

Sri Sathya Sai Reminisces Stories of Shirdi Sai Baba and His Devotees

On the 18th of June 1992, speaking to the students Swami said that proper use must be made of the senses. Making use of this opportunity, one of the teachers asked Swami what the conquering of senses really meant. Swami gave the answer to this question in a discourse in Trayee Brindavan as follows...

Each sense organ is covered by the same skin but performs only a specific function. For example, the function of tasting is given only to the tongue. Making proper use of all these senses amounts to conquering the senses.

Conquering of senses implies conquering of the mind, the master of all senses. The senses cannot discharge their duties unless they are commanded by the mind. Hence, if the mind is pure, all the senses through which duties are discharged will also be pure.

Sai Baba of Shirdi explained the same to Nana, a great devotee. A newly married couple had come to seek Baba's blessings. The woman had a veil over her face. When she uncovered it to take Baba's *padanamaskar* (touching the Divine



feet), Nana, who was seated at Baba's feet, stared at her face. Baba silently observed it and later told Nana, "You have seen this now. But divert your intellect immediately away from your vision. Who is a *buddhi-heena* (one who lacks intellect)? He is the one who allows his intellect to follow the objects that are seen. Hence, conquer the mind. Everything is then conquered."

All bodies have the same five common faculties (*shabda*) sound, (*sparsha*) touch, (*roopa*) form, (*rasa*) taste, and (*gandha*) smell. Why should attachment be cultivated toward bodies then? The same five elements are present in all. Then why desire the body? All the relations like mother, father, brother, sister, wife, and husband etc., are based on bodily feelings. These relations are not *atmic* (related to the spirit). Truth is one; it is manifest in several ways. There is only one, not many. The *Vedas* [scriptures] taught these same noble truths.

In the town of Nanded, there lived a beggar named Kaldas. He was always in control of his mind and was often found talking and smiling to himself. In the same town lived a wealthy man called Wadia, who had no children. Due to this, he was always worrying about what would happen to his vast property and the large amount of wealth after his demise. One day, Wadia poured his heart out to Das Ganu (a close devotee of Baba) and sought his advice. Das Ganu consoled him saying, "In the village of Shirdi, there is a person who can solve your problems and fulfill your wishes. His name is Sai Baba. At first sight, He might look like a madman, but never forget that He is Divinity Himself. There is nothing in the world that He cannot do. Go and seek His advice and grace." Das Ganu advised Wadia to go to Shirdi on a Thursday.

A few days before the planned journey, Wadia called Kaldas to his house and gave him a sumptuous meal. The following Thursday, Wadia left for Shirdi. At Shirdi, Wadia propitiated Baba as his *guru* and worshipped Him. This went on for three days. Then Wadia wished to offer *Guru dakshina* (offering to the spiritual master) and prayed to Baba that He accept five *rupees*. Baba said, "No, No, No! You have already paid me three *rupees* and 14 *annas* (Indian currency). You can now give me the rest of it. That will be enough." Wadia was taken aback. This was his first visit to Shirdi. Then how could he have already given three *rupees* and 14 *annas* to Baba? However, he did not wish to argue with his *guru* and so quietly paid the balance amount of one *rupee* and two *annas* as instructed by Baba. Students must learn from this example. Present day students would have counter-argued, "What is this that Baba is talking? Doesn't He know that I am coming for the first time? Will He return the change if I give Him etc.?" But Wadia obeyed implicitly.

After Wadia returned to Nanded, Das Ganu enquired about his pilgrimage to Shirdi. Wadia narrated the incident and asked Das Ganu if he could understand what Baba meant. Das Ganu thought it over and then told Wadia, "All forms in this creation are Baba's. Whatever you do to others reaches Baba. He exists in everyone. Before your journey, did you give any money to some needy person?" Wadia recalled that he had fed Kaldas.

Now, Wadia being a businessman was very good at keeping accounts. He verified his accounts and found to his bewilderment that the amount spent on the meal for Kaldas amounted to exactly Three *rupees* and 14 *annas*. Wadia thus realized that Baba was the Absolute Brahman.

There was one Tarkhad who used to work in the treasury. He was an active member of the *Brahmo Samaj* [monotheistic sect of Hinduism] and did not believe in the Divine as one with names and forms. He had an only child, a son aged 17 years. Tarkhad's son and wife were ardent devotees of Baba. He, however, did not object to their devotion though he continued on his own path. This was a good quality in him. The mother and son would visit Shirdi every month. The son in particular had immense devotion for Baba and never cared for his studies. His time was spent in worshipping Baba. But him being the only son, Tarkhad used to worry about this negligence toward his studies. His wife used to console him, "He is getting joy in what he is doing now. After all, he is doing nothing wrong in worshipping Baba, who is God himself. We should worship God at all times. Due to his good deeds in past lives, he has such devotion at this tender age."

One month, the son did not mention anything about the trip. His mother enquired about the scheduled trip and the son replied, "Mother, I am already thinking about it. I am ready to come. But here, every day after my *pooja* [prayer], I make an offering (*naivedya*) to Baba's photograph. Baba never accepts it directly, but I can at least leave the *naivedya* in front of his photograph. If I go, who will continue to keep the sacred offering before Baba's photograph? Father does not take any interest in such rituals. That is my worry."

When Tarkhad heard about this, out of immense love for his son, he assured him that although he did not have faith in these rituals, he would definitely place the offering before Baba's photographs every day without fail. But the son said, "If one is hungry, it can be satisfied only if he himself takes food, not someone else. If I am diseased, I must take the medicines and not you. If someone is hurt, the bandage must be on the wound of that person and not on someone else's. So, I will not go to Shirdi unless you agree to perform the *pooja* every day to Baba with full faith and feeling, as I do, and then place the offering."

Tarkhad then gave a promise and felt proud of his son's devotion and discipline at such a young age. This must be the quality of an ideal son. Usually, it is the father who is expected to mold the son, but now they spoil their children. On the contrary, in this case the son changed the father! To get an opportunity to correct the father is a great boon for the son. On hearing Tarkhad's solemn words, the son gladly left for Shirdi along with his mother.

Tarkhad then faithfully woke up early the next morning and took his bath. He got flowers for worship and offered sugar candy, as he had seen his son doing. Later on, he partook of the offering as *prasadam* [sacred food] and only then had his breakfast.

Since the father was attending to the rituals, the son stayed on happily at Shirdi for almost a month. Days passed this way. One full moon night, the mother and son sat on either side of Baba. Baba started speaking to the lady, "Mother, yesterday I was very hungry and went to your house. But I found that no food was offered there! So I had to return hungry." The perturbed son asked, "Baba when we are here, why must you go there to our house?" Baba said, "Well, you were offering food to me every day there. I got used to it and out of habit went there again." The son realized that his father would have forgotten to make the sacred offering the previous day. He at once dashed off a strongly worded letter to his father adding a note, "If you had not made the promise, I would not have come to Shirdi at all."

The father came back from office and saw the letter. He at once checked with his cook if he had placed the offering at the altar that day. The cook reminded Tarkhad that he was busy that day and had hence forgotten to make the offering. He had in fact locked the *pooja* room (the place of worship) itself and left for work. Thus reminded of his folly, Tarkhad was very sad.

What you must all understand from this is that when something is done regularly and with devotion, it definitely reaches God. You chant *Brahmarpanam* only at Puttaparthi or Brindavan. But in the outside world you do '*Lokarpanam*' and '*Swayarpanam*!' When you feed a dog every day for 90 days, it will come there and wait for you to feed it. When a dog can come in time, why wouldn't God come?

After this experience, Tarkhad repented and left '*Brahmo Samaj*' to join '*Sahaj Samaj*.' In particular, three people were close to Baba. They were Lakshmi Bai, Shyama, and Bapusahab Booty. Shyama always used to be at the feet of Baba. Booty was always at Baba's side, with a fan in his hand.

One day Baba told Lakshmi Bai, "Lakshmi Bai, I am feeling very, very hungry." She at once ran to her house, prepared a rice dish, and served it on a clean plate. Covering the full thing with a plantain leaf, she approached Baba and prayed, "Baba, please eat this. You said that you were very hungry." Baba showed her a spot on the ground and said, "Keep it there." Lakshmi Bai did so and waited nearby. Suddenly a black dog strolled in, caught sight of the dish, and proceeded to finish it off! The alarmed Lakshmi Bai hastened to drive away the dog, when Baba calmly said, "Don't disturb the dog. Let him eat."

Lakshmi Bai felt very sad that she had not been blessed enough for Baba to partake of what she had cooked. She thought she had erred somewhere. Baba read her thoughts and lovingly told her, "Why are you feeling sad? See, I ate your preparation—you can smell my hand." The surprised lady did so and was astonished that Baba's hand did smell of the rice she had made "How is this possible, Baba?" she asked. Baba smiled and told her, "Lakshmi Bai, understand this. Know the truth—all forms are Mine."

One full moon night Nana performed worship and thereafter visited several *Brahmins* of the neighborhood, along with several guests. It was lunchtime; the leaves for serving food were arranged. All of a sudden, a buffalo belonging to a neighbor caught sight of the leaves. It made a beeline to the laid-out feast and started devouring the leaves. Nana was horrified. He called out to some of his people. They came with sticks, beat the poor buffalo, and chased it away. They then proceeded to pick a quarrel with the neighbor regarding his buffalo's intrusion and extracted an apology. Nana succeeded in making his point with the neighbor, but he was somehow not too happy about this. A week later, Nana made a pilgrimage to Shirdi. There, he started to tell Baba, "Baba, on the *Poornima* (full-moon) night, I performed worship. Many Brahmins and guests were served food. But I feel that I have still made a mistake somewhere." Baba at once said, "Yes, Yes, I know, I know. They all did come. You invited me too. But when I came there, you chased me off."

Nana realized what Baba was saying. Baba then continued, "You must remember that when food is offered to God, He will come in any form and partake of it because all forms are His. Hence, if any being is ill-treated, it is an ill treatment meted out to God Himself. (*Sarva Jeeva Tiraskaram Keshavam Prati Gachhati*—the worship of any divine aspect ultimately reaches the Supreme Being.) You must develop at a young age this feeling of unity in diversity that all are one. You must constantly contemplate on the truth, 'Divinity is within me.' My aim in life is to know Him."

It is for this reason that in the days of yore, great men always advised people who came to see them, "Find out who that 'I' is?" Nowadays, if such a question is asked, people reply, "I am so and so. What is there to know in that?" Instead, you must first enquire, "Who named me? To whom is the name given? Who am I, then? I do not have birth or death." All names are like passing clouds. The *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta*, and *ahamkara* (mind, intellect, intention,

and ego) are all your instruments. You make use of them. Without you, there is no use for the existence of these instruments. So, know thyself. Know that you and God are one and the same. What is *Vedanta*? The end of all names and forms is *Vedanta*. *Veda* has a name and form. Hence, the ending of this name and form is the *Vedanta*."

Source: *Students with Sai: Conversations (1991-2000)*

2019 Easwaramma Day SAI Human Values Carnival Sathya Sai Centers of New Jersey

On Saturday May 4th, the SSE children, young adults, and adults from many New Jersey Sai Centers came together to celebrate Easwaramma Day as Children's Day with a Sai Carnival filled with activities that were both fun and promoted human values from 9:30 a.m. onward. The event was held at Sarva Dharma Service Center in Howell, New Jersey.

This inspiring celebration was a tribute to Easwaramma, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mother. It commenced with vibrant *bhajans* by children in the main devotional hall and a message on the significance of mothers in our daily lives.



By Swami's grace, the weather was conducive, so booths were set up outside for the various activities. The activities prepared and conducted by the SSE children included games such as Jenga, Ring

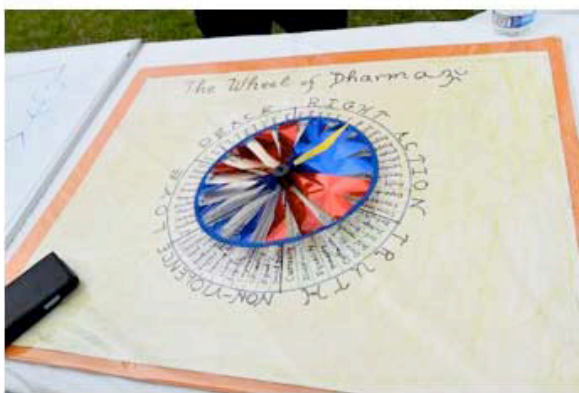
of Values, Chutes and Ladders, Darts, Memory, Values head-up, Wheel of Dharma, Spiritual Pursuits, an obstacle course representing challenges of life, and so on exemplifying Sai human values. There were also fun activities like decorating the hands with henna, face painting, guided art, T-shirt screen printing, etc. For lunch, there were stalls serving a variety of delicacies from around the world.

In the afternoon, there was a magic show with enthusiastic interactive participation by children followed by *bhajan antakshari* [musical game]. The fun and learning continued with the value-based games, balloons, and cotton candy for children and making greeting cards as a service activity. A robotics booth was also available throughout the day for children to explore and learn.

The main idea was to appreciate and enjoy while acquiring knowledge, learn in diverse environments, work in different ways, and use multiple senses, all for application of the values for the benefit of mankind. This was a truly fun-filled event for children and adults of all ages.

All participants left thanking everyone for their inspiring efforts for making this event a successful elevating experience in celebrating mother Easwamma's day as the SAI "Human Values" Carnival and being especially grateful to Swami for bringing us all together in such energizing events.

Jai Sai Ram



[Go to SaiSarathi.com](http://SaiSarathi.com) to see the full photo gallery of this event

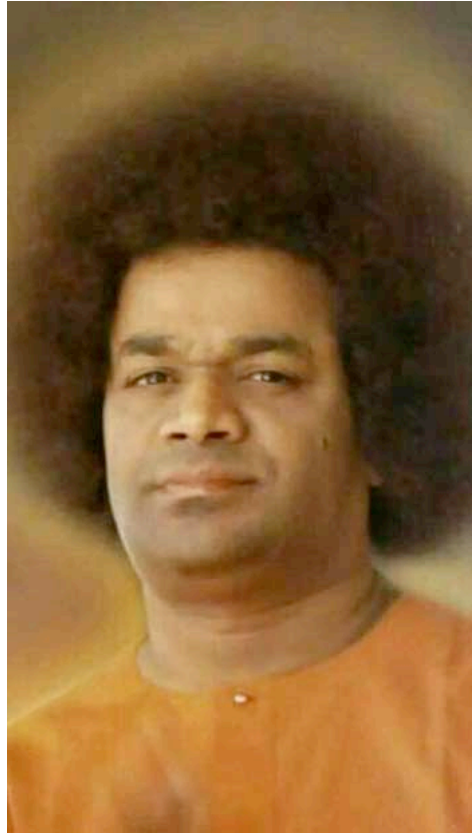
Being in the Presence of Sai

Rajdeep Singh is a student (1989-1992) from Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. He was formerly with The Indian Navy and is currently a Pilot with Indigo Airlines.

Was it a pleasant coincidence, a miracle, or a fruit of my past *karmas* [actions] or was it just His infinite grace? It is all beyond my comprehension, but whatever it was, my gratitude toward that unknown phenomenon would remain perpetual. My beloved Lord Sai took me under His protective umbrella to make a man out of me, a man who will be worthy of His Name. Before the memorable event, when He took me in His Institute, I was just a lump of clay, of no use to anyone. He came and made a lamp out of me, filled me with the oil of *bhakti* [devotion] and the wick of self-sacrifice. He lighted the fire of service to the wick, so that it may burn and burn to give light around by serving others.

It is my prayer from the core of my heart to Bhagavan that the oil and wick of this lamp remain for ever and ever and the fire of service continue for all time to come. Earlier I was in darkness, but now by His Divine love and grace I am coming out of it slowly, but steadily. And it gives me great joy that being in the presence of our Sai Mother, a change for the better is coming with the passing of each day.

Bhagavan came into my parents' life way back in 1976, and since then His infinite grace has been flowing ceaselessly to our family. It all started in June 1975. My father, who is in the Army, was then posted in North-Eastern Area. He developed pain and swelling on his left hip/thigh. The army doctors diagnosed it as a recurrence of old athletic injuries and treated him, but without any relief. There was no relief even though he had been treated at the best Army hospitals. Homeopathy treatment also was of no avail. During childhood, my father was religious and used to say his prayers regularly. But as he grew, he had stopped prayers altogether.



Bhagavan's Will was unknowingly and silently at work; seeing no relief from his ailment, my father turned to God and began reading selected Sikh prayers, and it became a daily routine to do so. His faith in God began. Due to his illness and lot of hospitalization, his promotion though overdue could not be given. And it is now that

Bhagavan's Will began working. A Colonel's wife, who had not met my parents but had only heard of father's illness, came to see him. She talked at length about Bhagavan and His miracles of healing, but these had had no effect on father. The lady offered to my father the book—*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram* (Part 3), who reluctantly took the book with no intention to read it, but in his curiosity he turned to some pages and began to read it. He felt in tune with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and Guru Nanak. The more he read, the intensity of having Lord's *Darshan* was increasing. And my mother, too, began reading the God's given gift in the shape of *Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*.

A few days later, father noticed fragrance coming from the book—*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*. On a Sunday, when the Colonel and his wife visited father, he narrated the incident of fragrance. They, too, smelled the book and were overjoyed. It was the fragrance of *Vibhuti* [sacred ash], and actually it was the omnipresence of Bhagavan to make the ailing person feel that everything will be all right soon. And the first miracle was that since the day father started reading this book, his health started improving. He could now sit for longer periods of time and had less difficulty in walking and standing. His faith in Bhagavan's Infinite Love and Grace deepened.

In the latter half of July 1976, by His Will, my parents and two elder sisters came to Puttaparthi. As I was young then, they left me with my grandparents at home. On arrival at Prasanthi Nilayam, my father had expected that Bhagavan would call them soon for interview. It was, however, several days later that the interview was granted by Bhagavan.

During the interview, Bhagavan materialized *Vibhuti* and gave it to mother. He then jokingly reminded her of her cribs against Him. Touching father's left hip, He said, "How is your leg and back?" This surprised father, for, although most people knew about the leg, he had not mentioned the accompanying pain in the back to anyone, not even to mother. Continuing, Bhagavan said, "Don't worry, it will be okay by October." Bhagavan directed that the *Vibhuti* should be taken for three days, and it would be all right. Three days of *Vibhuti* healed a two-year-old illness. Father stopped all medicines and was healed as assured, and he was promoted also.

Since that day, the left leg, which had always been weak, has never had any problems, not even minor ones. It is as though an unseen protective sheath has been guarding it. Soon father began to realize that Bhagavan was not just a saint. For had not Bhagavan been answering whenever he prayed to God in the Sikh traditions? Slowly but surely, he became a devotee of Bhagavan and has come to realize that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is none other than Waheguru, one of the names frequently used by the Sikhs for the one and the only God, the Lord of the entire Cosmos.

What we have to realize is that the illness was a boon in disguise. Without it father would have remained immersed in his little world and missed the joy of spiritual life

and faith in God. Bhagavan, who is the Principal Director in the drama of life, knows when and what to do. When my father's faith in the world and also its doctors had begun to crumble, He grabbed the opportunity to show father the Light and the Way.

Initially it was turning to the Holy Scriptures, which in turn led to faith in God. From faith and prayer came grace in the Divine revelation and intervention by our Bhagavan. Father was able to realize that Bhagavan is the Waheguru who has come to this world in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to lead us out of the darkness. It is not that Bhagavan needs devotees of fame. It is we human beings who need *Him*. Without *Him*, what is there in this world?

Guru Nanak has beautifully said, "If I please *Him*, it is pilgrimage enough; if not, nothing—no rite or toil—avails." So, it was by *His grace* that *He* gave us a place in *His shadow* and a mind that recognizes *Him* as "*Waheguru*."

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

The Banana and the Peel

Addressing the devotees assembled in Prasanthi Nilayam on the Onam festival, Bhagavan Baba encouraged everyone to install God in one's heart, ridding themselves of egoism and pride.

Tulsidas has said in his *Ramacharitamanas* [a Hindu epic] that he composed the great epic on the story of Raghunath [Lord Rama] for '*swantasukhaya*,' that is to say, for his own *sukha* [happiness and joy]. He engaged himself in that self-imposed task, not to any patron or even Rama, but to please himself. He derived great *ananda* (divine bliss) while writing it and when it was finished. That was the urge that moved him. In fact, all that a man does is ultimately traceable to this urge—the urge to earn self-satisfaction.

A man builds a house, writes a book, enters a job, or executes a plan—all because he gets joy therefrom. The cuckoo coos sweetly and derives joy therefrom far more than those who happen to listen. The rose blooms on the plant because of an inner urge, not an outer prompting. The father fondles his baby and receives thereby more joy than he ever gives. The various disciplines undergone by *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants), monks, ascetics, and those on the march along the path of self-knowledge are all adopted and adhered to because they give joy to oneself and fulfill an inner need.

Sacrifice is at the very basis of bliss

This day is celebrated by you as the day when Emperor Bali was both humiliated and blessed by God in the form of Vamana. Bali called himself the emperor of the

three worlds as he was more powerful than others. He was saturated with egotism. God came to him while he was busy with a *yaga* (a spiritual ritual), in the form and guise of a *Brahmin* boy and asked for a gift of just three foot-measures of land. Bali told him that he could ask for infinitely more riches and lands, but the boy insisted on that tiny gift. Bali's preceptor warned him about the identity and bonafides of the strange mendicant; he mentioned that he may be God Himself. This made Bali happier, for if it was true, he was so mighty that even God came to his door as a mendicant. Such was the measure of his conceit.

But when Vamana drew Himself up to cosmic proportions and measured the entire earth with one foot and the vast expanse of space with another foot, Bali was humbled; he offered his own head as the third foot-measure and let himself be trod down into the nether world. This day marks the day when the incarnation of Vamana happened in order to teach this lesson that pride meets with doom. Once the ego was thus suppressed, Bali became cleansed and God blessed him with various boons. He assured him that He would ever be his guardian. He permitted him every year, on Onam Day, to come up into the world and see for himself his empire and receive therefrom the homage of his people. So this is the festival of Vamana's advent as well as Bali's transformation.

This day also extols the merit of gifts, renunciation, and charity, however little, to anyone, for all are images of God. *Tyaga* (renunciation or sacrifice) is at the very basis of bliss, grace, and immortality. *Na medaya na prajayaa danena, thyagenaike amrithathwam anasuh*—say the *Vedas*. ("Not by intellect, not by progeny, not by riches, but by renunciation alone can the bliss of Immortality be attained"). Onam is the festival that instills this message into those who observe it with an eye on its inner significance.

Every obstacle is a step toward *ananda*

Kerala (a state in India) has contributed a great deal to the preservation of *Vedic* culture and Sanskrit learning. Keralites are endowed with faith and dedication. Witness the age-old privilege the *Nambudiris* (the priest community) of Kerala



enjoy, priesthood of the great *Vaisnavite* (a Hindu caste) shrine, thousands of miles away from their land, namely Badrinath among the Himalayas.

Of course, wherever faith and dedication to God are evident, forces that tend to ridicule it and diminish its strength are also found. Where *astika* (believer in God) is, there *nastika* (atheist), too, will raise its head. But disbelief in God or in some Supreme Will can be only a pose, assumed for the sake of personal aggrandizement or advertisement. It cannot stand the light of reason or of experience; even so-called atheists have love in their hearts, honor truth while dealing with society, and live on the basis of some eternal basic principles of justice. So they are believers in *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being, Awareness, Bliss Supreme).

You have the duty to stand witness in your lives to the courage, joy, strength, generosity, and humility that true spirituality and faith can impart to man while faced with disappointment, distress, defeat, defamation, and other calamities against which the atheist has no such shield. Gold gains in value when it is melted in the crucible. A piece of diamond when it is cut into a many-faceted gem is thereby rendered more brilliant and costly. The dull stone is not sought after by all. Prahlada, the grandfather of emperor Bali, was subjected to torture by his irate father; yet, that only added to his luster. Bali himself shone all the brighter for the punishment he received from the compassionate Lord. This is the lesson you have to garner today. Every obstacle is a step that leads you to the day that can never be destroyed or taken away.

It is natural for man to raise himself up

There is another duty that you owe to yourselves, which you have to recognize today. The world is the playground of *nara* (human) and *Narayana* (God), *nara* transforming himself into *Narayana* and *Narayana* transforming Himself into *nara* while playing their roles in unison. You know full well that *Narayana* has come in human form for reestablishing *dharma* (morality) in the world, for feeding the roots of faith in God and for interpreting God to man. You have to be assured that it is natural for man, too, to raise himself up through spiritual discipline, moral elevation, expansion of love, and other means to become *Narayana*. But man is unaware of this high destiny. He misinterprets his skills and strength and is so absent-minded that he slides down the scale into a monster or a monkey. Of course, there are many who struggle with these downward dragging tendencies and endeavor to elevate themselves; these most often grope in the dark and are badly led.

Devotion must flourish, unaffected by time

There are two truths that must be accepted by every pilgrim or devotee: (1) Devotion has to be full, free, and comprehensive. (2) Divinity must be conceived as full, free, and comprehensive. On the other hand, devotion today is almost always only 'part-time.' That is to say, whenever disease, defeat, or disappointment happen to assail you, you turn to God and pray for His grace; but when you are happy, prosperous, healthy, and in good shape, you ignore God and claim that they are all

due to your own abilities and achievements. God is ignored in sunshine; He is wanted only when there is night. Devotion must persist and flourish, unaffected by time, place, or circumstance.

God, too, has to be experienced in His fullness, and the *ananda* of that experience imbibed as one's permanent possession. Kasturi recited that poem which was sweet to the ear and full of Sanskrit words. But words seldom come out of actual experience. It is impossible to experience God and also talk about Him. Words like *Sarvajnana*, *Sarvavyapi*, meaning that "He knows all," "He is everywhere" are used by people, since elders and saints have used them from ancient times. It is impossible for anyone to have the fullest and the most comprehensive experience of these qualities of the Divine and also speak about that experience.

The *Gita* [the song of the Lord] speaks of God as *achalam chalam evacha*, "immoveable as well as moveable," that strikes one as impossible. God appears to move, act, bless, save, and test, but He is unconcerned basically with these. Look at a tree. The branches, leaves, etc. might be moving with the wind, but the trunk is steady and unmoved. God is but appears as not. The body, intellect, and mind move, but the *atma* is unaffected; it is steady, firm, and unchangeable. The lake is unmoved; the surface is tickled into wavelets by every passing breeze. The colorless unmoved curtain or screen is unaffected by the pictures of fire, faction, floods, and glaciers that appear upon it in a realistic manner. When the pictures are seen, the screen is unseen; when the screen is seen, the pictures are unseen. But without the screen (*Brahman*), the pictures have no meaning, carry no message, and tell no story. They impart no *ananda*.

God is the stealer of hearts

You may carry a matchbox in your pocket with no danger of fire emanating though the components that are there in that box. So, too, there are the components of divinity in you; only it is not patent, it is not expressed. Take a stick and strike its head against the chemical coating given on the side of the box, and suddenly, in a flash, you get the flame of fire. So, too, take the *Jiva* (the individual) and strike it on the *Brahman*-principle that is immanent in the universe, and the individual, too, manifests the divinity latent in it. The tree is the individual; the forest is the *Brahman*. The one apart from the many is the individual. The many and the manifold is the *Brahman*. Kasturi standing alone, apart, is *vyashti* (the individual); when he goes and sits among you, the thousands who have come here for Onam, he merges in the *samashti*. *Samashti* is *Brahman*; *vyashti* is the *jivatman* (individual soul).

Prahlada's grandson Bali whom you honor today extolled the Lord standing before him as master of the entire Cosmos, as "Arch thief among thieves," (*Dongalalo gajadonga!*). For, God steals the most precious possession of man, even when its owner is awake. He steals the *chitta*; He is the *chitta apahari*, the stealer of hearts. I disappointed you; I even requested you not to come so far, away from your homes for this festival; but yet your hearts have been stolen by Me and so you could not

stay away. Onam is the day when you Keralites feast on the banana. When you eat a banana, you have first to remove the skin, so, too, when we desire to eat a mango or a lime fruit. The sweet substance has to be reached after removal of the bitter skin. For Bali to be received and accepted by God, the bitter cover of egoism and power-mania had to be removed. Ignorance, *maya* (delusion), illusion, pride, all are the components of the skin.

Onams come and Onams go; but people are no nearer the goal. This is because though Onam is given a hearty send-off, generosity, renunciation, love, and the spirit of service are not given an equally hearty welcome. You have to take this as the Onam Message—strive to manifest, cultivate, and express love, and suppress pride and egoism, so that you can win the grace of God.

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 12

Q & A with Bhagavan

Purusha and Prakriti

Swami: O, you have come! Well, what is the news?

Bhakta: What other news have we except yours? I heard that Your Kerala tour was most pleasant and wonderful. I am sad I was not destined to join.

Swami: Why are you sad for it? Listen to the account and be happy, that is all. Have the confidence and the hope that when next such an opportunity presents itself, you may be able to join. Do not be brooding over the past.

Bhakta: What is the use of confidence and hope when one is not destined? Hope will only cause greater disappointment.

Swami: Has destiny a shape and a personality so that you can recognize it even before it shows itself? You should not hang on its favor, talking all the time of destiny, destiny... How can that destiny itself fructify without your will and wish, taking practical form as action? Whatever be the destiny, it is essential to continue acting. *Karma* [action] has to be done, even to attain one's destiny.

Bhakta: If one is destined, everything will come of itself, isn't it?

Swami: That is a big mistake. If you sit quiet with the fruit in your hand, hoping that its juice will reach the mouth, how can you take it? It is sheer stupidity to complain that destiny denied you the juice, without squeezing and swallowing the fruit.

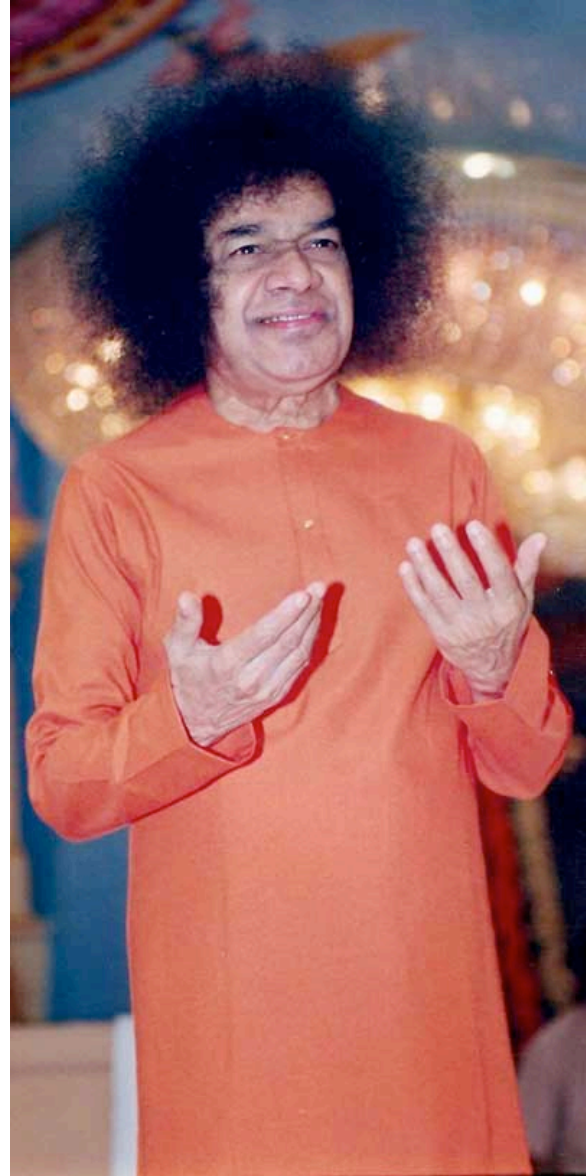
Destiny gave the fruit into your hand; *karma* alone can make you enjoy it. *Karma* is the duty; destiny the result. Result cannot emerge without action.

Bhakta: So, Swami, we should not sit with folded hands, placing all burdens on destiny, isn't it?

Swami: Listen. You should never underestimate your powers; engage yourselves in action commensurate with that power. For the rest, talk of destiny to your heart's content. It is wrong to desist from the appropriate *karma*, placing reliance on destiny. If you do so, even destiny will slip out of your hands. Whoever he be, he must engage himself in *karma*.

Bhakta: Yes, yes. Swami. In the *Gita* also Arjuna is told, "Even I do *karma*; the universe cannot go on if I desist from *karma*. And so, if you withdraw from it how can you realize the result?" I believe now that *karma* is *Purusha-lakshana*, the hallmark of men.

Swami: And of women too, it is *Prakriti-lakshana*. All beings, men or women, trees or animals, worms, insects, all have to do *karma*; everything in the universe is bound by this law. There is no escaping this obligation. *Karma* is the characteristic of *prakriti* [nature]. Do not refer to it as *Purusha-lakshana*. *Paramatma* is the one and only *Purusha* [Cosmic man]. *Prakriti* is all *Shakti*, feminine. You are all not *Purushas*, remember.



Bhakta: But Swami, there is that distinction in nature; how is it correct to say that all are feminine?

Swami: You may imagine it to be so, guided by your natural reason, but the reality is not that. All this is just secular experience; temporal, temporary. They are not the basic truth. This is simply play-acting; mere impersonation. In some plays, men take the role of women. Sometimes women enact the role of men in plays. Are they,

therefore, men? In the drama, *Prakriti*, all the actors are feminine, though there may be men roles too. The genuine *Purusha* is only one, that is Shiva, the *atma*. The *atma* is immanent in everyone, but for this reason alone all cannot be deemed masculine. The *Prakriti* theatre is like a girls' school where all the roles of the play are taken up by girls. Shakti, which is feminine, puts on all these parts. But do not take the drama as real, my dear fellow.

Bhakta: Swami, even after hearing all this, the nature of the world remains an enigma to me. When one side is seen, it strikes me as Real; when the other side is presented, it strikes me as unreal. Nothing is definite.

Swami: That is exactly the nature of *mithya* [falsehood]. It means that the world is neither *sathya* [true] nor *asathya* [untrue], it is real as well as unreal. You are born in *mithya*, you are enmeshed in it, and so you cannot distinguish this from that, the *sathya* from the *asathya*.

Bhakta: Then setting aside this discussion of *mithya*, tell me something, Swami, about that *Sathya*, that *Purusha*, whoever He is.

Swami: The *Purusha* has neither birth nor death, He undergoes no change. He is *Chittaswarupa*, *Jnanaswarupa*. *Dharma* or codes of social conduct are not of His nature; so He is not *dharmaswarupa*. The *jnana* [wisdom] that is His nature does not change, is not corrected or supplemented from time to time; it is eternal wisdom. Light is its nature and so it does not admit even a dot of darkness. The sun does not have effulgence added to it from the world it illumines; it will emit splendor whether there are worlds or not. The *Purusha* is self-luminous. He is always the object of knowledge; he cognizes all *vrittis* or mutations of the *chitta* or consciousness; he is modification less, *aparinaami*, non-evolved. The *chitta* is *parinaami*, it changes and evolves. The *Purusha* is sentience itself; He is not affected by apprehension or non-apprehension. No *vyapara* or activity can affect Him. Even when unmanifested, effulgence is His nature.

The seed in the soil grows into a tree, the tree is the manifested form of the seed. This change from seed to tree and tree to seed shows that the *Shakti* in the seed has *vyapara*. This is *parinaama*. But the *Purusha* is unchanging, unaffected; He is the See-er. He is completely apart from *Prakriti*. No deed can diminish His glory, nor exhaust His personality.

Bhakta: Then which is *Prakriti*? Who is *Purusha*?

Swami: The principle behind the 'Seen' is *Prakriti*; the principle behind the 'See-er' is *Purusha*. *Amoolam*, *moolam*, it is said; the root cause has no root! Causeless, both *Prakriti* and *Purusha* have no beginning.

Bhakta: Then this *samsara* [world], too, should be beginning-less, isn't it Swami? It resulted from the union of the two.

Swami: That union is the result of delusion; prompted by delusion, it produces delusion again. That is the law of the seed and the tree.

Bhakta: Union means what, Swami? What is the condition?

Swami: The reflection of the *Purusha* in the *gunas* [qualities], which evolve from *prakriti*, that is union. Listen, just an example. The Sun is not water, neither is water Sun. Still, by their juxtaposition, reflection is produced. The image has the characteristic neither of the Sun nor of water nor can it be said that it is devoid of these. When the water is agitated, the image too gets agitated. The image also shines a little. Again, the magnet is distinct from the iron, but when the two are brought near, the magnet affects the iron and makes it similar to itself. This is the relationship called *samyoga* or union.

Bhakta: Of these, which is the real *Purusha* and which is the active *Purusha*, tell me.

Swami: Did I not speak of the Sun and the image? The image, the *Purusha*, is the doer, the enjoyer, the experiencer. The original, the *bimba* [reflection], is unaffected. He is the non-doer, the non-experiencer. The image, *Purusha*, is known, therefore, as the *Vyavaharikapurusha* or the *Grihitha*, the acceptor. The *bimba* is the true, the eternal, the real, the *atmaswarupa*. The *Grihitha* is the knower and by that act of knowing, he has undergone modification.

Bhakta: Right, Swami. Wonderful. How many books one should have completed in order to know all this! And even then, to grasp the meaning is so hard. I have now known that *Purusha* is not in the world, that all this is merely a drama, *Paramatma* being the One *Purusha*. To attain Him, everything in *prakriti* is striving; this is probably what is spoken of as *Shiva-Shakti*. Fine, Fine.

Swami: You are right. It is also referred to as *Jiva*, Brahma Union. Everyone must strive for this union. The *jiva* cannot exist alone; *moksha-sadhana* has to be done, willy-nilly, by every living thing. Without it, there can be no peace.

Bhakta: What does *moksha* [liberation] mean exactly, Swami? And what is *mukti*?

Swami: Both mean the same. That which is burdened with the *manas* [mind] is the *jivi*; when the *manas* and the *nama* [name] and *rupa* [form] that it spins from out of its substance are destroyed, then the *jivi* attains *moksha*. Then it becomes one with *Brahmam*; that is *moksha*. When the *Ganga* or the *Godavari* [rivers] reach the sea, their separate names, forms, tastes and limits all disappear, and they acquire the name, form, taste and limit of the sea itself.

Until the *jivas* attain the end of the mind, they bear the *nama*, *rupa*, and the *ruchi* (taste) of delusion, my-ness and I-ness; when the *jivi* nears the sea, these

characteristics begin to disappear slowly. When the *gunas* as well as the mutations of the mind are destroyed, then one can say that union has been accomplished with *Brahmam*. How can the *Ganga* that has merged with the ocean be sweet? If it is said that one has merged in *Brahmam*, he should not have the three *gunas*, nor any taste of *manas*. Such full union is known as *Sayujyamukti* [becoming one with the Supreme].

Bhakta: O, how grand, Swami. Bless everyone to attain that union; then the world will really be happy.

Swami: What? For Me to bless so would be to go against the freedom you are endowed with. Take up the *sadhana* [spiritual effort] prescribed for winning that blessing; gain the blessing by effort, that is the way. It is not something that is given away. You do not pray to the Sun to make the rays fall on you, do you? Shining is His nature; He is doing it always. Remove the obstacles between you and the Sun and the rays are on you. So, too, keeping the obstacles of delusion, My-ness and I-ness, between you and the rays of grace, what is the use of complaining that they do not fall on you? What can the rays do?

Bhakta: That is as good as saying that we must remove all traces of I-ness and My-ness from our minds.

Swami: Why do you say, "As good as saying?" I am saying it emphatically, over and over again. If you seek the rays of grace, try and remove the obstacles. Remember, even if you do not strive for it now, you will feel the urge some time later; you cannot escape that urge. It has to happen someday, this shuffling off the coils of delusion. Why postpone the day of joy, the day of liberation? Strive for this from this very day, nay, this very minute. You may leave now, my boy. But come again. I must tell you one more thing. Do not go to extremes; be steady; be patient.

Source: *Sandeha Nivarini*

Thought of the Month

A Teacher's Duty

The human body is the most wondrous machine in the world. It has a bewildering multiplicity of limbs, organs, veins, nerves, and cells that co-operate to maintain it under varied conditions. If any one of these rebels or refuses to rescue another, the body is bound to suffer. So, too, a society, community, or nation can be safe, secure, and happy only when the individuals comprising it are mutually helpful and bound together in skillful and sincere service. Every generation has to receive education and training in such intelligent co-operation and service. Or else, the world has to face confusion and chaos.

The ideal held before the tender, innocent, unselfish children is a lucrative job rather than a life of peace, contentment, and love. Narrow loyalties, contest, and competition are polluting the minds of children. Parents, teachers, and all interested in the progress of mankind have to take note of this situation.

Teaching and learning have both become mechanical routines. They have lost the freshness and joy that vitality alone can give. The value of the teaching process lies in raising the level of consciousness of the learner, in heightening the sense of wonder and awe, and in emphasizing the unity of one with all. The destiny of a country is decided by the ideals implanted by the teachers in the minds of the boys and girls entrusted to their care. Education must pay attention not merely to the material and intellectual progress of the pupils, but even more to their moral and spiritual progress. Education should help man to live a meaningful life. It should not direct all efforts to provide a livelihood.

The higher life, which makes man human and a fit candidate for unfoldment of the divinity that is his reality, depends on the cultivation of the five cardinal virtues—truth, right-conduct, love, peace, and non-violence. These virtues elevate the individual as well as the society of which he is a part. The teacher has to watch every word and gesture of his, every action and reaction of his, in order to avoid any infringement of these virtues. For, the teacher is for the pupils the ideal, the example, to whom the parents have entrusted them. Women teachers can discharge this responsibility better than men. Children can be molded more easily through sweetness and softness, which maternal affection implies, rather than by fatherly advice and admonition.

The atmosphere of love should not be disturbed by any uncharitable remark against anyone's faith. Nor should anyone be ridiculed or slandered. Children's minds should not be polluted by fear, hatred, or disgust. The doors of their hearts must be open to all. Later on, as the impact of society and the state grows, pupils can be led to an understanding of the political and religious forces that will affect their lives.

Students have to be encouraged to "Follow the Master (the inner voice of conscience), Face the Devil (the down-dragging antisocial urges), Fight to the End (until one is able to overcome the inner foes of lust, anger, greed, undue attachment, pride, and hatred) and Finish the Game (of life on earth)."

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 19, The Teacher and Tomorrow, pp. 192- 194