No one, however, is making any effort to stop this menace. They are not resisting the evil elements. It appears as if all their knowledge, position, and influence have been reduced to nothing. Such persons, though they may not be indulging in unrighteous acts, are giving encouragement to them.

Here is an example from the *Mahabharata*:

Considering that war should be a great universal calamity, Dharmaraja (the eldest of the Pandavas) appealed to Krishna to go as an ambassador of peace to the Kauravas. Entering the audience hall of Duryodhana, Krishna described at length the disastrous consequences of war. The great *Acharyas* [teachers]—Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, and Ashwathama, who were present on the court, were intently listening to Krishna's words. But Krishna's appeal was of no use to them. Because of their long association with the wicked Kauravas, they became abettors in the crimes of Duryodhana and others.

Vidura, who was a witness to the evil that was being committed, resolved to oppose it. He pleaded with the Kauravas in many ways to listen to the wise words of

Krishna. His appeal fell on deaf ears. Rather than stay amongst such evil-minded persons, Vidura felt that it was better to go on a pilgrimage and left the country immediately.

Bhishma, Drona, and others, having been beneficiaries of the sustenance provided by the wicked Kauravas, chose to be loyal to them and stayed on. All of them were great preceptors. They knew well the distinction between righteousness and evil. They had enquired into the nature of the eternal and the permanent. Of what avail was all that knowledge? When it came to practicing what they knew, all their knowledge was of no use. In the final outcome, all of them met with the same end in the great war as the evil-minded Kauravas.

Krishna looked upon those who even if they were good in themselves did not oppose unrighteousness and injustice committed in their presence when they had the capacity to do so as actual participants in the crimes. When evil and injustice and violence are being perpetrated, if individuals look on unconcerned, they must be regarded as accomplices in the crimes. In the end they also suffer as much as the criminals. By their passive association, they provide encouragement to the evildoers.

When the good are associated with the wicked and do not oppose them, they share the responsibility for the deeds of the evildoers. The Divine will not consider whether they are learned or ignorant, wise or unwise. If they are learned or wise, why did they not stand up for truth and justice? Why did they remain silent? It means they are tainted by the same guilt. The failure to resist evil is their offence. It is only when we resist acts of unrighteousness and injustice and try to put down malpractices in society that we can claim to be assisting in the task of restoring *dharma*.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XIX, P. 156-158

“Do not walk in front of Me. I may not follow you. Don’t walk behind me. I may not lead you. Walk beside me and be My friend.” If you attempt to walk in front of Me, you may be taking the wrong path. If you walk behind Me, you may possibly desert Me. Walk abreast of Me, then there is no chance of you going astray or away from Me, because I am with you. The inner meaning of this is: “You and I are one.” Divinity is omnipresent. Divinity is the Indweller in every being. That being the case, there is no need for you to go in front or walk behind. Take the Divine with you wherever you go. This is the true mark of the *sadhaka* [aspirant].

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XIX, P. 162.

You must be prepared to face any kind of crisis and meet any type of calumny. Calumny and abuse should not affect one who has firm faith in God. The man who

experiences the bliss of union with the Divine has the strength of a thousand elephants. He has boundless courage and knows no fear. The God-centered person has three qualities: purity, perseverance, and patience. Without these qualities, a man is a weakling. But with them, he has all the strength and courage he needs to face any challenge.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XIX, P. 163.

Visit *Sai Sarathi* on the web at SaiSarathi.com

Sai Sarathi welcomes submissions of articles, transcriptions of talks, and student stories about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, His teachings, and personal experiences at His lotus feet. We also welcome SSE student projects and announcements for regional events.

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

In this Kaliyuga, the principle of prema is not in evidence. It is smothered in jealousy, conceit, hatred, fear, falsehood, and greed. That is why it is best referred to as the kalaha-yuga, the age of faction, marked by fights between mother and daughter, father and son, teacher and pupil, guru and guru, brother and brother. The recitation of the name of Krishna is the best method for cleansing the mind of all these evil impulses.

You may ask, "If we engage ourselves in this pastime, how can we earn our livelihood?" Well, let me assure you, if you have pure and steady faith in the Lord, He will provide for you, not merely food, but the nectar of immortality. You have that mighty potentiality in you, to discover the Lord within and compel, Him to grant you that nectar.

~Baba

