

The Mind—Use and Misuse

*The mind causes rebirth to beings
The mind causes release to beings
The mind confers victory to beings
In the struggle to attain the four:
Goodness, fullness, fruition, freedom,
dharma, artha, kama, moksha.
The mind confers mergence everlasting.*

The mind wills, yearns, prompts, and insists on effort and action. This process is named *sankalpa* [inner thought or resolution]. These are like *shasanas* (commands). Everyone has to be aware of the variety and validity of the actions induced by these promptings. The mind is host to fifty million such! Of the thoughts that appear and vanish, the clouds that pass silently, many stay and stir the mind into activity. These are referred to as *sankalpas*. Until these are well understood against their vast background, man cannot live happily and in peace. Good *sankalpas* can elicit the best out of man and help him to use all strength for his uplift. Man has to recognize bad *sankalpas* or urges as soon as they arise and render them ineffective by the systematic cultivation of beneficial *sankalpas*. These latter alone can save a person from disaster and keep him close to *Prasanthi* (supreme calm).

Ships at sea are guided by the compass along the desired direction; without it they risk being wrecked on rocks or icebergs. Man has to sail safe across the ocean of *samsara* (flux and flow). So he needs a one-pointed, agitation-less mind to guide him and guard him.

The face is molded by the mind

One can discover for himself how difficult it is to equip oneself with such a mind. The face photographs the mind, its moods, its decisions, and desires, in short its *sankalpas*. Consider a gramophone record; its contents—words, songs, noises—can only be heard, they cannot be seen. But the contents of the mind—evil *sankalpas* based on anger, hatred, envy, despair, arrogance, egotism, or good *sankalpas* based on truth, love, charity, compassion—can be seen on the face, though they cannot be heard.

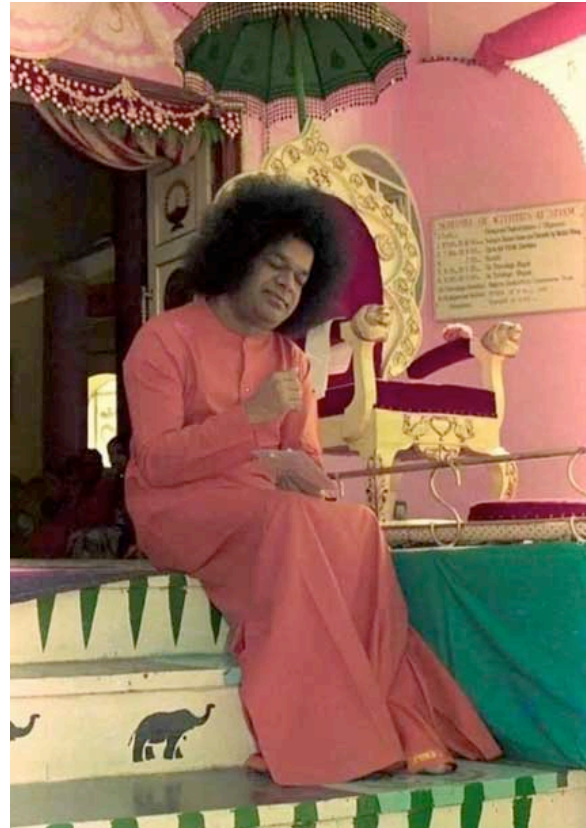
The face is molded by the mind. Every single *sankalpa* (or thought accepted and acted upon) is a streak or line that affects its shape. We can picture it as the Notice Board, which announces to all concerned the activities inside the institute.

The *sankalpa* cannot be hidden or kept under cover. All attempts in this direction are as foolish as the ostrich's behavior when pursued. It sticks its small head into the loose sands and considers itself safe from being killed by hunters. But its huge body attracts the eye. It is soon destroyed and dragged away. Evil *sankalpas* as well as good are reflected on the face of man.

The mind activates the sense organs

A *sankalpa* affects the consciousness more subtly than an electric charge. It manifests as a need, a motive with a name and form. It colors the thought stream in a distinct way. It is no scribble on a blank mind; it causes clusters of reaction in the blank-less mind. Its potency depends on time and circumstance. *Sankalpas* breed further *sankalpas*; they play their role unaided, through their own latent force.

The mind activates the eye and ear, the tongue and nose and every organ of perception and action. The mind initiates its activation when a *sankalpa* influences it. The mind is the unseen witness, the interested observer, as the queen inside the raja's palace, watching the flow of men and vehicles on the road below through holes in the wooden windowpanes of the *zenana* [women's quarters]. Whence do the *sankalpas* originate? From the ego, the "I". And the "I"? From the innermost *atma* [soul].



Sankalpas or conations or inner resolutions tend to be attracted toward one another, when they flow in the same direction or are related to similar desires. Cranes fly together as flock; they do not mix with crows. Crows form their own groups. Among beasts of the forest, bison have herds of their own kind; they have no comradeship with elephants, who mingle only with elephants. Deer, too, form groups by themselves. Similarly, a musician attracts musicians around him. Teachers seek teachers for company.

The decisions that the mind makes either to commit or omit are amazing, for the cosmos and all its contents can be described as their consequence. The mind decides

on the fact or facet of the objective world that it has to notice. The *sankalpa* bears fruit and the fruit conforms to the seed from which it springs. It has to reveal its impact sooner or later. So man has to avoid evil *sankalpas* and cultivate good ones.

Examine every thought with care

For example, one might entertain a thought to harm or injure someone. And it might fructify as harm or injury on him. But the *sankalpa* will surely rebound on the person bringing with it hundredfold harm and injury. A bad *sankalpa* hurts both the person and his target. A poisonous worm injures all who handle it. The *Mahabharata* relates how the Kauravas fed and fostered the *sankalpa* to adopt various tactics to disgrace and eliminate their cousins, the Pandavas. The result was their total elimination along with those who supported them. The Pandavas survived, crowned with glory. Their *sankalpa* [was fulfilled] and their subjects were happy.

Therefore, as soon as a passing thought sprouts in the mind as an urge or desire, one has to examine it with care to discover whether it would tarnish or promote one's reputation, hinder or help one's progress, weaken or strengthen one's character. If it is of the former category, cast it away as a foul stinking object. And save yourself by saturating the mind with good intentions. Earnestness in this direction is heightened by mutual encouragement. *Rishis* [sages] in their sylvan settlements benefited largely from such consultative, confirmative processes.

Effects of evil *sankalpa*

The nature of the *sankalpa* that motivates a person can be sensed by others. The story of Ted Ross, a lone farmer in Holland, illustrates this quite well. He left his brother and mother to live in peace and freedom and settled on a 40 acre farm, in a cottage he built. He had interest in poultry farming and he raised chicken. Killing birds for food was part of the culture he grew in. One night a fox entered the yard and made a meal of them. Its visits continued night after night. So the farmer took a decision (*sankalpa*) to kill the fox. He kept awake with gun in hand. But though fowls disappeared, the fox was not seen. He could hear its approach, the flutter of the birds and its exit, but he could not spot where it was. His vain vigil persisted for five long years.

He consulted many elders about the mystery. A pure-hearted sympathizer told him, "Ted! Your mind is so free from blemish that even a tiny blot is patent to all. The fox is aware of your intention and is taking clever measures to avoid being noticed." Animals have this capacity. It is a gift of nature. A dog curled on the brink of the road will not be afraid of your approach when you are *sankalpa*-free. Plan to hit it while even 20 feet away, the dog will rise and run!

When animals have this sensitivity, [what about] men? Man's *sankalpas*, their manifestations in action, can be detected easily. A person who has committed

wrong, who has robbed another's property, who has scandalized another, or uttered a lie—look at his face, examine it closely. You will notice the signs of confusion and fear. The anxiety makes the blood cells become weak; the face becomes pale; lips quiver. The person suffers in health. Suppression is dangerous; expression brings about infamy. This is the effect of evil *sankalpa*. It must, therefore, be plucked by the roots and thrown out.

Every urge must be cleared by *buddhi*

Unrest, anxiety, and anarchy are fed by evil *sankalpa*. You must see good, hear good, and act good, so that evil intentions do not arise. People who move with criminals or read or write about them are likely to be infected with the evil. *Sadhakas* [spiritual aspirants] who move in the company of the godly are prone to develop serenity and compassion.

The mind travels quicker than sound, far quicker than even light. Just as one holds under greater control a car that moves at a speed faster than the rest, one has to exercise greater control and mastery over the mind. Obey the mind's vagaries, you become a beast. Let discrimination control the vagaries, you become a candidate for Divinity. Every urge must undergo test, must be cleared by a judge, namely *buddhi* [intellect]. Does it prompt one to ridicule or defame another? Then dismiss it as unworthy. Good intention sprouts as action; action fructifies into *sadhana* [spiritual effort]; from *sadhana* emerges *sheela* (virtuous character) that draws down the shower of grace. Intentions can all be beneficial when the person persists in good company. Of course, one cannot gain them from without; they have to grow from within, from the heart, freed from the weeds of pride and greed. Good company helps to purify the heart.

This is the lesson people have to learn today, cultivate *sat sankara* (good thought) by seeking out and sheltering in *satsanga* (good company). Planting poisonous seeds, people hope to get nutritious fruits! Why blame God when bitter seeds do not yield sweet fruits? Man is the only animal that imbibes and expresses *ananda* [bliss]. The smile on the face is the blooming of the joy that fills the heart; it wafts away discontent and depression from other faces.

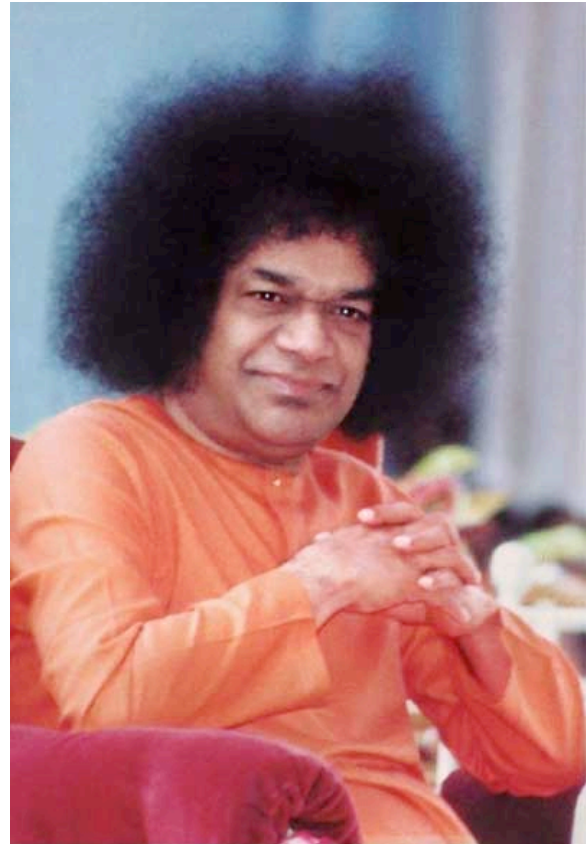
The mind can be an instrument to gain success in any of the paths of *Yoga* and in the struggle to gain the goals of life. If it is given license to foster any type of wish or conation, it is certain to plunge man in bondage. The mind shapes life and the world wherein one lives. The mind of the individual, the 'i' has originated from the cosmic mind of God, Brahman. One's duty is to merge it in the source. Then the 'i' becomes 'I'. Before the mergence, the 'i' is known as man and announces itself as limited. In order to achieve the mergence, the consummation, saturate the mind with *sat sankalpa*. Remember: "From good thoughts, good minds; from good minds, good God."

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 19

Saism Alone can Usher a Golden Era for the World

Arjun Kumar Sengupta had a Ph.D. in Economics from Massachusetts Institute of Technology; he taught at the London School of Economics and the 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.

Only 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 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 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)

Golden Age Avatar

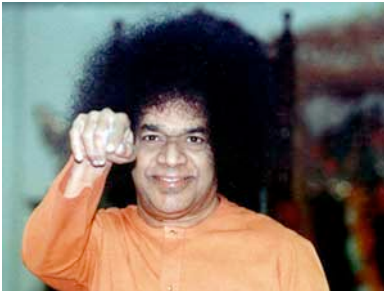
In the wide-open frontier
That I Am
a hint of vastness
embraces me

From a balcony in the heavens
Sai Avatar surveys
His luminous creation
Winged worlds
Spiraling galaxies
Timeless superluminal
light years
orbit His celestial finger

I gaze wonderstruck.....
Swami's fathomless eyes
eclipse the dark night
a thousand suns rise in
every atom of my being

And the Earth turns....
Golden

~Sonya Ki Tomlinson-Warren



"There is no force on earth that can delay for an instant the mission for which this Avatar has come. You are all sacred souls, and you will have your parts to play in the unfolding drama of the new Golden Age, which is coming."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sanathana Sarathi, October 1996, back cover

Lessons Learnt at His Lotus Feet

Ravi Mariwala, a Bal Vikas student from then Bombay, spoke many times in front of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and thus developed the desire to be a student at His University. In 1982 Mariwala joined Bhagavan's college and studied there for nine years. He was in the speaker's group and travelled with Swami to Kodaikanal and Tamilnadu. He is a recipient of three gold medals from Swami. Swami handpicked him to serve in the Super Specialty Hospital, where he served for 14 years. Ravi lives in North Carolina with his wife and two sons.

With deep humility and heartfelt *pranams* at Bhagavan's lotus feet I would like to share with you the deep and significant learnings of my stay with Him. That time is imprinted in my memory and cannot be replaced. These are true, sincere, and touching learnings and are not bookish or conceptual.

Why is our own experience important? While we may be inspired by other people's learnings, eventually we have to develop our own. The true impact of your contact with the master can only be visible when you open yourself to Him so that He can guide you on a path. We are very blessed that in this *Kali* [Iron] Age, we are here when the *Avatar* was here in form.

I am sharing the teachings with love in my heart, but you have to open your hearts to imbibe His teachings. I was very blessed that I joined Bhagavan's college in 1982 and passed out from it in 1991. I had completed nine years at His lotus feet. But then at that very opportune time, instead of letting me go out into the wide world to build a career for myself, Bhagavan pulled me and rescued me from a mundane life by taking me into His fold as an employee of His own hospital, which at that time was only a concept.

My first meaningful interaction with Bhagavan was when I had the chance to speak in His presence. I was a typical Mumbai boy, and clearly the company I kept at school would not align with Swami's expectations. When I joined *Bal Vikas* (Swami's values education classes), I was able to see this need for change more clearly. Inspired by my ideal *Bal Vikas* teachers, I took a vow to mend my ways and walk the path that would please Swami.



The first time I saw Swami was in Dharmakshetra in Mumbai, where I had gone very disinterestedly, and literally I was the last person sitting in a hall with the capacity of 15-20 thousand people. A very young and vibrant Swami came out and started

walking down the aisle to where I was and looked at me. He stood there and gently waved His hands. As I gazed at Him I was deeply affected and transported to a peace that I sensed within me. At that moment I knew that this was the beginning of a very different direction for my life.

Very soon thereafter, I got the opportunity to speak in front of Bhagavan. Swami lovingly accepted my garland and kept on looking at me as I spoke. After my talk, He materialized *vibhuti* [sacred ash] and made me sit down to the left of His throne and kept rubbing my back. I interpret this as though He was getting rid of the Mumbai-related tendencies and thoughts and was preparing me to join His college. As the program continued, Swami kept talking with me on the stage, virtually granting me a private interview during the public function. He also gave me permission to join His college after I completed school.

I joined Swami's college in 1982 and finished my studies with two postgraduate courses, MSc. and MBA. By Swami's grace I got three gold medals from His own hands. After that I served in the Super Specialty Hospital for 14 years.

Lesson 1—Obedience is Key

My first learning is about the importance of obedience in our lives. The acronym I use is **OIK**—“**Obedience Is Key**”. After I joined Swami's college, I discovered new meanings of the word obedience, and a new depth of obedience was required if I wanted to walk this path sincerely.

One day in 1990, Swami called me to the interview room, where there were seven or eight of us. Swami started admonishing me and showed His irritation. Clearly, He was angry. However, I couldn't understand what I had done to incur this anger. Then Swami pointed to my hair and said, “You have such long hair! Don't you know that you are a Sai student and I expect Sai students to observe three disciplines: I want you to wear white clothes, be clean-shaven, and have trim hair”. Now, internally I was truly perplexed. I couldn't understand why Swami was saying this because I had had a haircut only two days back. Out of deep reverence for Bhagavan, however, I kept quiet. By then I had learnt not to question Bhagavan but to listen to what He was saying and absorb it. Soon after, fortunately, Swami changed the topic and talked about other things. After the interview, my only mission in life was to get to a barber and have a haircut because in less than 24 hours I would be back in the *Mandir* [temple].

Early the next morning, I went to the hostel barber and asked him to cut my hair. The barber was surprised and he said, “Sir, you had a haircut a few days back.” I, however, insisted. Not just that, I asked him to cut my hair short and deep. I went to college, and in the evening I went to the *Mandir*. Swami was sitting inside and when he heard the boys thundering into the *Mandir* to grab the best place, He came out. I was sitting in my place and He beckoned me to come into the interview room. I was

alone with Bhagavan in the room wondering what was to come. As Swami says, “Love My uncertainty.” Very sweetly Swami said, “Very good, very good! I'm very happy with you, Mari (He would call me Mari, short name for Mariwalla). Do you really think I wanted you to have a second haircut? No, no, not at all! I am that Master who will never tell you the next step that you have to take in your journey until I am fully satisfied with the first step that I have asked you to take.”

At that moment, the significance of a seemingly trivial event became so clear in my mind. It was clear to me that when and if I want to go ahead in life, I have to pause and think if I have obeyed Swami's commands to His satisfaction. Bhagavan is waiting to promote us to the next grade and give us the next lesson or challenge, but He (not we) needs to be completely satisfied that we have obeyed Him totally. More importantly, later in life it became a practice, because I had learnt that however trivial or seemingly illogical His command may seem, if I really accept Bhagavan as my *guru*, I should follow that command and not put myself before it or interpret it in my own way. We cannot see the way our lives will unfold. Bhagavan is constantly preparing us for what has to come.

Very soon, about a year later, the next command came, and Bhagavan was waiting to see if I would *obey* Him. I had always wanted to be near Bhagavan and to serve Him, but around the time when I was finishing my MBA I was starting to feel attracted by the world—Swami calls it *Vishaya Vasana* (craving for worldly desires)—I wanted to go out into the world and become a big manager, build a career, etc. Now, one day Swami said to me, “I'm starting a new hospital, are you interested in joining it? I would like you to be a staff member at My hospital.” I who was always wanting to live in Puttaparthi dedicating my life to Swami suddenly found that I was not sure. Swami noticed my hesitation.

Swami used to say that right around the candle, there is a dark zone. The candle sheds light around it but immediately under the candle there is darkness. Also, very often He said, “You are all frogs in the well. Look at the devotees; they are like the bees coming to the flowers for they realize the value of the nectar they seek—the nectar in this flower (pointing to Himself)”.

To connect back to the acronym **OIK**, after He taught me that first lesson about the double haircut and He saw that I was hesitating to accept the opportunity to serve in His hospital, He called me into the interview room. There was I, alone with Bhagavan. I was standing shivering as I was unsure about what Swami was going to ask of me. But Swami simply said, “Work in My hospital, that is My *aagya* [command], and that is good for you, good for your family, good for the country. Do you accept My *aagya*?” I could not hold back my tears as I realized the mistake I was making by hesitating to accept the offer. So I dived at Bhagavan's lotus feet and I said, “Swami, nothing is greater for me than to accept Your *aagya*.”

Having obtained a great *Sadguru* and having developed firm faith in Him, even if our vision becomes momentarily unclear or our wayward mind deludes us, if we obey His command without a moment's hesitation, our progress toward Him will be speedy!

Lesson Two—Believe in Bhagavan's protection

Now let's explore the second lesson that I learnt. The acronym for this is **BTCCC**—"**Bhagavan Takes Care Constantly & Continuously**". The image that flashes in my mind is that of Swami holding a small rabbit by the ears with one hand, while He places His other hand below the rabbit as though He is going to release it and catch it as well. When He releases us He also saves us. What He is demonstrating is that I am always with you, in you, and around you; I'm going to guard you and guide you.

My father, who was just 54 years old, had a heart attack when I was doing my Master's course in Parthi in the year 1988. In those days [I thought] that Swami would not recognize me as He did not even know my name. So with much trepidation I went and sat in the front line with a letter and with the hope that Swami would take my letter, accept my prayers to bless my father. That day Swami came up to me, took my letter, opened it and read it then and there. He said, "Don't worry, call your father. I will see him."

A few days later, my father and mother came, and Swami called us for an interview. He took my parents and sister into the private interview room. He materialized *vibhuti* and rubbed it on my father's chest very lovingly. We felt very relieved and reassured. Swami spoke to us for some time and then He brought us to the main interview room, where other devotees were sitting.

Now, all of a sudden Swami looked at my mother and said, "I have rubbed *vibhuti* and when you go to Mumbai go to cardiologist and get an angiogram done." I was sitting on the gent's side, hoping that my mother wouldn't make the mistake of saying "yes" to Swami, and she was so perplexed that she didn't. My thought was that once Swami has showered His grace, we don't need any confirmation or external validation. Then Swami gave us *prasad* [consecrated food] and [*pada*] *namaskar* [touching His Feet], and we all came out of the interview room. I came and sat amongst the students on the *Mandir* verandah when Swami came up to me and He shook His finger at me and said, "Dare you go to a doctor!" At that moment, while others thought Swami was admonishing me, I felt so blissful because I had *aligned myself to Him*, and the external world didn't matter as long as I had His grace, guidance, and guardianship. This happened in 1988. Today my father is 84, and by Swami's grace has had no untoward event with respect to his heart health.

In 2002 he had a major gastrointestinal event and was admitted in the hospital. We went to Brindavan. Swami sought him out in the Brindavan crowd, and He

materialized *vibhuti* for seven consecutive days and healed him completely. We should remember that Bhagavan's actions are not incomplete and short-lived. They are not one-day wonders, for He wants to be in our life continuously, constantly. But that is possible only if we *align* with Him and show Him that we depend on Him for everything good or bad.

After I moved away from the *ashram* and came to the US, and after I got married and had a family, I could still see how much Swami was continuing to guard, guide, and protect us.

Lesson Three—Invest in deepening the inner connection

So now let's move to the third learning: **DIC—Deepen the Inner Connection**. Why do we talk about the inner connection? Let me explain. One day Swami went to Brindavan and He came back in a week; that was very strange because Swami would go to Brindavan for longer durations. In those days, I had many interactions with Swami and felt very close to Him as I was chanting His name, reading good books, and participating in the hostel *bhajan*. While Swami was away, I had had three dreams of Bhagavan. Swami returned to Prasanthi Nilayam and sat for the *bhajan on His throne in the bhajan hall*.

All of a sudden, He came out from the *bhajan* hall and came to where I was sitting and singing with eyes closed. Tapping my forehead He asked me to get up. He said, "How many times did you have Swami's dream?" I said, "Three dreams, Swami." He said, "No, you had My dream four times. Very good communication!" Suddenly I recollected that I had had a fourth dream, but I was not counting it as He had just given His *namaskar*. He came to remind me that to dream about Him was a very significant event, as only by His Will can you dream of Him. He was also encouraging me to continue deepening that connection with the inner Sai, by acknowledging that effort and saying, "Good communication". He showed me that He is indeed the *in-dweller* and that He is not outside of us. Throughout our life, we have to deepen our inner connection (communicate) with that inner Bhagavan.

In 1990, my parents visited Brindavan (Whitefield, Bangalore). I was also there with Swami. That day it was pouring rain, and somehow my father lost his wallet, but wasn't sure where he had dropped it. When I went to the room, I saw that he was upset, and he told me about his loss along with the credit cards. I quickly went to the canteen and asked the manager whether they had found the missing wallet. His reply was negative. The roads in Whitefield were all dug up due to construction work. In addition, there was thunder and lightning with heavy rain. Soaking wet and disappointed, I was walking back to the room. I said in my mind, "Swami we are Your devotees and You have to help us—please help me *now*." You will not believe me when I narrate to you that after I prayed thus, when my foot landed on the ground, it landed on my father's wallet. I just picked up the wallet and ran to the

room. These are small but meaningful experiences, where Swami responds to our prayers. When we connect with Him, He is there with us in a split second.

The next opportunity presented during the time I served in the hospital. There was a 67-year-old man who came in for an aortic valve replacement. After the surgery was complete, we could not “wean” him off the heart-lung machine. We had tried inotropic drugs, defibrillated the heart, but the heart continued to be flaccid and would not start beating. I was running the heart-lung machine and was in the operating theatre since 9 a.m. My colleague came to me and offered to relieve me at 3:30 p.m. so I could grab lunch.

As I came out of the operating room, I thought that this is Swami's hospital and He has visited that operating room countless times, so why don't I call on Swami in this hour of need. Thinking thus, before doing anything else, I stepped into a support area room where the sterilizers were kept and prayed very fervently, “Swami this patient has come for surgery to Your hospital, please cure him.” After a few minutes in prayer, I finished my lunch and went back to the operating room. I was shocked to see that everybody there including the anesthesiologist, anesthesia technician, cardiac surgeon, assistant nurse, and assistant surgeon were very relaxed and casual. Not sure what was happening, I looked up at the cardiac monitor and I saw that the blood pressure was 140 / 85, the arterial trace was fantastic. Then I looked past the sterile screen covering the patient to peep at the heart and I saw that the heart was beating very well. I asked Dr. Neelam Desai, “What happened, madam?” She said, “I don't know; we didn't try anything new but all of a sudden the heart just started beating so well that we are now closing him up. We're done!” I just took a step back and silently thanked Swami for the grace that had made that thought arise in my mind.

Soon the patient recovered and went home. On Sunday when I went to the *Mandir*, Swami came after the interviews and sought me out. He stood in front of me and materialized *vibhuti* and while giving it to me, He pressed my hand and he said, “This is for that patient You prayed for.” I was blown away! This reaffirmed for me how perfect Swami's timing is and also how He was validating our *direct experience* of calling on Him.

What are Swami's own guidelines about when to pray for ourselves and others. One day in 2003, two of us were sitting at Swami's feet and massaging them when we asked Him, “Swami, is it a good idea to pray to God and to ask him for things?” He said, “Oh, it's very good to pray to God, but you should *only pray* and not ask for anything.” So it is best to pray to connect, to deepen that inner connection, and not ask for trivial things like promotions, bigger house, or better bank balance, etc. With this simple response, Swami opened up yet another dimension *about prayer without motive and demand*, prayer to get absorbed in our Lord and to feel the connection.

Consider the example of Kuchela, also known as Sudama. He offered Krishna puffed rice; he was tongue-tied and could not ask anything Him for anything. Meanwhile,

back home, silently the Lord was at work, and his hut was transformed into a palace, his wife was adorned with ornaments, and he received more than his needs.

The Master can come only when you *open yourself* so much that you allow Him to guide you in this world. We are very blessed that in this age when the Lord was amidst us, we knew of His presence, in fact, He made us aware of His presence. How many people in the world know about Him?

In short, the three important lessons are **OIK—Obedience is the Key**. Once you start obeying His command and you hold on to His feet, only after that can you come to truly appreciate and experience for yourself that **BTCCC—Bhagawan will Take Care Constantly and Continuously**. Let us not question when, how, or where Bhagavan will take care. Just follow Him and have faith in Him. Finally, with Bhagavan guiding and protecting us, what is our duty? We should focus on **DIC—Deepen the Inner Connection**. This we can do by evolving ourselves, so even though we have access to this powerful Lord, we don't pray for anything but just pray and deepen our devotion, holding onto Swami with deep Love, without any demands.

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram!

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Moksha and Karma **(Liberation and Action)**

Q. They speak of *Avadhutas* [mystics] also. Who are called so? What are their qualifications?

A. Like the *vanaprasthas* [recluses] and the *sanyasis* [renunciants], they too have to be free from all attachment and hatred. They do not take any interest in their surroundings; whether it is a forest or town, they are not worried in the least. They have no relation with others. They pay no heed to past, present, or future. They move about on thorn and stone, silent, smiling to themselves, ever joyous, ever alert, seeking no comfort and no slicker, seeking no place to sleep or take food, for *ananda* [joy] is their *ahara* (food). There are *Avadhutas* even today in the Himalayas, in silent caves, immersed in their own inner *atma-ananda*. Not all can see them. Only good luck can bring you to their presence.

But there are many who pretend to be *Avadhutas* and who go about with that name. The genuine ones would not seek men; nor appear in public. Even if they miss their way and come among men, they just slip away silently lest they draw attention to

themselves. When you find an *Avadhuta* freely moving in company and mixing with human affairs, take him to be a *Yamadhuta*, a monster!

Q. How long is one bound by the *deha-dharma*, the obligations and duties related to the body?

A. As long as the *jivatma* [individual soul] is not cognized. When that is discovered and known, there is no more need.

Q. How long is one aware of this *jivatma* itself?

A. Until the stream joins the sea. Till the stream of *jivi* [individual] reaches the source from which it came, the Sea of *Paramatma*.

Q. What is *moksha* [liberation]?

A. *Moksha* is liberation from all that binds. That is to say, the attainment of the ever existing, ever-stable, ever-pure *atma-tatwa*; getting rid of the ever-changing, ever unreal, impure *deha-tatwa* [*tatwa*: principle].

Q. That attainment is not for all, is it, Swami?

A. Why do you say so? Everyone who equips himself can attain it; those who make the effort *are* attaining it. Everyone who is ill is entitled to the medicine; you cannot say that only some among them are. Yet, if the drug is costly, only those who can afford it can benefit by it. The Lord's grace is hard to get; you have to pay a heavy price. Pay the price, that is to say, earn it by *sadhana* and the grace of the Lord will save you from this *bhavaroga* (the disease of worldliness).

Q. Who are those that most need this *sadhana*?

A. All who yearn to be saved from the flood of "birth-death" that is now sweeping them along.

Q. Baba! What is the cause of man getting born?

A. The impact of *karma* [action].

Q. How many varieties of *karma* are there?

A. Three! Bad, good, and mixed; some add a fourth, the *karma* of the *jnani* [wise person] that is neither good nor bad.

Q. What is bad *karma*?

A. It is called *dush-karma*. All acts done without the fear of God or of falling into sin; all acts done while under the influence of the six enemies, *kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, and matsarya* [desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride, and envy]; all acts that reveal the beast in man, that do not indicate that he is possessed of *viveka, vichakshana, and vairagya* [intelligence, discrimination, and detachment]; that are devoid of *daya, dharma, sathya, shanti, and prema* [compassion, right action, truth, peace, and love]...these are *dush-karmas*.

Q. And *sat-karmas* [are]?

A. All acts done in the fear of God and of sin; all acts done with *sathya, dharma, shanti, and prema*; these are the *sat-karmas*.

Q. What are the *mishra-karmas*, the mixed ones?

A. They are an interesting lot. Though the acts are good, though apparently they are prompted by fear of God and of sin, still they reveal impulses that are quite the opposite. People start rest-houses and water-distributing, centers, for example, but they do not pay the servants regularly and well. Their aim is just to win some fame. They give to the poor as alms only useless clothes and worn coins. Whatever they do, their purpose is to get publicity.

Q. You also spoke of *jnana-karma*, Swami.

A. Yes; *jnana-karma* is the name used for all acts done to learn from sacred scriptures or elders or teachers the way to escape from the bondage to duality and to the falsity of the world and to develop faith in the values of *sathya, dharma, santhi, and prema*; all acts that lead to the merging of the individual in the Universal Absolute.

Source: *Prasnottara Vahini*

Thought of the MONTH

Enquiry

Enquire, enquire, enquire. Make a determined attempt. Don't relax your spiritual efforts in any way. What we need to recognize is the *mooladhaara* [root basis of existence] principle. This principle is not visible through a telescope and cannot be captured through a camera. You only need yearning in your heart, which gets transformed into spiritual enquiry. Without yearning, search for God cannot be sustained. Every student should cultivate yearning—"I should know, I should know". Then you will realize the fruits of your search for God, sooner or later.

You have to enquire as to what extent you have understood the principle of love, which is uniformly present in all. Man is carried away by his identification with the body, and therefore he perceives diversity in creation. In fact, it is unity alone that is behind the apparent diversity. Whatever differences are there, they are only the creations of your mind. If you want to eliminate these differences and realize the principle of unity in diversity, you have to realize your true nature....

Recognize the Fundamental Principle of Oneness, Divine Discourse, March 21, 2004

Hence, give up selfishness and strive for self-realization. You must enquire into yourself, "Who am I? Body, mind, intellect, *chittha* (consciousness), or *ahamkara* (ego)?" You are none of these. You are yourself. "I am I". Recognize this truth.

Give up Selfishness and Strive for Self-Realization, Divine Discourse, Sept. 27, 2006

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

Some people talk about meditation. Even Buddha advocated the practice of meditation. What is that you have to meditate upon? What is meant by meditation? Does it mean concentrating upon a particular object? No, no. That is not meditation at all. To contemplate upon the principle of "I am I" is true meditation. No other *sadhana* (spiritual practice) can match this. As long as you have the dualistic feeling of "you and I", you cannot experience unity. Buddha recognized the principle of unity and based his life on this truth....

Attain Enlightenment by Renouncing Desires, Divine Discourse, May 13, 2006

God is immanent in every atom and every cell of the human body. There is no place in this universe where God is not present. Hence, do not entertain any doubt about the existence of God. Do not forget God. In fact, if you forget yourself it amounts to forgetting God. Hence do not forget yourself.

It is for this reason that one is advised, "Always be careful." You must constantly enquire into yourself, "Am I forgetting God?" You must always be aware of your true nature and remind yourself, "I am I". If you are firmly established in that truth, there will be no scope at all to entertain any evil thoughts about others.

Always Be Happy and Peaceful, Divine Discourse, July 28, 2007

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