

Why Should We Keep Good Company?

The company one keeps determines one's character. A person tries to join the group where he can freely express his innate nature. So *satsang* (holy company) is a very important requisite for moral and spiritual advancement. Man, by nature, is prone to cater to the desires that arise within him or the urges that are prompted from without.

Very often these are deleterious. So he ruins himself by giving them the chance to overpower his personality. Consider the happy influence that good association can exert. A length of string is a worthless thing—no one will wear it in the hair or place it reverentially on an idol of God. But when it associates itself with a few fragrant flowers, then women decorate their coiffure with the length of floral garland and devotees place the garland on the idol they adore.

A block of stone in a public square is a much neglected and misused thing—street dogs often foul it. But let the stone receive the company of a sculptor or his pupils, it is shaped into a charming idol of God and installed in a temple to receive the homage of thousands. Again, take the example of the domestic mouse. In the houses where it dwells it is hunted and trapped, poisoned and killed, but when Lord *Ganapati* [Ganesha] adopts it as His vehicle, it comes to be adored as a holy animal.

Evil company demeans and debases man

The serpent is hated and beaten to death whenever it makes an appearance, for it is dreaded and avoided by man. But in association with Lord Shiva (who has them [snakes] coiling round His wrists, ankles, and neck), the serpent receives reverence from millions. The company of the divine gives it a halo of consecration.



So, too, evil company demeans and debases man. Take the example of fire. Fire is held to be sacrosanct and holy and is religiously fed and fostered in every orthodox home where the *Vedas* [scriptures] provide the guidelines of life. But when the fire enters a ball or a rod of iron, it has to suffer hammer blows in plenty while the rod or the ball is being shaped into some tool by man! Attachment to the iron brings about this calamity for the highly venerated fire.

The years of life allotted to man as a result of the enormous amount of merit earned and accumulated through many lives in the past have to be utilized for the purpose of rising higher into divinity. For this adventure, congenial and inspiring company is essential. Riches decline only when spent, but life in its own course is being clipped short every moment. Even when we sleep unconcerned, every minute makes us older and takes us nearer the grave.

The end of freedom is wisdom

In order to direct time into useful channels, life has to be regulated and limited, habits have to be sublimated, harmful tendencies have to be corrected, and constructive attitudes fostered. These imperatives are emphasized in the Sathya Sai Hostel, though some of you may not appreciate the restrictions and guidelines presented for your conduct. They might be irksome to you just now, for you have joined this hostel quite recently, having grown up in totally different kinds of environments.

Perhaps you crave for what is called 'freedom of will and action.' But when you have not fixed an ideal before yourselves, this freedom can easily become license to give yourselves up to deleterious habits. What is the end of freedom? The real end of freedom is not pleasure, but wisdom. *Swechha* is the Sanskrit word for self-will. Self here means the higher self, the over-self. Its will is ever to merge with the supreme and be immersed in *ananda* (divine bliss).

Just consider the fate of students in most of the other colleges and hostels. Note the unhappy state of affairs prevailing there. The atmosphere is not congenial either for academic achievement or for personality development. It is full of foolish excitement and factional politics. Has man evolved from the animal only to descend to degradation worse than that of the animal? Is man to be motivated only by the needs of hunger and fear...? Man should be motivated differently. Again, can man be happy by merely attending film-shows or by roaming about in bazaars and spending time aimlessly?

Accept the ideal of a disciplined life

In many cases the parents and elders are at fault because they are bad examples for their own children. They drink and gamble, hate, and fight. Education has to save you from pursuing these wrong paths. I may tell you that students who lived in this hostel for some months in accordance with its rules and regulations have won the appreciation of authorities of its sister colleges in Bangalore for their punctuality, earnestness, and disciplined behavior.

A disciplined life is the best offering you can make to the country or to the divine in you. One single person who is averse to regulated living may by his example spoil the careers of many others with whom he comes in contact. So each of you must accept the ideal after analyzing its implications and being convinced of its validity.

Animal instincts and impulses have persisted in human nature as vestiges, and it is only when their upsurge is controlled and gradually eliminated that the springs of divinity can manifest themselves. This hostel provides you just the opportunity, and the *satsang* (good company) here helps you to accomplish this. Nature can be modified by nurture; even dogs can cease to crave meat when they are trained to relish only vegetarian food. So open yourselves gladly to the influence of the *satsang* available here. Of course, stork ridicules the swan and crow carps at the cuckoo's song, but in spite of all the cynicism, the swan sails upon the water as grand as ever and the cuckoo has not developed any flaw in its song. Those who ridicule others eventually find themselves isolated and laughed at for their own idiosyncrasies.

Most intelligent schemes of men can become flops

Very often even the most intelligent schemes of men result in the opposite turn of events due to some fundamental flaw in their reasoning. It was in Bobbili [a place in India] years ago that an infectious disease resulting in boils on the skin spread fast. It was discovered that the infection originated from domestic rats. Since the rats could not be totally destroyed by means of traps, the ruler decided to encourage people to keep cats as pets, and he gave each householder a liberal monthly allowance of rice for feeding the cats.

Five kilograms of rice was supplied to the householders every month. After a time, complaints reached the ruler to the effect that the cats were not being properly fed, and the householders were themselves consuming the rice intended for the cats.

So the ruler ordered them to present themselves in the court with the cats they were rearing. When they appeared along with their pets, it was discovered that the rumors of misappropriation were false. Every cat was astonishingly well-fed and plump. One cat, however, the one reared by Ramakrishna, was lean and hungry. When the ruler charged him with misuse of the rice supplied to him by the state, he said, "Master! None of these other cats has ever caught a rat. Those cats are too well-fed for that. When they have no hunger, how can they seek out and kill rats? My cat catches at least a dozen a day." The ruler had to agree that his plan was a big flop. It had produced just the opposite result!

Remember, the rules laid down for you are for your own good. Whatever I do, speak, or order, is for your good, for rendering your future years happy and fruitful. This is the most valuable period of your lives and you must be thankful that you are spending it in this atmosphere, in the midst of this *satsang*. All this is being done because I know that you are all Mine. Even if you deny that you are Mine, I shall persist in telling you that you are so until you understand, for I am the Divinity that is your reality.

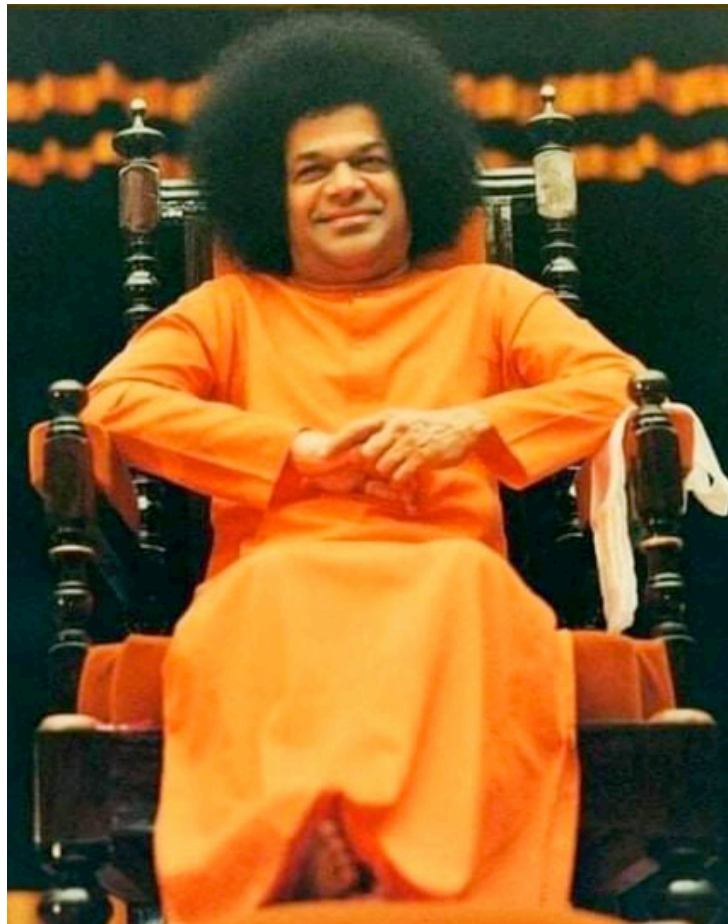
The 'I' in you is disturbed and becomes distressed when you stray into unrighteousness and wander into waywardness. Therefore, understand well the value of the schedule of work and worship prescribed for you here, and have your personalities molded to the best shape so that you may shine forth as inspiring examples of service to man and God.

Source: Divine Discourse at Sri Sathya Sai Hostel,
Brindavan, August 17, 1977

Why Fear When I Am Near!

The author, the late Maj. Gen. (Retd.) S. P. Mahadevan, retired from India's Armed Forces after a long, distinguished career and was awarded the AVSM [a military award] for his outstanding services. After retirement he served as the Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Public Services Commission. An ardent devotee, he served as the State President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, Tamil Nadu [southern India], for several years.

As a student of the Ramakrishna Mission, from my very young days I had learned to respect sages and saints. As a Battalion Commander in Sikkim, as a Brigade Commander in the Badrinath-Kedarnath-Gangotri area of U.P., Tibet border, and later as a Divisional Commander in the Ladakh region of Kashmir on the Indo-Tibetan border, I met many *rishis*, *lamas*, and other evolved souls. When I saw Bhagavan Baba for the first time, I felt the extraordinary force of Divinity in Him. I was overwhelmed by His love of service to the poor and the needy. I found that His sayings were practical and down to earth, simplifying high philosophical ideas to be



easily understood and practiced by all, irrespective of religion, race, caste, or community. His teachings are universal in nature and are based on love. Motivated by His utterances like "Love all and serve all" and "Help ever hurt never," I started doing small kinds of social service even while serving as an Army Officer and later as Chairman, Public Service Commission, Tamil Nadu. After retirement I have had the good fortune of spending all my time as a Sai worker, doing social and spiritual service in urban and rural areas.

In September 1955, a fellow Army Officer gave me a photo of Bhagavan at Mhow [a town in Central India] cantonment near Indore and told me all about His miracles. As an old devotee of Shirdi Sai, I have decided to worship Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as a fish worships water. From that day onward, my Army career took an upward swing.

By His grace I was selected to be a member of the United Nations Peace Keeping Force in the Congo (Africa), and later was sent to many foreign countries in the West and East on Government missions. Though I was wounded in several military operations in and outside of India, I was not afraid of death because Bhagavan had told me in one of His interviews in Brindavan "Why fear when I am here". Though I had read earlier about His saying, "Why fear when I am here", this is the first time He gave me an assurance that why to fear when He is there; maybe to assure my military mind that He is always near me and not far away in Prasanthi Nilayam or in Brindavan.

On many occasions on the war front in many areas, He has kept His word given to this ordinary military devotee like Lord Rama kept His word given to Sugriva and Vibhishana, and like Lord Krishna kept His word given to Pandavas. Later in the snow-covered areas He had been "with me, in me and around me" saving me from a helicopter crash, snow avalanches, and also from snipers during my visits to the frontline of my Army Division.

In April 1986, during my visit to Hyderabad as Chairman of the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission, I had suffered a heart attack. Bhagavan not only saved me from this heart attack but in July 1986 came all the way to my house in Madras [Chennai] unannounced just to bless this ordinary devotee and to save him from having a second heart attack. I am fully convinced that nothing moves or happens in this wide world without His will.

In December 1977, Bhagavan saved my youngest son, who is a Naval Officer, from a major scooter accident; and in June 1985 He saved my second son, who is a pilot in the Air Force, from an air crash. You may ask how we are so sure that it was He who saved them. On both the occasions, when my wife and I went with our sons to thank Bhagavan, before we could open our mouth, He narrated the entire event in the correct sequence confirming the actual time, dates, and the place of the accident apart from how He saved them. After this can anyone doubt His omnipresence?

The biggest Sai miracle in my opinion is the transformation of people who come in contact with Him. As a senior Army Officer, I used to be haughty, high-browed, and short-tempered. After coming nearer to His lotus feet, I became humble and unassuming. I used to be hasty at times. Bhagavan used to remind me by saying "Haste is waste, Haste is hurry, Hurry is worry, Worry is bad for health." As Chairman of the Public Service Commission, I wanted to resign on two occasions. Bhagavan advised me not to resign till I completed my full tenure of six years and added, 'You need not oblige all the time, but you can always speak obligingly.' This advice made my job easier and made me also become popular. Since then, I realized that by practicing one of the Sai teachings, "speak softly and sweetly to everyone", we gain high respect and regard in society.

I would like to mention the transformations of one Brigadier and one Colonel who used to drink like a fish, smoke like a chimney, and eat anything except human flesh. The Brigadier was lucky to get Bhagavan's *darshan* [sight] in January 1978 when Bhagavan visited my house to bless us. Bhagavan advised him to drink milk. When asked, the Brigadier informed Bhagavan that he was from Kashmir but posted in Madras. He prayed for a posting to Kashmir to sort out his family problems. Lo and behold, he received his posting orders within 48 hours to his hometown Baramulla. When he came to thank Bhagavan, he was advised to set a good personal example by doing selfless service.

The other officer, the Colonel, was also blessed and not only did he get the posting of his choice but also received a promotion by Bhagavan's grace. They both have since become complete teetotalers, non-smokers, and vegetarians doing Sai service in their respective places.

Many people ask me why so many foreigners come to Bhagavan. My answer to them is that most of the foreigners who come have enough money to buy all the material comforts, but they come to Bhagavan for getting peace of mind, which they cannot buy with money. Like me, they also believe that *darshan* (divine glimpse) of Baba removes all their problems and worries of the world; *sparshan* (touch of His lotus feet or a casual touch of His dress) removes all their illness; and *sambhashan* (conversation with Him or listening to His discourse) energizes them with fresh zest and enthusiasm to face the world.

Out of millions of people who come to Him, I have not seen anyone going back unhappy or dissatisfied, because they somehow imbibe His Divine vibrations that in turn remove or lessen their burden of life. His teachings also have universal appeal bringing out the unity in diversity of all religions of the world as depicted in the Sai emblem. He practices what He preaches as per His saying, "My life is My message". He keeps on reminding us to love all, believing in the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man."

Many people may be wondering as to why Bhagavan spends the bulk of His time for the students, with the students, and about the students. His Divine design is to use

the students as His media to carry forth His teachings to the world and to be shining examples to society after going through rigorous training in the human values of truth, righteous conduct, peace, love, and non-violence. Here is a new generation inspired by love and faith in Bhagavan, schooled in academic excellence and spiritual discipline, that is being transformed and equipped to provide moral leadership to the world.

I have realized that Sai discipline, which is essentially spiritual in nature, is based on love unlike the military discipline based on fear of punishment. The sense of achievement and joy one gets in performing Sai work is much more than what one feels after a successful military operation as the latter entails casualty to human lives and damage to people and property. I always feel happy to recollect the various revelations I had of Bhagavan's omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. In fact, I feel the constant need to recollect these to get over confusions, crisis, and contradictions that cross my mind periodically. From experience I came to realize whatever Bhagavan says or does has an inner significance. By example, He teaches us never to expect or demand any material benefit for the services we render.

Though I have been having ups and downs in my health, remembering Bhagavan's assurance 'Why fear when I am near' gives me courage, confidence, energy, and enthusiasm. I keep on doing spiritual, educational, and social service as a Sai worker in my state, unmindful of my age and failing health, because I am under the good care of the greatest healer on earth—Lord Sai. I firmly believe that Lord Sai is our breath, and that we survive because of Him. Lord Sai is our charioteer and so we are safe, secure, and successful. Lord Sai has proved on many occasions that He is a loving father and doting mother. In His infinite mercy, He has been giving us motherly love and forgiving us our mistakes committed knowingly or unknowingly, and at the same time guiding us and guarding us. May this living God who is also the loving God continue to bless us all to be worthy of His grace.

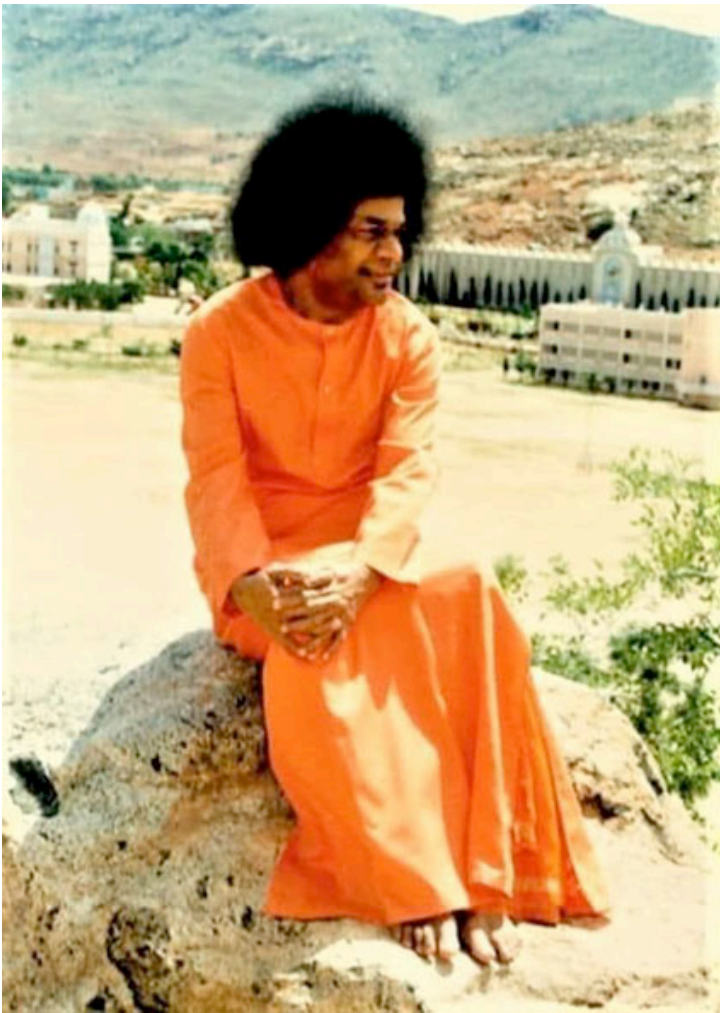
By Maj. Gen. (Retd.) S. R Mahadevan
Source: *Sai Vandana* 1995

Divine Tutelage Under Sri Sathya Sai

Our Loving God says that in the present, the past lives and the future gets shaped. I feel quite nostalgic while I go down memory lane. When I was eight years old, my parents showed me this wonderful Lord as my 'Savior'.

When I was eleven, my parents brought me to Parthi for His Divine *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan* [sight, touch, and conversation], and for His Divine benediction in the course of the interview that He graciously granted the entire family. From then onward, all the members of our family have been drawn to His fold

one after another, guarded, guided, and groomed to be instruments in His Divine mission.



Way back in 1976, I was in my second year MA (Economics) class, preparing for my university examinations under the 'watchful eye' of my revered teacher, Prof. A N Rajamani. We had seven papers. The sixth one, Regional Economics, was the first optional paper, on a Saturday afternoon. The examination started at 2 p.m. and nowhere could I see any economics in that question paper. I was in the predicament of the legendary elephant-king, Gajendra! I was completely lost! Then I closed my question paper, surrendered to my Lord faithfully in my heart without a trace of ego and invited Him to write the examination through me. When I opened my question paper, lo and behold! The five questions out of ten that I had to answer were there, so simple and

straight forward. The members of my family and I could realize the Divine play in it only when I was awarded the Justice P. Chandra Reddy Gold Medal by the University of Madras for having stood first in MA (Economics). This honor later fetched me, by choice, an Assistant Professorship in Economics at CBM College, Coimbatore, in the very same year.

As a *Seva Dal* volunteer, I actively participated in the service activities of the Coimbatore *Samiti* (an organization), and in November 1978 I was one among the several groups posted on duty at a site where (the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of SSSIHL is housed now) our beloved Swami laid the foundation stone for Sri Sathya Sai Arts, Science, and Commerce College (SSSASCC).

I had an intuitive feeling that I would be drawn soon to serve in His glorious educational institution. Since I was in a permanent job then, there was no reason for me to think of any other alternatives very seriously. Then I stumbled upon the

advertisement in a newspaper inviting applications for the post of a Lecturer in Economics at SSSASCC, Prasanthi Nilayam. I got a phone call informing me that our beloved Lord would visit Ooty the following day. Immediately, the devotees from Coimbatore made arrangements for a bus to go to Ooty for the Lord's *darshan* and took me also along with them. When Swami approached the Coimbatore group, I gathered courage and prayed to Him to permit me to serve in Puttaparthi College. Swami replied in the affirmative: "Yes, yes, yes." I consulted my parents and applied for the post. A formal interview was conducted at Brindavan and I was selected.

The management of the CBM College, Coimbatore, was considerate enough to relieve me from my duties immediately. But the Principal of the CBM College, who had joined just then, directed me to get an extension of time from the authorities of SSSASCC. I rushed to Parthi and Swami lovingly conceded my prayer and graciously permitted me to join after 15 days. Fifteen days passed. The Principal of the CBM College did not keep his promise and directed me to approach the authorities of SSSASCC for yet another extension of 15 days. Now I was in a fix. A senior colleague of mine there challenged me by remarking, "Your Baba is known for miracles! Why couldn't He do something in your case?" A voice from within came and I replied, "He does, and you will be the first to witness that!"

The next day, I happened to go to the house of the former Principal of the CBM College, Prof. Narayanan, who got very annoyed on hearing about the way in which the issue had been handled. He took me straight to the Chairman of the CBM College, pleaded with him on my behalf and persuaded him to take the initiative in getting my relief. The following day, the Chairman came to the college and ordered the Principal to issue my 'relieving order' immediately. After obtaining my 'relieving order' from the Principal in just 15 minutes, the first person I met was the same colleague who had doubted the ever-encompassing love of Swami!

The very next day, I joined my duty at SSSASCC and met Prof. N Kasturi with whom I maintained a close relationship for decades. Just a few days later during *darshan*, Swami inquired about me and christened me 'Coimbatore'. Whenever occasion demanded, He called me 'Coimbatore' and I had a doubt for a long time whether Swami knew my name at all. The staff meeting of the college used to be in the Divine presence in the Divine interview room in the *Mandir*. Swami used to touch upon several issues in the course of His conversation and fill the hearts of everyone with confidence, missionary zeal, and love. On one such occasion, I was far away from Him. He spoke in mellifluous Telugu for over an hour and a half without any translation. After He concluded, without looking at my side, He lovingly enquired in Telugu, "Bhalachandran, did you understand what I spoke?" Though Telugu was not my mother-tongue, I followed His message. I replied quickly, "Yes, Swami." He turned back and gave me a broad smile. On yet another occasion of this kind, Swami instilled in me the sense of belonging to the institution to which I was wedded now, by declaring, "You take care of My children; I will bear the entire burden of your family." Swami stands by His promise completely.

In the formative years of the Institute, during *darshan* Swami would certainly come to every teacher, pass a remark about something, correct or reprimand, comment or appreciate, and sensitize him. On a Sunday morning, as He was passing me, He lovingly gave a pat on my head and moved ahead. Suddenly, He turned and rushed back and asked me with concern whether His pat pained me. 'No, Amma!' I said. The moment He heard me address Him as 'Mother', He looked at me with His piercing eyes and flooded my entire being with His infinite grace and love. I was lost in ecstasy for about an hour and a half. He was watching me from a distance. "He is infinite, yet tangible; though He is impersonal, He is personal and intimate; rather the impersonal is personified for our benefit." (*Yogasutra Upanishad*).

After the Institute came into being, its authorities nominated me to organize the Institute's first final examination for the Prasanthi Nilayam and the Anantapur Campuses. As we were yet to equip ourselves to meet the requirements of a full-fledged university examination, I was directed to contact the *Mandir* authorities to lend their support to conduct the same.

I was on my way to discharging my duty when Swami's car came in the opposite direction on the road. The moment He saw me, He stopped the car and gave me a bit of His mind. I could not understand the reason. Prof. N. Kasturi, who was by His side, later told me that Swami had been upset since He had seen me on the road during the working hours of the Institute. However, when He came to know that I had been on my examination duty, He came to me during the evening *darshan* and blessed me profusely to accomplish my task. Swami is so particular even now that His children should never err at any point of time.

He visited my class sessions thrice and was delighted to observe the teaching plus interactive sessions I had with my students. He expressed His appreciation then and there. He complimented me on my handwriting and the lesson plan that I had written on the blackboard. He perused the notes jotted down by the students and made His suggestions for their improvement. He directed me more than once to give additional time and coaching for the 'slow-learners' so that they never lagged behind.

The Institute auditorium was getting remodeled under Swami's direction in 1984. Shilpi Subramanian was designing and drawing two huge pictures on either side of the stage of the auditorium. One evening, Swami came to the auditorium without prior notice. None was there on the Campus except me. I rushed to Him, welcomed Him, and led Him to the auditorium. He headed for the side-entrance of the auditorium, walking barefoot, unmindful of bushes and thorns. I collected Swami's sandals from His car, praying to Him to put on the sandals. He not only granted my prayer, but also directed me to slip them onto His lotus feet. While I was engaged in this Divine service, He held my head tightly and did not allow me to get up. After playing thus for a while, He blessed and directed me to get the auditorium opened. He surveyed the work that was in progress and left for the *Mandir*. During His visits to the Institute, He graciously permitted me several times to open His car and carry His '*pan-box*'. He took a special interest in my registration for the Ph.D. degree at Sri

Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur, approved my topic and Research Supervisor, and encouraged me in producing my dissertation.

During March 1980, we, the staff of the college, were informed that our appointments were not made in conformity with the norms of the S. V. University and the Directorate of Collegiate Education, A.P., and our services would be terminated with due notice. We were told to apply for our respective posts afresh and appear for the interview once again. This worried us a lot. On a Sunday morning, just before the *bhajans* at 11 a.m., Swami was talking to the students in the middle verandah when my esteemed colleague, Dr. Gangadhar Sastry and I stood with folded hands far away, listening to the following pearls of His Divine guidance:

- Contrary values are complementary to each other.
- The present moment is more valuable than the past or the future.
- We must celebrate our existence.
- Owning full responsibility makes me free and elated.
- I have to broaden my vision and deepen my roots.
- *Sadhana, satsang* [spiritual effort and good company], and service are our vital forces.

As the Tamil bard, *Thiruvalluvar* says: "*Vellathaniadhu Malar Neettam, Mandhardam Ullathanaiadhu uyarvu.*" (The limit of a man's achievement in the present moment is more valuable than the strength of his will. The Lotus plant grows up to the height of the water in the pond, so does a man rise to the free height of his will.)

This 'will power' is the Divine Grace that our beloved Lord has given to each one of us as a 'blank cheque'. It is up to us fill in the cheque and draw Divine Grace from His Infinite Source.

~Prof G. Bhalachandran, Former Head of Department of Economics,
Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam
Source: *Sai Vandana* 2005 (80th Birthday Offering)

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

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

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

A Bouquet for Our Beloved Sai

I start this Prayer to Sri Ganesha, who
keeps us from all harm and sin:
Dear Ganesha, Sri Ganesha, bless this
Journey we begin.
Sweet Ganesha. Sai Ganesha, Lead us
to Lord Sai our King.

.... To Sathya Sai our Divine King:

Om to Earth and Heaven above,
Om to the dawning Sun within.
Sai has come to light our Heart,
Illumine love and peace therein.
Om to Earth and Heaven above, to
Sathya Sai, our Lord, we sing.
His light and goodness fill our heart,
Illumine love and peace therein.

O God beautiful, O God beautiful,
Thank You for each perfect day.
Thank You for Your gracious gifts,
You care for us in every way.
Dearest Lord, we feel Your presence in
our Heart where You reside.
May all our words, and all our deeds,
and all our thoughts on You abide.

At Your Lotus Feet we pray that never
we from *dharma* stray.
Help us, Lord, to see Your form in
every creature that is born.
You're our beacon, You're our shelter,
You're our hope, we bow to You.
Show us how to serve all mankind,
Love all, seeing only You.

Lord, we want no wealth or fame,
Just give us strength to sing Your name.
When we search our heart, our mind,
Beloved Sai, You're all we find.
You're our mother, You're our father,
You're our brother, sister, too.
You're our friend, and You're our *guru*,
You're our God, we worship You.

Brothers, sisters, near and far,
Come listen to the *Avatar*.
When we share the love we feel,
His Golden Age He'll soon reveal.
Start the day, spend the day,
End the day with love, sweet love.
That's the way to come to Baba,
Merge with Him who's purely love.
Start the day. Fill the day, end the
Day with love, sweet love.
That's the way to reach Lord Sai, merge
with Him who's purely love.

Praise God, remember God,
Rejoice in God, Be One with God.
Let every breath be filled with God,
within us is the loving God.
... Sri Sathya Sai our living God.
Lord, we want You. Lord, we need You.
Lord, we give our lives to You.
Lord, our hearts are filled with *prema*.
Lord, our eyes see only You.

Asatoma Tamasoma, from the
Darkness lead us home.
Always shine Your light upon us,
Give us peace, Lord Hari *Om*.
We open wide our Temple door,
Voice and heart to heaven soar;
Glory to the blessed One,
Whose love is deep within our core.
...We have His love forevermore.

Joyfully we sing God's name,
Proclaim God's truth, extol His fame.
Our hearts receive the *arthi* flame,
and taste the sweetness of His name.
We're happy that on earth He came.
We're ever grateful that He came.
.... Dear Lord Sai, we're glad You came.
Om - Shanti - Shanti - Shanti.

~A. N. Drucker

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Sept 1981

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

The Gross and Subtle Concept

Bhakta: Swami, at Venkatagiri, during the 'Adhyatmika Sabha' (assembly pertaining to the spirit), You said some things that I could not clearly understand; can I ask about them now?

Swami: I am happy when anyone asks me about things that he has not understood. Of course, you have every right.

Bhakta: You said *sthula-rupa* and *sukshma-rupa*, the gross form and the subtle form, isn't it? These two, are they the characteristics of the *manas* [mind] only? Or are they related to everything?

Swami: They are characteristic of everything; in fact, all the names and forms found in the gross exist also in the subtle stage! Why, the gross is there only to make you understand the subtle!

Bhakta: Well then, Swami, we see the gross firmament, the *sthula-aakasa* [gross space] has it a subtle *aakasa* [space] also?

Swami: My dear boy, all this exists in that subtle *aakasa*. The subtle *aakasa* is as imperceptible and as all-pervading as the gross *aakasa*.

Bhakta: What is its name, Swami?

Swami: It is known as the *sukshma hridayaakasa*, the subtle firmament of the heart.

Bhakta: How can that be all-pervading?

Swami: Nothing else possesses the extent, the area, the breadth that this *hridayaakasa* has. See how many scenes, how many feelings, how many conjectures are immersed and imbedded in it!

Bhakta: Then have we a Sun also in that subtle sky?

Swami: Of course! Who said, no? Without that, how can there be all this splendor, all this light and wisdom and brightness?

Bhakta: What is its name, Swami?

Swami: When the heart is the *aakasa*, the Sun, naturally, is the *buddhi* or the intellect that illuminates that sky. The effulgence of the *buddhi* is as bright as the rays of the Sun. So the subtle Sun is *buddhi*.

Bhakta: Then it is possible that the Moon also in subtle form is in the *aakasa* of the heart.

Swami: Why do you ask about all these one by one? Did I not tell you at the beginning itself? Every gross name and form has its corresponding subtle form and name. The Moon in its subtle form is *prema* [love], with its cool rays pleasing the heart. Love is the subtle form of the Moon.

Bhakta: Excuse me, Swami, the Pandavas and the Kauravas [from the epic *Mahabharata*] waged a war, isn't it? How are they supposed to have waged the 'subtle' war, these 'subtle' Pandavas and their opposite numbers, the 'subtle' Kauravas?

Swami: Why do you say, "supposed to have waged"? They are waging it even today in the subtle form! In this war, the evil qualities are the Kauravas; the good qualities, *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa*, are the five Pandava brothers. The evil qualities are many and so the Kauravas, too, are a horde. Each one under his own *hridayaakasa*, on his own *chidabhumi* [the place where dead bodies are burnt] is waging this struggle every moment.

Bhakta: Swami, they say the Pandavas are children of the King Pandu and the Kauravas are the offspring of the King Dhritarashtra. In the 'subtle' form, how are we to recognize them?

Swami: Both are disputants for the kingship of the self-same heart; they are in everyone as *ajnani* and *sujnani*, the unwise personality and the wise personality. The unwise blind ruler is Dhritarashtra; the wise Pandu is the father of all good qualities. Have you understood?

Bhakta: But then, Swami, excuse me, in that war there were millions of soldiers and chariots, and the subjects—who are they in this 'subtle' conflict?

Swami: Of course, they are all there in man. The million feelings and thoughts and impressions are the soldiers and subjects. The ten *indriyas* [sense organs] are the regiments; the five senses are the chariots. In everyone's heart there is this perpetual war being fought between good and evil, between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Is that clear?

Bhakta: Well, who is Lord Krishna in the subtle war; He who was then neutral in that struggle for power?

Swami: Don't you know? He is the witness, known as *atma*. He is *sarathi* [charioteer] of the chariot of the *jiva* [individual soul].

Bhakta: Another question. All these people had Hasthinapura as their capital then. In man, which is the Hasthinapura?

Swami: The basis for all these subtle manifestations, these men, chariots, Pandavas and Kauravas is, as you know, this *asthinapura*, the city of bones, this body. This skeleton is *asthinapura*! Both have nine gates. There both the Kauravas and the Pandavas were born; they played and were trained there; they grew up together there. So, also, in this same *asthinapura* all the qualities, good and bad, are born and do grow; they develop and subside, they watch and hate each other, all in the same body. Are not the warring rulers in this body also *ajnani* and *sujnani*, the unwise personality and the wise personality?

Bhakta: Yes, Swami. There is an intimate connection between the *Mahabharatha* war and the qualities and conduct of man. Really, the relationship is there, without doubt. What a fine comparison! As you said this type of warfare is taking place in everyone, even now. Well Swami, when will this war end?

Swami: When will this war end, you ask? When both 'bad qualities' and good qualities fade out and man becomes quality-less; then alone can man have *shanti* [peace].

Bhakta: At the time, this battlefield, this *asthinapura*, the city of bones will not exist, is it?

Swami: When there is a battle, there must be a battlefield. When you have no battle, why bother about a field.

Bhakta: Can we not avoid the battle altogether?

Swami: Why not? Kings develop the spirit of war because they have confidence in their subjects. The subjects encourage the rulers to unleash the hounds of war. Delusions are the subjects, who push the individual into the battle. When there is a paucity of such subjects war, too, will not be waged. So divest yourself of such subjects as delusions, illusions, feelings of 'I' and 'Mine', and then you can be at peace, enjoying undisturbed *shanti*, my boy...You can go now! Wait! Let me tell you one thing: entertaining doubts of all kinds is also a delusion, *vyamoha*! Strive to be free from even this trait! Well, go and come sometime later.

“With prayer to God, you can achieve anything in life. I want you to pray. I am always with you, in you, above you, and around you. Make efforts to instil such faith and devotion in fellow human beings. That will make Me very happy. Happiness lies in union with God. Hence contemplate on God incessantly. Never give scope for anxiety or worry.”

~Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 39, Ch.1

Self-Confidence

Thought of the MONTH

First of all, one should have faith in one's own Self. Develop self-confidence, which will lead to self-satisfaction. When you have self-satisfaction, you will be prepared for self-sacrifice. Only through self-sacrifice, can one attain self-realization. Self-realization means to realize that you are everything. Self-confidence is the foundation, self-satisfaction is the wall, self-sacrifice is the roof and self-realization is life. No one can live in a building without roof. Roof cannot be laid without walls and walls cannot be raised without foundation. So, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, and self-sacrifice are very essential for self-realization. Today man has lost Self-confidence. If one loses Self-confidence, one loses everything. Only through Self-confidence can one have the vision of the latent divine effulgence.

~Divine Discourse, Sathya Sai Baba, "The Life Principles of Man"

With the passage of time, due to the effects of *Kali* Age people have lost faith in the Self and have reposed faith in this transient and ephemeral world. Today man does not have even the self-confidence of birds and beasts. When a small bird rests on a thin branch of a tree, the branch starts tossing up and down. But the bird is not fear-stricken because it depends on its wings, not on the branch it rests. Bird has total reliance on its wings, but not man in his Self...he suffers as a result.

There is no scope for any doubt in a man with faith in the Self. He is unperturbed by the vicissitudes of life. Since ancient times, the culture of *Bharath* has had Self-confidence as the basis, but with the commencement of the modern age Self-confidence is on the decline. Every man should develop faith in the Self. One can attain the blissful state only through Self-confidence.

If man does not know his own Self, what is the use of knowing the rest? He reads newspaper every day in order to be aware of the happenings around the world. He makes efforts to know what is happening in every country, but does not put in any effort to know his own Self. He keeps questioning whosoever he comes across, "Who are you? Where do you come from?" but he does not put these questions to himself. There is no point in undertaking any spiritual practice without Self-enquiry.

~Divine Discourses '98, Develop Steadfast faith in God

It is only when you have developed self-confidence, confidence in the indwelling Atma, that you will be able to develop a strong confidence in the Lord. If you do not believe in yourself, you cannot truly believe in God. For the body-mind, this master is the indweller. He will never leave you. Therefore, by means of inner inquiry you should try to discover and recognize this unchanging indwelling divinity which is your true reality.

~Sai Baba Gita, Worldly Knowledge is Useless Without Self-knowledge.