

Diamonds in the Dust

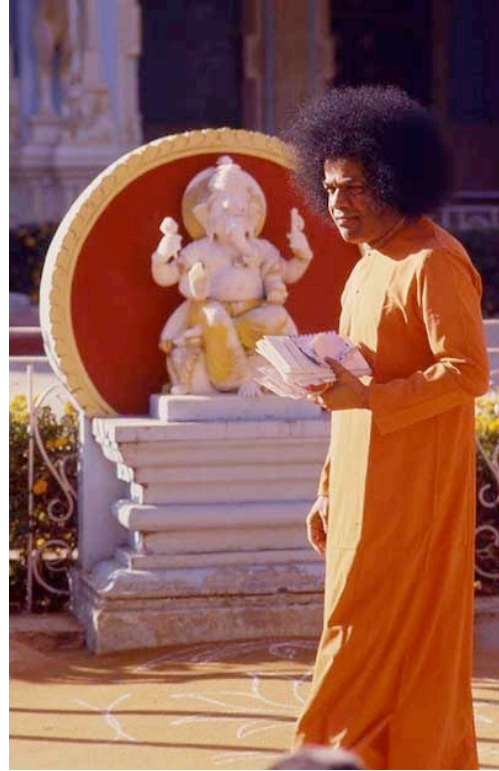
In the following discourse during Dasara, Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba explains that we should not identify ourselves with the body but the atma as that confers bliss, peace, and light.

Compassion toward all creatures is the greatest virtue; willful injury to any creature is the worst vice. Have full faith in this. Spread love and joy through compassion and be full of joy and peace yourself. You do not have joy and peace now mainly because your vision is warped and wobbling. The vision is now directed toward the faults and failings of others, never toward one's own faults and failings. The ears, too, delight when stories of the failures and foibles of others are related. No attempt is made to examine the failures and foibles of oneself. Really speaking, the inquiry and investigation have to begin with oneself. For, what we see in others is the reflection of our own selves, our own prejudices and preferences.

Besides, when your attention is focused on faults and failures, vices and wrongs, the mind, too, becomes infected with their pollution and it starts relishing only experiences that smack of such tastes. Hence, the lives of such people lose the peace and joy that are the heritage of the wise and the wary.

Let us take the example of the snake. It has two characteristics: (1) It never moves straight. Its path is always crooked. (2) It strikes at all that comes in its way. Man, too, is snaky, for he exhibits these two characteristics in a marked manner. He shares another characteristic, too, of the snake, namely, poison.

Poison is called in Sanskrit, *visha*. A kindred word is *visha-ya*, which means the sensory objects that poison the mind of man with lust, anger, greed, craving, pride, and hate. The snake's poison is the cause of why it is destroyed wherever seen. Man's slavery to *vishaya* is the cause of his downfall. But the situation is not without some hope. The serpent can be tamed, and its poison fangs removed when music



from the *nagaswaram* [conical double-reed aerophone] pipe is played and when it is fascinated by that sweet melody. The poison that *vishaya* exerts on the human mind can also be eliminated and countermanded, when man is fascinated by the sweet melodies of *namasmarana*, or *sankirtan*—that is to say, by the repetitive chanting of the meaningful names of the Lord. The poison in both can thus be sublimated into pure nectar.

What happens to man when *namasmarana* withdraws his mind from the sensory tangles is—the acquisition of a new balance, of a blissful equanimity called *samachitta*. Nature is in constant flux; nothing remains the same, even for a few seconds. The sweet dish that is cooked now becomes stale and stinking a few hours hence and is ruined so much that it acts as a danger to health when consumed. Other types of change happen in other fields, other things, and beings.

Man not only expects these changes, he prepares himself to face them. In fact, in many cases he is unhappy if the change does not happen! If things remain the same, it is certain to cause deep disappointment. A newborn babe must grow in weight, in movement of limbs, in the intake of food, and the output of energy through activity. Or else parents become anxious and run from doctor to doctor. The same thing happens when the child does not walk or talk, weep or laugh.

In a normal baby, there exists real *samachitta*, for there is no desire (except the instinctive desire for food, drink, and maternal protection) to agitate it. The babe is the inheritor of immortality; so, it is unaffected by anxiety that haunts the adult. The word *sama-chitta* is, in common parlance, taken to mean sheer equanimity—an unshaken balance when confronted by success or failure, loss or gain, pleasure or pain. But, `sama' has another and more significant meaning, namely, *Brahmam*, the Universal Eternal Absolute Principle. *Samachitta*, therefore, in its philosophical sense, means a consciousness established in the Absolute *Brahmam*, and as a consequence, above and beyond the storms and stillness's of the world of duality. This constant consciousness of the Reality is the fruit of *yajna* or sacrifice, the *Vedic* symbol of *tyaga* (renunciation), as mentioned in the statement, *na medhaya, na prajaya, dhanena, tyagenaike amrtattwam anasuh*, not by the intellect, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but only by renunciation can immortality be attained. *Yajna* means *tyaga*.

It is to emphasize this great axiom that during *Dasara* every year, the *Vedic Yajna* is performed. The thousands who attend the festival can share the knowledge and the inspiration that the *Yajna* provides.

This day is the *samapti* of the *Yajna*. *Sama* means, as I just now said, *Brahmam*. So, *sama-apti* means the attainment of *Sama* or *Brahmam*, which is the summum bonum of the ritual. The realization of this *Brahmic* Reality is the birthright of all men. But though born with the right and the responsibility as the *Amrta-putra* (the child of immortality), man denies himself the victory, courts defeat, and prides himself as an

Anarta-putra, the child of the illusory, the delusion. The realization that is his due is not an unattainable achievement; it is a simple conquest, so simple that people never attempt it!

The assertive ego that urges him to identify himself with the body and the instrument with which it is equipped, the motives with which those instruments work, and the reactions that those motives breed has to be mastered by the Real Self, a wave of the great Ocean of Cosmic Consciousness, that is all. Man declares himself as *aham* and takes pride in his *aham-kara* or *aham-consciousness*. But he is not aware of the inner meaning of the word *Aham!* *Aham* is just a verbal symbol for what he really is. *A* is the sound that represents the Omnipresent Godhead, named also as Vishnu. In the *Gita* it is asserted, *Aksharanam Akarosmi*, among the letters I am *a*. *Ham* means energy, power, force, *shakti*.

So, when one points to himself as *aham*, he is unconsciously announcing that he is the hardened energy of the Omnipresent Universal Absolute *Brahmam* called also Vishnu.

Besides, the Lord says in the *Gita*, *maya krtham idam sarvam*. I have made all this out of myself! When all is He, you and all *jivas* (individualized beings) are He. How then can we demarcate some as bad and relish the stories concerning them and list their faults and failings?

The question may be raised, "The good and the bad are so obvious, how can we deny it or ignore it?" They are obvious only so long as the individual is not fully established in the truth that God is All (*Vasudevassarvamidam*). Until that moment, the body dominates thought, desires haunt the mind, ego rules the intellect; so dualities lord over man. When like the boy Prahlada, one is sunk and saturated in God-consciousness, there can be no feeling of gain or loss, pleasure or pain. He is immersed in the Word and is unconcerned about its meaning that is manifested in all its variety in the objective world. The one Word seems to have many meanings, as a result of ignorance. It is the Word, the *Para-shakti* (the Supreme Principle) that gives value and validity to every one of the meanings.

Another idea called *ekagrata* (one-pointedness), too, now must be elucidated. *Sadhaks* often bewail that they do not earn one-pointedness. They mean, by that term, that they are not able to concentrate their attention long on a flame, light, picture, or idol. The eye concentrates on something seen; the nose on some fragrance; the ear on some melody. But the mind concentrates on the One, the *Ekam*, the *Brahmam*—that is described as *ekam nithyam vimalam achalam sarvadhee sakshibhootham* (the One, the Eternal, the Pure, the Inflexible, the Witness). *Ekagrata*, therefore, denotes the concentration of the inner vision on *Brahmam*. The intellect, the ego, the senses—these should sub-serve this great purpose and help in attaining the ideal. They should be vigilant that they do not divert the vision or deviate it from the *Brahmam*.

However, it has to be admitted that such *sadhana* is now very rare; very few fix their inner vision on the Universal and the Eternal; nor do they listen to its majesty and mystery. The tragedy that has fallen upon mankind is just this: the mind of man has strayed away from its moorings and is being tossed about on the waves of doubt and diversity. *Brahmam* is One, unchanging and everlasting. A mind filled with the yearning for *Brahmam* will see the One in all, it will remain unaffected by the smiles and sneers of fortune. But man's mind has been tempted into strange paths that can lead him only to fear and frustration. Man condemns the world and calls it a seat of wickedness and war.

The faults lie not in the world, but in himself. He has war in him and so he sees war; he is inherently wicked and so he observes wickedness all around him. A brilliant lamp cannot remove the darkness that a blind man has always around him. For those who have eyes to see, it is brilliant with the light around them. The darkness the blind man swears by is in him, not outside him. So, too, the man who is at peace with himself will discern peace all around him. Nature is beauty, truth, and peace. Man sees it as ugly, false, and violent—that is all.

It is strange but true: immortality lies enshrined in the mortal; there are diamonds in dirt and dust; wisdom dwells in this mansion of muscles; the *atma* illumines this tabernacle of the *jiva*. Man does not look into himself; he is poor though under his feet there lies buried treasures. Heir to inexhaustible bliss, he runs after momentary pseudo-pleasures! He gets as reward only distress, disappointment, and defeat. He spends all his allotted years in this wasteful adventure, and even at the last moment of life he is beset with sorrow and fear. He has no peace when he leaves his body, for he has lost the chance of winning peace through its instrumentality.

Once there was a woodcutter going daily into the forest and collecting a bundle of fuel that he sold in the village nearby for a pittance, it just sufficed to keep his wife and children alive. One morning, while he was stepping out of his hut, the wife reminded him that it was *Yugadi* (the New Year Festival) the next day; she pleaded with him to collect a heavier bundle of fuel that day, so that they could get a few more *paise* [cents] to give the children a morsel of sweet rice each. The man nodded assent and walked on. He succeeded in gathering an extra huge bundle, but with that heavy load on his head, he was soon exhausted. He had to deposit it on the ground before he could approach the village. This set him thinking of his plight. He had lost all his old zest for living. He called upon the Angel of death, the *Mrtyudevata*, to relieve him. He cried, "O Death! Have you no mercy toward me? Why have you forgotten me so long? How I wish I could die and escape from this daily grind!" The Angel of death took pity on him and appeared before him to fulfill his wish.

But the woodcutter suddenly receded; he cleverly changed the purpose of his appeal to the Angel. He had no wish to die, though in his despair he had called out for her help. He said, "No. No. I had no one here to lift this bundle on to my head, so I called

on you to come to my aid. That was the only reason behind my prayer. Please help me to lift this burden and place it on my head; I have to reach the village soon!”

Since man is innately immortal, he recedes from the grasp of death. The will to live is very strong, much more persistent than the will to die.

It is like the story of the sun and darkness, this question of meeting death or vanquishing death. The Sun-God was one day, very impressed by the 1008 names with which a devotee offered Him worship. He listened to the names, as he uttered them in steadfast faith. He was particularly alerted when he called upon Him as *Andhakar-dweshi*—He who is looked upon as the enemy by darkness. The Sun-God could not tolerate the existence of an enemy alive, so He called for a war unto death for this demon called Darkness. He went into all the places where Darkness hid himself, but no sooner did He spot him, the demon disappeared so that He could never come to grips with him. Finally, He concluded that Darkness was non-existent and was only a creation of the imagination of His adorers! Before the splendor of immortality, the darkness of mortality, too, would flee in haste.

The resident in the body has no birth and therefore no death. But man is hugging the falsehood that he is the body and so is subject to death and birth. A silver cup can be reshaped by the smith into a plate, or later, into a *paan* [betal-leaf] box. But though the name, the form, and the function might change, the silver is there in all three, unchanged in substance, in spite of the births into plate and box and the deaths as cup and plate. When a man stands on the bank of a sheet of water, his shadow appears in the water. People say it is he, but *Vedanta* says, he is not it. When the shadow is beaten with a stick, he is not hurt, so it is not he. But when someone says it is misshapen, ugly, etc., he gets angry! So, he is it. The shadow is both he and not he. It is neither true nor false, it is real-unreal, it is *mithya* [untruth].

The eye is distinct from the objects it sees. The eye is an instrument used by the I, which is a ray of the splendor of the *atma*. The senses are mirrors and when the light of that ray falls on them, things and objects are reflected therein. The *atma* shines and all the inner organs of perception awaken to their duty of gathering knowledge and revealing bliss. It is their duty to function according to their nature; the result is not to be aimed at. It follows when the duty is done efficiently to the best of one's ability and will. A knife cuts vegetable but does not eat them. It cuts a fruit but is not tempted to taste the sweetness.

Let us imagine a cup full of fruit juice. The cup is not aware of the sweetness of the juice. A straw is used to sip the juice. The juice fills the entire length of the straw, but yet the straw is a stranger to the taste. The tongue has the juice on it, but it has no knowledge of its calorific value or its components. It can only pronounce judgement on its taste; for other purposes it sent the juice into the stomach. The stomach discriminates and distributes the essentials of the juice to every part of the body, every nerve and cell, and contributes to their efficiency and strength. The cup is the

body of man; it has in it the divinely sweet *atma* principle. The sense organs are the straws; intellect is the tongue; the ego principle is the stomach; it converts the sweetness into spirit and confers bliss, peace, and light.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 12

Saism Alone can Usher a Golden Era for the World

Arjun Kumar Sengupta has a Ph.D. in Economics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he taught at the London School of Economics and Delhi University. He worked as an economic adviser to international agencies and was Special Adviser to the Managing Director of International Monetary Fund, Washington. He was an Ambassador of India to the European Community, Brussels. In 1993, he was appointed Member Secretary of the Planning Commission and Chairman of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector. From 2006 he was Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha until his death in 2010.

A person, who has overcome the trappings of his ego [and] is able to follow the precepts of selfless or universal love that Bhagavan teaches as a method of transforming one's life can only be regarded as a devotee of Bhagavan. When I apply these criteria to myself, I do not think that I am competent to be regarded as a devotee. I have many miles to go before I reach that stage of liberation. I have gone through repeatedly the painful process of examining and re-examining the basis of my experience of Bhagavan Baba.

Still I am overwhelmed by Him. He is so real to me, so intensely alive, that I can never deny Him. I cannot comprehend His phenomenon. And what I do not comprehend, I cannot describe. So, I have never tried to explain Him, and have only suggested to anyone who has asked me about Him to go and meet Him and experience Him. I cannot verbalize or express that experience, because it is beyond my comprehension or reasoning. But I can still feel the impact of that experience.

I guess all these sentiments are quite common for anyone who has come to know Bhagavan. My experience is surely nothing uncommon. I would rather talk briefly about my reactions to a few teachings of Bhagavan. There is nothing



extraordinary about those reactions either; but different people react differently to the same words or teachings, and it may be interesting to know the wide spectrum of views that can converge around very simple statements of Bhagavan. The variations only depend upon an individual's background, understanding, and predilection.

The first thing that struck me, as I tried to go through the literature about Bhagavan, His teachings and His Discourses, was that they are addressed to all sorts of people with different beliefs and points of view and facing various kinds of problems and situations.

They are not and cannot be all applicable to every individual, and one has to look for and find the line that is applicable to oneself. That process of search itself is quite a difficult exercise, as it is also, essentially, a process of knowing oneself. There is no end to it, and one is never certain that one is on the right track. But, somehow, some day, one comes across some sentences, or paragraphs, or sayings or even some particular tunes of a *bhajan*, that suddenly strike one as if they were very specifically applicable to oneself, poignant with great significance and intimate allusions, with very special meanings.

On one such occasion, I was going through the exhilarating experience of discovering such a paragraph. Suddenly Bhagavan looked at me and said that if I could fix my antenna properly and tune in the right wavelength, I could listen to any program I wanted whether from the BBC or from Delhi, as all the radio waves of the world were passing through the place where I was sitting then. (It was at Brindavan in Whitefield).

A very simple point to tell me that it depended on me, my efforts, and my preparedness to be able to receive His grace that is flowing in abundance all around.

Time and again, Bhagavan reminds us of our own responsibility in shaping our life and destiny. There is enough scope for free will to change the course of our life within the bounds or parameters determined by our own *karma* or past activity. Every activity or *karma* done in the past, whether that past is yesterday, last month, or previous life, has its consequences. And at any point of time, the effects of all past activities constitute our initial endowments of assets, minus liabilities, or stock of capital. With that we start our life at every present moment to shape our future.

Bhagavan says, "The future is in your hands; tomorrow can be shaped by today, though today has already been shaped by yesterday." This means that there can be a number of different tomorrows resulting from what we do today. It is this that gives the scope for free will, or the possibility of choice that would lead us to end up with an improved or deteriorated stock of capital compared to what we started with today. One's past *karma* is one's fate, and as Bhagavan says, it is, "The inescapable writing on the head and it has to work itself out. But people forget that it's not

written by some other hand. It is all written by one's own hand. And the hand that wrote it can also wipe it off."

This puts a tremendous responsibility on oneself. There is no scope for fatalism, despair, or pleading helplessness at the present state of being as the result of the past *karma* over which we have no say today. Man can still change his destiny, ameliorate the effects of the past *karma* by engaging in the right or appropriate *karma* at present. Working with the given stock of capital inherited from the past, we can, with appropriate effort, follow an optimum path ending up with an improved stock of capital for the future.

The concept of time in this framework is a continuum that exists irrespective of the lives of individuals or societies. It is for our convenience that we slice it into units of hours, days, months, years, or a lifetime. We choose the units, relating them to some reference points in the case of the calendar time, to the solar system, and in the case of a lifetime, to an individual's span of physical existence. Within a unit, however, time is limited and is a most precious scarce resource, as it allows the scope for changing and improving upon the initial stock of capital that one has been endowed with at the beginning of that unit of time. Bhagavan impresses upon us again and again the preciousness of time, and the severe cost of waste of this very scarce resource. This cost is measured in terms of opportunities of improvements that would be lost, within the span of a unit of, say, a lifetime.

For an economist like myself, accustomed to thinking in terms of choice subject to constraints, and of time as a scarce resource that can be converted into capital, this world view of *karma* or activity based on Bhagavan's teaching is delightfully refreshing.

An individual in this scheme starts his life, or any day in his life, with a given stock of capital or endowment of net assets, inherited from the past. He has two resources that he can use according to his discretion: his own labor or efforts and his allotted time.

After leading a life of activities, he arrives at the end of his unit of time with a terminal stock of capital, which would determine the constraints of the course of life during the next unit of time.

The economist's world is limited by the assumption about human behavior that it is supposed to be motivated by self-interest or personal gain. An individual in that world uses his scarce resources to maximize his personal gain, measured by material consumption. That is, by its very nature, a source of conflict, since at any time the amount of consumable materials cannot be infinite and a larger consumption of one individual must mean smaller consumption of another.

In conventional economics, there is hardly any other alternative view of human behavior or motivation. It is, of course, necessary to assume some model of behavior

as otherwise we cannot explain what the individuals are supposed to do with their scarce resources, given their initial stocks or 'endowments'. It is convenient to assume that they would try to maximize personal gains. That seems also to explain most of the actual empirical behavior of individuals today in the modern world. The socialist system that tried to impose an alternative behavior pattern did not seem to work. So long as the success of an activity is measured by the profits or its results, it is not possible to abstract from the question of who benefits from these results, and so long as the individuals are treated as separate from each other, benefits for one cannot be identified as a source of satisfaction or cause of motivation for another.

Indeed, the world consisting of such self-interested individuals maximizing personal gains, with no consideration for others except when it is conducive to serving the self-interest, is the world that we see around us today. It is a world of disharmony, jealousy, and inequity.

We are caught in a hopelessly divisive situation of conflicting interests. We cannot resolve those conflicts by changing policies or even by achieving a growth of material wealth. An individual would always try to get ahead of others, trying to have more of everything, maximizing his own possessions, leaving just that much quarter for others that is considered necessary to ensure his own security.

The *karmic* view of life that Bhagavan describes, as a model of human behavior, is clearly a way out of this situation. It also, in a sense, posits a maximizing behavior, where an individual operating with an initial stock of capital uses his scarce resources to maximize, so to speak, his terminal stock. He starts with a stock of *karmic* value and seeks to end with as much as possible an improvement of that value. Consumption of material goods and services during the period of life when such an improvement is realized is no longer an end in itself but becomes a means or input in the process of sustaining oneself during that period, to enable the individual to achieve such improvement.

In Bhagavan's world, the *karmic* value an individual is seeking to maximize is his divine nature, which one secures if one's activity or *karma* is motivated not by personal gain that separates him from others, but by disinterested efficiency and detachment. That divine nature is the antitheses of selfishness and divisiveness. It is the continuous discovery of unity and harmony between oneself and others and the universe around.

It is the direct product of the process of treading the path of '*nishkama-karma*—selfless or desireless action'. This is definitely no easy road, and most of us have many many miles to go before we can reach even the beginning of the road. But Bhagavan says, "There is more joy in the doing of *karma* than in the fruit it may give; the pilgrimage is often more pleasurable than the actual experience of the temple to which the pilgrim went."

That is the path of *sadhana*, the pleasure of that is its reward. If only all of us could follow that path, we would have made a different world for ourselves. It is 'Saism' alone that can usher in a golden era for the world.

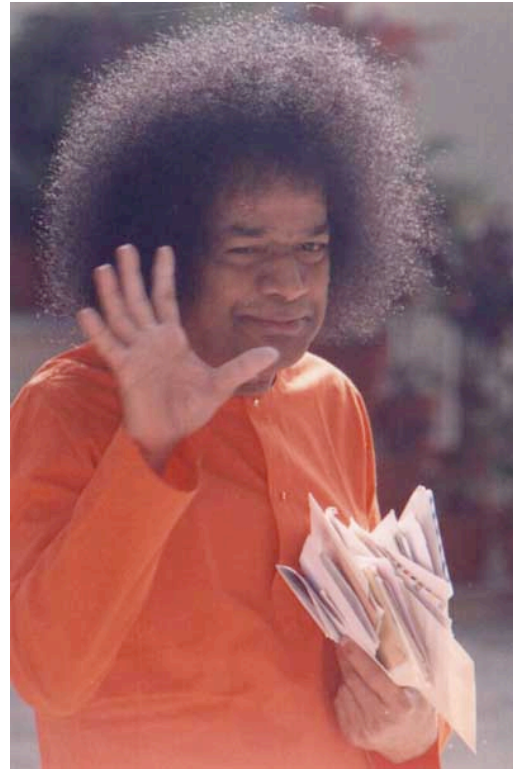
Source: *Sai Vandana* 1990 (65th Birthday Offering)

The Ray of God

The *Upanishads* say that the human is a spark of Divine Love, encased in five sheaths: the *anna* (gross, material, food component), the *prana* (vital air, breath), the *mana* (the mental, emotional, volitional), the *vijnana* (rational, discriminatory, intellectual), and the *ananda* (blissful, equanimous, balance). It is the fragrance of that love that emanates from him as love toward things, beings, and ideas. That love is ever urging and surging for expression, enlargement, and enclaspings. But the tangles of fear, greed, egoism, and aggrandizement do not allow the spark to grow and illumine the sheaths as well as the world around.

This day is the Festival of Light (*Deepavali*); that is to say, of love. Knowledge, too, is praised as light, but it is often a clouding fog, a weapon of offence, a burden on the head, a drag on the hand of charity, a shackle on the feet. It ripens into a liberator only when it is earned through love and put into practice through love. Love alone gives light.

Love unfolds first on the lap of the mother. The eyes of love fasten themselves on the caressing face of the mother. It then spreads toward the father, brothers, and sisters, kith and kin, friend and playmate, region and language, world and its Maker. The I that lives within the body is like a lion in a cave. It is the monarch of the forest; but it limits itself to the few square feet of rocky floor. Let it come out, renouncing the petty possession. So long as you crib yourselves into the body-consciousness (I am the body), you are the lion moping in the musty cave! Do not feel, *dehoasmi* (I am the body). Roar, *Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman, I am all this and more, I am all this is, was, and will be)—and littleness, time, space, ego, all will flee from your heart! You will be Love, Love, Love—and nothing else. That is to say, you will be Divine, one with the One.



Light has no boundaries, prejudices, or favorites

Expansion is love. Expansion is the essence of love. Love is God. Live in love. That is the *Deepavali* message I give you. When a lamp is lit from another, there are two where there was but one. The first one did not stop emitting light. You can light a million lamps from one, but yet the first will not suffer a jot! Love, too, is like this. Share it with a million, it will still be as bright as when it was alone. There is another lesson, too, that the illuminations on *Deepavali* Day tend to teach. Each house in the streetlights a few lamps and keeps them on the doorsill, the parapet wall, the gate, the porch, the well, and what is the effect? The town is filled with light, the residents are happy, the children dance in glee, and the sky shines in the glow of earthly joy. Light spreads; it mingles with the light from other sources of light, it has no boundaries, no prejudices, and no favorites. You may not like your neighbor, but the light from the lamp on your verandah shines hand in hand with the light from the lamp on his verandah! You cannot keep it back!

Hold fast onto God through any of three paths

Deepavali is intended to teach you this lesson of light and love; move out, clasp, spread, expand, give up limits of mine and thine, his and theirs, caste and creed, in one limitless flow of love. That is the culmination of all spiritual *sadhana*. Competition, the desire to defeat and overwhelm the other person, whatever the means necessary for his downfall, the greed to earn wealth, fame, superiority, these have put out the lamp of love in the human heart today. Resolve on this festival day to light it again. When the worship of God starts in the shrine room, the first act of yours is 'lighting a lamp,' isn't it? Without a lit lamp, no auspicious ceremony is initiated. When the lamp of love is shining, God manifests! Keep it burning bright and pure, God persists! Allow all to light their lamps from it, God showers grace!

God, first; the world, next; myself last! That is the legitimate sequence for the *sadhaka*; and who is not a *sadhaka*? You have to be one now or later so that you can be liberated from this cycle of birth-death! Now man in his callousness toward his own welfare has turned it topsy-turvy! It is 'myself first, the world next, and God is last.' So, God is lost, too! Hold fast onto God, then, you will be safe.

You can hold fast onto Him either through *jnana*, *bhakti*, or *karma marga* (paths of knowledge, worship, or work). You may travel first or second or third class in the train, the destination is the same, for all *jnana* proceeds on the assumption that God is immanent and transcendent. *Bhakti* believes that God is Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer, that He is to be adored and propitiated by deeds that He appreciates, that God is Master and you are privileged to serve. *Karma* takes into account a third category—nature! It is not simply God and man. Man has to manipulate nature, live in nature, live by nature—always dedicating his activity to the further glory of God, resigning himself to the worshipful activity, unconcerned with the fruits of his activity, for they are in the hands of God. Do your duty; leave the rest to God. A disc with the seven colors of the rainbow when rotated quickly gives not the band of VIBGYOR, but a band of white! So, too, the three colors, *jnana*, *bhakti*, and *karma* are

different only when the white light of God is passed through the prism of human reason and mind. Activate them in deed, they are but parts of one ray.

Love is the breath of the *sadhaka*

Believe that all are God, through *jnana*; even then compassion compels you to love and serve. Believe that God is Master or Father and that you are His children or servants, through *Bhakti*. Even then, His command is to wipe the tears, nourish the sick, and help the lame to climb over the stile, through pity and sympathy. Believe, through faith in *karma*, that God has to be adored through dedication; even then, love says the highest form of adoration is by means of *seva* (service) done in love.

Love, therefore, is the breath of the *sadhaka* and I call upon you to celebrate *Deepavali* not by feasting and exploding crackers to disturb the peace of the neighborhood, but by silent lighting of lamps and silent service through love.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 10

The Real & The Unreal

Q & A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Swami: Oh! When did you arrive? You were not visible anywhere outside. Are you well?

Bhakta: It's two days since I came. I see here a number of people everywhere outside. I hear the incessant confusion of voices. Coming from my place to avoid that confusion, I find here, too, crowds are everywhere. Therefore, I entered inside. There it is fine, blissful, and quiet. That is why I was in the Hall inside. It is as quiet inside as it is restless outside.

Swami: What is special in this? It is natural. Where there is jaggery, there the ants gather... and between outside and inside, this is the distinction! That is the characteristic. That is how it is.

Bhakta: Swami! I do not understand what You say. If You tell me in detail, I shall listen and be happy.

Swami: You yourself said, didn't you, that there is an outside and an inside. Well, those are what we call '*bahyaprapancham*' and '*antaraprapancham*'—the external world and the internal world. Now, which is the internal? Give me your idea.

Bhakta: You want it to come from my mouth itself? It would be so good if You speak.

Swami: Well, making the questioner himself give out the answers is the *Sanathana* [ancient] method of teaching. If those who question, themselves give the answers, they would clearly understand the subject. The lecturing style is different. In olden days, all the *rishis* [saints] enabled their disciples to understand *Vedanta* only by this method. So, come on! Speak! Let us see.

Bhakta: Do you want me to speak of the objects I have seen with the eye?

Swami: Not only the eye. Tell me all that you have experienced and known through all the senses of cognition, the eye, the ear, etc.

Bhakta: Earth, sky, water, sun, moon, wind, fire, stars, dusk, mountains, hills, trees, rivers, women, men, children, old persons, animals, birds, coldness, heat, the happy, the miserable, fishes, insects, disease... like these I have seen many.

Swami: Enough, enough, that is enough! This is the "*prapancha* [world]" Did you see it only today? Did it exist yesterday? Will it exist tomorrow?

Bhakta: Why do you ask me so, Swami? It has existed like this for ages, isn't it? Who knows for how long it will exist, or since how long it has existed?

Swami: 'Since how long it has existed!' you said, isn't it? That is what we speak of as *anadi*, beginning-less. This external world is beginningless... When there is 'external', there must be 'internal' also, is it not? Well, have you ever seen a cinema?

Bhakta: Ever seen! Why, Swami, the cinema, too, is a part of the *prapancham*, isn't it? I have seen many.

Swami: What did you see? Tell me.

Bhakta: I have seen many wonderful 'pictures'; I have heard numerous experiences of joy and sorrow.

Swami: 'I have seen', you say. The screen is one, the 'picture' is another. Did you see both?

Bhakta: Yes.

Swami: Did you see the screen and the 'picture' both at the same time?

Bhakta: How is that possible, Swami? When the pictures are seen, the screen is not visible; when the screen is visible the pictures are not seen.

Swami: Right! The screen, the pictures, do they exist always?

Bhakta: No. The screen is permanent; the pictures come and go.

Swami: As you say, the screen is permanent, and the pictures come and go. For this 'permanent' and 'impermanent' we use the words, *sthiram* and *asthiram*, *nithyam* and *anithyam*, *ksharam* and *aksharam*. I ask you: Does the picture fall on the screen or the screen fall on the picture? Which is the basis for what?

Bhakta: The pictures fall on the screen; so, for the picture the screen is the basis.

Swami: So, too, the external world, which is like the picture, has no permanence; it changes. The internal world is fixed; it does not change. The external has the internal as its basis, its substratum.

Bhakta: But. Swami! I heard you say *ksharam-aksharam*, *nithyam-anithyam*.

Swami: Yes, my boy! You were speaking now of pictures, do these have names and forms?

Bhakta: Haven't they? Its only because they have names and forms that the story is understood. Then only do we recollect *Ramayana* and *Bharatham*. There is no formless name and nameless form.

Swami: Good! That is well said! Where there is a form there must be a name; where there is a name, there must be a form Both these are connected with each other. When we say, "*avinabhava sambandha*"—it is to this relationship that we refer. Have you understood now the meaning of '*prapancham*'?

Bhakta: I have grasped that it is identified with name and form, but, Swami, I would like to hear You describe how it originated.

Swami: You should not fall into the tangle now. If we engage ourselves in describing that, it would be like getting into a mango garden and without eating the fruit we have plucked, calculating the number of trees in the garden, the number of twigs on each branch, the number of fruits on each twig, and what the total price of all the mangoes would be if the price of one mango is so much. Instead of senselessly wasting precious time in the collection of this information, we should, like the person who eats the fruit, find out what is of primary importance, and understanding that thing first, attain contentment and joy. Leave that alone. What did you say is the nature of this *prapancham*? This *prapancham* has another name too, do you know?

Bhakta: I said that the *prapancham* is identified with name and form. I have heard that it is known by another name, *jagat*.

Swami: This *nama-roopa prapancham*, this *jagat* is like *indrajala* or magician's art, real only as long as you see it. So, too, the world is real only so long as you

experience it with your *indriyas* or senses. That is to say, anything not experienced in the wakeful stage 'is taken as nonexistent.' Under such circumstances, we say '*sat* [truth]' for existence and '*asat* [untruth]' for non-existence. Therefore, what do you say of this world? Is it '*sat*' or '*asat*'?

Bhakta: It exists in experience in the wakeful stage, and so it is '*sat*'; it does not exist in the deep sleep stage, and so it is '*asat*'.

Swami: Oh! *sat*, *asat*, did you say? When these two words are added, we get *sadasat* [lasting], isn't it? This is what is spoken of by us as *maya*, do you know?

Bhakta: Is that *maya* [illusion] similar to magic?

Swami: Is it not? '*Indrajalam idam sarvam*'—all this is the magician's work. That is what the *rishis* have been saying since ages.

Bhakta: Then there must be a performer of all this *indrajala*, isn't it?

Swami: Certainly, there is. That magician is God. He is endowed with countless auspicious attributes. The *Maharishis* have formed a name on the basis of each attribute and a form on the basis of each name and attained realization meditating on those forms, making the Attributeless Attributeful and the Formless Formful. Is it not their experience that is being proclaimed through a thousand tongues? In the *Sastras*, *Vedas*, and the *Upanishads* have they not declared how they have realized God in their *dhyana samadhi* [meditation], each in his own way, according to his attitude and devotion and worship; how each has been blessed with the vision of the Lord and the actual consummation of union with Him?

Bhakta: Yes. Swami! I have understood that. But you said that name and form are based on attributes. Kindly explain this to me.

Swami: Certainly. We must now pay attention to such important topics only because the others are beyond your powers of imagination. Listen carefully. Since the Lord pleases all, He is known as Rama. So, also, He is *Premaswarupa*, the embodiment of love. He is *Bhaktavatsala*, full of affection to His devotees; He is *Krupasagara*, Ocean of Mercy. In each such name and form, He has vouchsafed *Sakshatkara* to *bhaktas* and blessed them with *sayujya* [merger with the Divine]. The Formless God assumes all forms in order to bless *bhaktas*.

Bhakta: I am happy. I am indeed so happy, Swami! Through Your grace, I understand quite clearly. Just one doubt: The Formless *Paramatma*, you said, has countless names. Are all names and forms equal? Is there any difference?

Swami: What a question! All names and forms are certainly equal. Whatever name and form are worshipped, the Lord is of that unique real *Swarupa* only. It is possible

to realize Him through that name and form. But the *bhakta* should pay attention to one matter. In whichever form the Lord is worshipped, the favor prayed for the purpose must be one.

Bhakta: What type of purpose, Swami?

Swami: *Mumukshutwam*—desire for liberation. The Lord alone should be loved, nothing else. Love That. Meditate on That. That should be concretized. Finally, resolve that you be merged in That. That type of acute desire alone one should have.

Source: *Sandeha Nivarini*

Our Duty to the *Atma*

Thought of the MONTH

To get at the core of God at His greatest, one must first get into the core of himself at his least, for no one can know God who has not known himself.

When man is entangled until the moment of death in stilling the clamor of the senses and catering to the needs of this illusory world, how can he thrill with ecstasy of the awareness of his own *atmic* core? From the monarch in the palace to the beggar in the streets, all are caught up in the game of extracting pleasure from the outer world. The illiterate man and the scholar are equally busy in the pursuit of this mirage. So, what are we to say of the superior capacities of scholarship? Earning money, guarding the earned money, increasing it by the surest and the safest methods, thus the struggle goes on... plus, plus, plus! The bondage to worldly things tightens faster and faster. No one pauses to enquire how deep and how real is the joy that these earnings can give. And what of the “fashions” that he enslaves himself to? They justify these aberrations as social obligation and duty.

But have people no duty toward the *atma*? Have they no obligation to recognize the *atma*? Should they not bind themselves fast to the *atma* that is the reality? It is sheer cowardice to avoid this duty, to ignore this obligation, and to escape from this bondage. Of course, you have to live on the earth and understand it. You have to study the universe and derive joy therefrom. But to believe that it is the be-all and end-all of life is a sign of insanity.

Analyze every object and discover the cheapness and hollowness of each. Then genuine *vairagya* (detachment) will be planted in your heart. So, utilize the priceless weapon, the perfect mirror, that God has given you, the *buddhi* (intellect), for the journey to God. Sometimes, the *buddhi* is enticed by the fake delight that the mind revels in, through the senses. *Sadhana* (spiritual discipline) has to be used at this

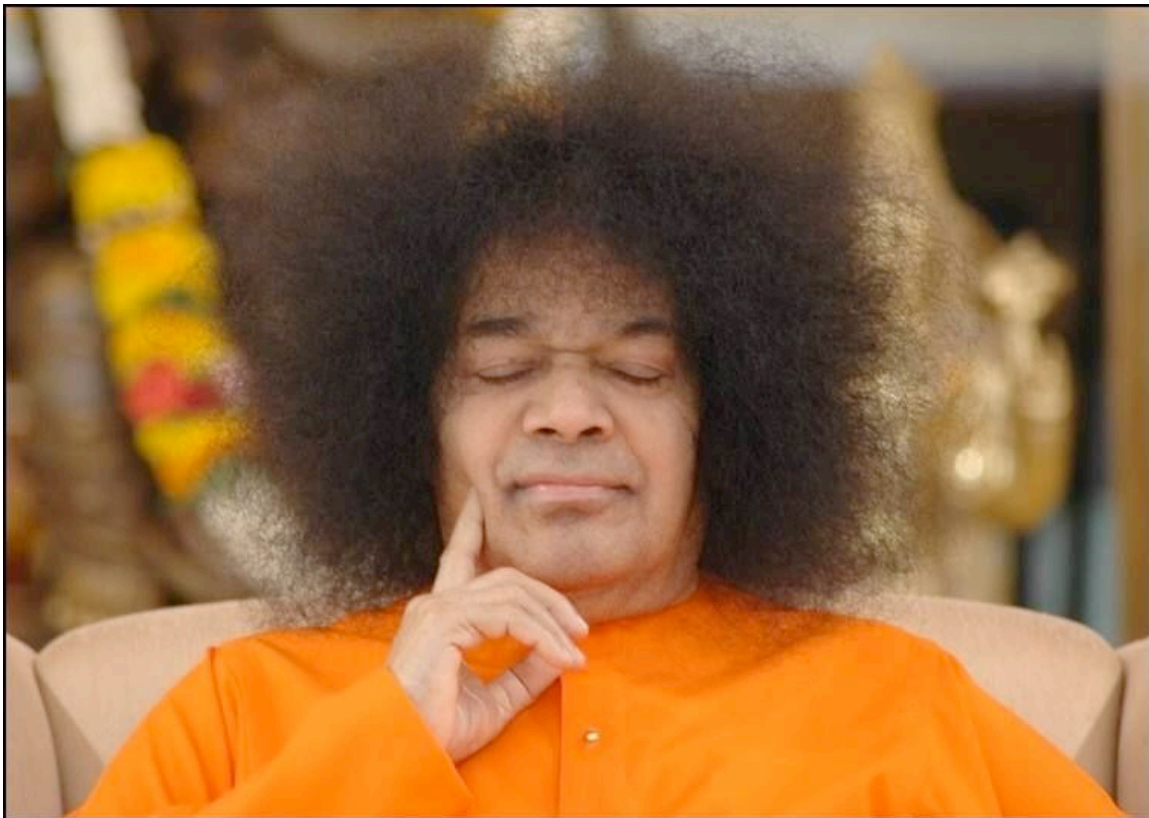
moment to turn it away from serfdom to the mind. It must be restored to its status of regulator and controller of the vagaries of the mind.

Sadhana alone can help man to choose the right path and pursue it relentlessly. Every religion in every era and clime emphasizes the One and marks out the path to reach it. They warn us against too much attachment to the world, which is basically poisonous.

Sadhakas (Spiritual aspirants)! Embodiments of love!

Yearn always to be as close to your Divine core as possible. You need not desert your family and run away into loneliness. You have only to keep in mind the comparative triviality of the world. Death stalks every living being, disintegration waits on all created things. From a world so transient, so uncertain and unstable, one has to win the goal of eternal peace and eternal bliss. The eternal *atma* is associated with the ephemeral body. Discrimination alone can make this plain. Detachment alone can make the road clear.

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol XIV
Discrimination and Detachment—Dasara Discourse, Sep 26, 1979



*Bear all and do nothing; Hear all and say nothing;
Give all and take nothing; Serve all and be nothing.*

~ Baba ~