

Role of the Avatar in the Cosmic Play

*Like oil in the thil [sesame] seed
Like ghee [clarified butter] in milk,
fragrance in a flower,
Juice in a fruit, fire in wood,
Divinity is everywhere.*

Embodiments of the Divine *atma*! From ancient times, the questions, "Where is God?" and "How does He appear?" have been agitating the minds of people. The answers have been sought by different ways of investigation. The believers, non-believers, those with doubts, and others have not been able to get clear answers to these questions. To comprehend the truth, one should look within oneself. This cannot be learnt from textbooks or from teachers. *Chaitanya* (consciousness) is there in the mind and pervades everywhere. The power of vision in the eye and of taste in the tongue are derived from this *chaitanya*. People are using the sense organs but do not know the source of the power that activates them.

Chaitanya cannot be comprehended by the physical vision. It is within everyone in very close proximity. People undertake external exercises and spiritual practices in vain to find it. The entire creation is a manifestation of the Divine Will; *prakriti* (nature) is the manifestation of God. Man is also part of *prakriti* and thus has the Divine power in him.

***Chaitanya* is the seed of entire universe**

A seed germinates and grows into a plant and then into a tree with branches, leaves, flowers, etc. The seed of the entire universe is *chaitanya* (pure consciousness). It is *sat-chit-ananda* [truth, consciousness, bliss]. It grows in full bloom in the human being and blossoms into the flower of awareness. Thus, God incarnates in man. To understand this truth is the goal of human life. It is the mind that stands in the way of this realization. The mind is perverted when it is centered on the ego (body consciousness) of a person, but when it is directed toward the *atma* it becomes sublime. One puffed up with ego forgets divinity. Thinking on the physical plane and looking at the external world, man is not able to understand the divinity within him.

It is wrong to think that spirituality has nothing to do with worldly matters. The physical world also reflects divinity. There are two entities, *swabhava* and *prabhava*, the former emanating from the true inner Self and the latter from worldly pursuits.

Because man forgets his true divine nature he is wallowing in troubles and tribulations. He is reflecting only animal qualities in his actions. Only when one enquires within, one has the chance of realizing divinity.

Today we are celebrating *Ganesh Jayanti*, the birthday of Vighneshvara. Who is He? What is His greatness? What has He taught to the world? We celebrate the *Jayanti* but do not make any effort to understand the *tatwa* (principle) behind it. His supreme teaching by His own example is oneness of the universe. When He was asked to go round the universe to get a prize from His parents, He just circumambulated His parents Lord Shiva and Parvati and claimed that He had completed the trip around the universe by going around them, as Lord Shiva and Parvati represented the universe.

Unity in the family is the basis of unity in society

The vehicles of Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh, Subrahmanya and the objects worn on their bodies all get on harmoniously though they are in their original nature antagonistic to each other. Take the examples of the lion, the vehicle of Parvati, living in peace with the elephant, the form of Ganesh; [take] the bull, the vehicle of Shiva, the peacock, the vehicle of Subrahmanya, bearing no enmity toward the snake, the garland of Shiva.

Unity in a family is the basis of unity in society. Though there are lots of common features among mankind, people are not able to visualize their unity, but promote only their differences. The cause for the lack of peace in the world is the absence of harmony in thought, word, and deed in everyone, which is reflected in the lack of unity among different individuals.

Spiritual values have been given up, resulting in the turmoil that we see today. Ganapati taught that one should respect one's parents and thereby win their grace and secure bliss.

The form of Ganapati cannot by any human standards be termed as handsome. He has a small head, big stomach, and uncouth form. But still we are captivated by His form and like to see Him more and more and worship Him. Beauty does not lie in the *akara*, the external form, but can be experienced even in *vikara* (apparent uncouthness). Ganesh sacrificed His own tusk and used it as a pen to write down the *Mahabharata* to the dictation of Vyasa for the benefit of humanity. Man worships God only for selfish purposes. No one is prepared to sacrifice anything for getting divine bliss, while men are prepared to go to any length for worldly pleasures. Your mind and heart should be rendered pure to worship Divinity. You should see unity in diversity.

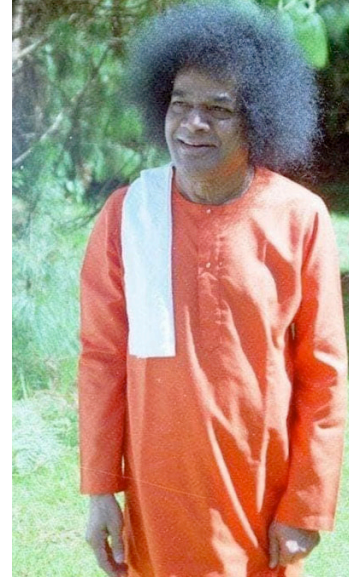
Role of the Divine in the cosmic drama

In the cosmic drama, the Divine has His own role to play. When one takes up a role in a drama, he should act according to the role and not according to his state in real life. Behind the screen he comes into his own. You should understand this truth

clearly. A man may take up the role of Rama in a drama. Then he must adhere to the principles of *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, and *prema* [truth, righteousness, peace, and love] that governed all Rama's actions, though in actual life the actor may not be righteous. Similarly, God assumes a role in the drama of the world in human form. He must behave as a human being only. This should be clearly understood by all.

Avatar will not transgress rules and regulations

Krishna was *Paramatma* (supreme power) and *sarvajna* (all-knowing). Though He was very close to Draupadi, at the time when she suffered humiliation in the court of Duryodhana, who ordered that she be disrobed, Krishna made an endless supply of *saris* to protect her honor. Some persons ask why Krishna did not punish Duryodhana on the spot when he was perpetrating such a heinous crime against a noble woman who was so devoted to Krishna. No doubt Draupadi was highly devoted to Krishna, and Krishna had also the power to punish Duryodhana. But in this drama, several more scenes had to be enacted. Duryodhana was predestined to be killed by Bhima in the war that was yet to come. So Krishna could not interfere.



Kamsa's life was in the hands of Krishna, and Ravana's life was in the hands of Rama. Both Rama and Krishna are forms of Vishnu. But each had to play His specific role in His incarnation. For every incarnation there are certain rules and regulations that the *Avatar* will not transgress. Mere mortals cannot understand the ways of the Divine.

In the Divine family of Lord Shiva, we should understand that Shiva represents energy and Parvati represents *prakriti* (world of matter). *Buddhi* (intellect) and *siddhi* (fulfillment) are symbolic of Ganapati and Subrahmanya, their sons. They are all one, though conceived in different forms. All the five fingers in the hands are not alike but different in size and shape. But when you do any work, they join together to give maximum effect. If all are of equal size, it will not be conducive to effective functioning. This is one of the secrets of God's creation.

Realize the wisdom of the Divine

There was a mathematician taking rest under a tree. He wondered why a pumpkin creeper bore such a huge fruit, while the huge banyan tree over his head bore only tiny fruits. He doubted the sense of proportion of God. During his sleep some fruits from the banyan tree fell on his body. On waking up he realized that if the huge tree that attracted people to take shelter under its shade had big fruits like pumpkins, their fall would be harmful to those resting under it. This experience made him realize the wisdom of the Divine.

You should try to have complete knowledge of anything. Partial knowledge is dangerous. You should study the nature of the heart. God thinks of *Loka-Shreyas* (the welfare of the whole world). He has a broad vision, while human beings have a narrow selfish outlook.

You should also expand your heart—not the physical heart, which may call for surgery if it expands. I am speaking about the spiritual heart. It is called *Hridaya*, meaning one that is filled with *daya* (compassion). It is all pervading. If you think of America, your heart goes there at once. The physical heart is like a machine with limited scope. The heart with *daya* (compassion) is *Daivam* (God). If one has no *daya* his nature is devilish. Compassion is the most essential quality of a human being. Without compassion, man is inhuman. A compassionate heart reflects divinity.

God has no birth or death. He remains an eternal witness. How to realize such an entity who is *aprameya* and *apramana* (beyond description and beyond proof)? He responds only to *prema*. You should understand God through love and spend your life with love.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 26

You have been born for one purpose: to die. That is to say, to kill the "I". If bhrama [illusion] dies, you become Brahman, or rather you know that you are Brahman. All literature, all effort, all yajna (sacrifice), all teaching is just to hold a mirror before you so that you may see your Self.

~Baba

Happiness is Union with God

Marcello Sandri was a student from 1992-2001 at the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam. Currently, he is a senior software engineer in Italy.

After having been in the Divine fold for the last many years, after having observed Him, after having talked with Him many a time, the only thing of which I can be sure about Bhagavan is that He is love, love, and nothing other than love. The way He looks at everyone, the way He smiles at everyone, the way He moves, are all reflections of His inner being, of what He really is, and that is love alone.

Often, we may feel that He is 'angry' with us, but we should never forget that He is the greatest actor in this drama of life. He acts so well that we fail to recognize the love. He acts 'angry' to correct us, for we do not change otherwise. So His main aim is our happiness. Isn't that love?

When He gives discourses, when He sings *bhajans* [holy songs], we are all exhilarated and feel overjoyed though we may be far away from Him. How does this happen? It is because His love is like a wildfire, which spreads out making everything and anything burn in the same fire. At that moment we really feel happy. The only problem is that we do not keep that fire alive, we let it die out and thus we return to our normal state.

Our life as a student seems to be like in paradise, for we have everything that we need around us, and to top it all we have Bhagavan Himself who lives with us. But why is it that He then emphasizes the point: "Look within, start your inner journey." A journey within! And where is the destination? First of all, what could we possibly find inside us that is not already outside us?

I am reminded of a small poem, which answers all these questions beautifully. It goes like this:

God wanted to hide, He said:
"If I hide on top of the highest mountains,
man will climb it and find Me,
If I hide in the atom, He will split it and
find Me,
If I hide on the stars, He will spy me out
with His telescopes."
So, God decided to hide in the place
where man would never search,
And that is in the depths of his heart.



So God is there inside us, in our heart. That is what our Dear Lord means when He asks us to look within. He gives us a clue to this treasure hunt and the treasure is immense, immeasurable. It is up to us to find this treasure so well hidden. It is said that the best way to hide something from someone is to keep that object right under his nose! That's exactly what Bhagavan has done. The biggest treasure of all is not under our nose, it is with us already, but we do not know it! How foolish is it of us to go around searching for what we actually have already?

'God', 'Consciousness', 'Bhagavan' and 'Inner Being' is all synonymous. Bhagavan is no different from us except that He knows that He is God while we do not. In the Bible, too, it is written: "God made man in His very form." Does it mean physically? I don't think so. Our soul is the same as His. We are just a part in His endless whole. How beautiful it is to think of this! We are God, God is we. So if we are God, we can achieve anything! We can do what others can't. We can now do the things we were afraid of. This is great. All this would be true only and only if we really believe that we are God. Another poem springs up in my mind in this connection:

A small boy looked up at a star and began to weep.

And the star said, "Boy, why are you weeping?"
The boy said, "You are too far away,
I will never be able to touch you."
And the star answered, "My dear boy, if I weren't
Already in your heart, you would not be able to see me."

When I read this poem for the first time, I was out of breath. I was really astonished. This poem clearly describes the way we are living today. We are like the small boy weeping for the worldly things around us knowing not that we have them already inside us. This is in accordance with what Bhagavan says, "Everything is a reflection of your inner being." Everything we see around us, if at all we can see anything, it is already inside us. The worldly things we see are just reflections, and reflections are not real. This is what is called *maya* [illusion]. The whole world is *maya*; it is unreal. But we are very much attracted by it. You may ask me how it is possible to have everything inside. This is indeed possible because we have Bhagavan inside us. Then we have the whole universe and much more, too! It all comes back to the point that we have God inside us.

Then how is it that we do not hear Him or why doesn't He talk to us? It is because we do not try to listen, and we do not give Him the necessary time to talk. Once a student went to Socrates and asked him, "Master, how can I find God?" The great master then took him to a river. The boy obediently followed him into the river. Suddenly, Socrates pushed the boy into the water. The boy began struggling for breath but in vain. When the boy became blue in color, Socrates pulled him out. The student was very angry and abused him. Socrates then said, "Dear boy, when you were under the water, what did you want most?" The boy answered "air." Then the great truth was revealed, "My dear boy, you can find God only if you want Him as badly as you wanted the air then."

We can hear the Lord inside us only if we really want to. The choice is in our hands. It is up to us to make this choice fast, for God is waiting.

Finally, another big question arises. Why should we create a bond with the inner Lord when we have Him physically with us? This question makes real good sense right now; [in] the future when Swami sends us into the world to spread His love and mission to everyone, it would make no sense at all. Then we wouldn't have Bhagavan physically anymore. What would we do then? Should we just forget everything that we have learnt here in Prasanthi Nilayam? No. It is then that an inner Lord takes over. Therefore, we should create a very strong bond with Bhagavan within. Just imagine, we would have Him however we want Him to be, wherever we want Him, whenever we want. There would be no physical limitation then. He would be available to us at any time ready to love us, help us, and rescue us. He will then surely guide us on to the right path. He will enact through us. He would become us.

And that is the final stage of our life where we would feel the real happiness, which we feel so often in Bhagavan's presence, so often but for so less time. But now it would be a never-ending happiness, for, "Happiness is Union with God."

I would like to conclude with a poem. But this is a poem with a difference, for it was written by Bhagavan Himself:

Come one, come all; See Yourself in Me, for,
I see Myself in You all. You are My life, My breath, My soul.
You are all My forms. When I love You, I love Myself.
When You love Yourself, You love Me.
I have separated Myself from Myself so that I could love Myself.
My beloved ones,
You are My Own Self.

Source: Sai Nandana 2000 (75th Birthday Offering)

A Bird on the Tree

Beneath the blue sky, the floating white clouds, a bird flew,
Paused for a moment, fluttered its wings, sat atop the branch,
The topmost branch of the cherry tree, sat alone in silence,
It viewed the scene below from its high perch, a superb seat,
Just for a little while, serene and splendid, in its isolation,
It seemed to enjoy, in a mute minute, free of any twittering.
I sat there in my white steel chair, bathed in the golden light,
I watched the bird that morn, steeped in a reverie, it flew away.

Spring season with its budding blossoms, with its tender leaves,
Spreading a green mantle with its varied shades and shapes,
Late frost retreats at the arrival of the joyous spring of hope,
Men and women, kids and puppies ventured out with a sprint,
Pandemic isolation had hitherto ripped apart their joy in life,
Freed somewhat from the fetters that bound them so harsh,
They all ventured forth in family groups to recapture that glory,
That evaded them when this virus turned their lives into a mess.

As is my wont these spring days, after my walk morn and eve,
By the side of my house, shaded by the tall, spreading trees,
A walk steady and slow as befits my declining age and strength,
A walk that aids in keeping my joints supple for my daily move,
I sit in my garden white chair, watching nature in its entire garb,
Watch the scenes of those who pass by, some with kids and pets,

Some with a smile, others lost in themselves wending their way.
I sat alone, bereft of company, as the family pursues their own lives.

A period mostly spent alone, a time in reminiscence of the past,
Well aware that life's toil must be endured to the last breath
With my own efforts, I turn to Lord Sai for direction to proceed,
Musings on little things open up a wider vista of beauteous things,
Bird on the treetop bring poignant vision of the flight of fancy,
Which Keats flew on the wings of poesy to be with the nightingale,
So did I wish to alight with the bird on the treetop to enjoy scenes,
Alas, it cannot be, sensing my limitations, I am content with my lot.

As Sai guidance jolts me from wandering mind to think deep and true,
I see around me scenes of the lovely creation of the creator Himself,
Rich foliage on the trees bewitching with their shades and shapes,
Flowers red, pink, green and yellow with their petals neatly arranged,
Who else but the Divine craftsman could arrange them so flawless?
Seated on my white chair in the garden with the divine gift before me,
With the bird on the tree teaching me joy with its silent meditation,
I bowed in humility to Lord Sai for all His offering of Divine Wisdom.

~Kanaga Ranganathan, May 22, 2021

The Sathya Sai Avatar: My Perceptions

Sri Anil Vinayak Gokak, a retired officer of the Indian Administrative Service (Maharashtra cadre), served as the seventh Vice Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning from February 2005 to August 2008. He has held important positions in the Government of Maharashtra and later in the Government of India in various capacities such as Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, and Secretary, Department of Fertilizers.

My wife and I saw Baba for the first time in August 1969; we had accompanied our parents. Baba materialized a beautiful necklace for my wife and asked her to wear it; He said that He had performed our marriage afresh and gave the necklace as a present to mark the occasion! Then He materialized a big apple and asked my wife to eat it! My wife had a most thrilling experience. Two important events brought about a qualitative change in my perception of Baba as God and *Avatar*. Very often I would wonder whether miracles were the only hallmark of Divinity and whether the importance being given to them was disproportionate.

One day when my father had come to Mumbai, he told me how Baba compared His miracles to visiting cards, and that the miracles are only an introduction to Him.

Then around the year 1973, there was a fierce controversy on whether Baba was God or not. When some of the rationalists asked Baba whether He was God, He said, "I am God, you are also God. The only difference between you and Me is, I am aware of My Divinity, whereas you are not." This struck a deep chord within me.

However, it was the subsequent events that proved to be the turning points. Baba blessed my wife in the mid-seventies that she would conceive and give birth to a son. These words proved to be benedictory, and my wife gave birth to a son in September 1975.



Another incident that also took place in the mid 1970s further consolidated my belief. My mother was extremely unwell, and my wife and I came down from New Delhi to Bangalore to look after her. She was suffering from severe pleurisy and the doctors opined, based on X-ray reports, that she would survive only for three months. When the subject was broached with Baba, He gave her *Vibhuti* [sacred Ash] and

said that everything would be all right, and that no operation would be necessary. When the X-ray was taken again, the doctors said that the danger was no longer there. My mother lived for 18 long years thereafter! These events were the landmarks of the first stage of my understanding of Baba. The miracles that He performed and the benefits that accrued to us because of them thus played an important role in convincing me about His Divinity and *Avatarhood* at this stage.

The second stage of my understanding of Baba is related to the statement that Baba makes very often. He says that He gives us what we want so that we may want what He has come to give us. I started pondering over the significance of the pronouncement. I began to feel that I should at least try to understand closely the working of Sathya Sai Organizations without necessarily being a full time or active participant in their programs. Activities connected with *Bal Vikas* and *Seva Dal* now fascinated me. I could see the impact that these activities were having on the masses. Particularly I realized Baba's abilities to explain to the masses the most profound truths in the simplest of words. In simple language He explains the importance of inner faith as opposed to external rituals; the values of *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* [truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence], as against the irrelevance of caste and creed. He is quite contemporaneous in His vocabulary as well as content. While emphasizing the importance of inner faith and character, He gives the example of the car: the car moves only when the

driver moves the inner [steering] wheel. The inner character and strength are to the human being what the inner wheel is to the car.

Baba has said, "I am *Lokanath* [Lord of mankind] and not *Vyaktinath* [Lord of individuals]." I started feeling that His role as *Lokanath* was like that of the saints and prophets in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries who mingled and communicated with the masses to awaken their interest in spirituality. My perception of Baba as *Lokanath* was particularly strong between the mid-seventies and the eighties. The establishment in the early eighties of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, a deemed university, added a new dimension to my perception of Baba as *Lokanath*. The weightage given to human values in the syllabus and the emphasis on transforming the personality of the students, not just imparting information and knowledge to them, sent an unequivocal message. He is truly *Lokanath*!

From the year 1990 onward, a new dimension appeared in my perception and understanding of Baba as *Lokanath* when Bhagavan Baba undertook the massive projects such as Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital to cater to the medical needs of the people in rural areas, and the Drinking Water Supply Project for the drought-prone region of Anantapur District. Baba extended the scope of the water supply project and has covered Mahaboobnagar and Medak Districts and Chennai City under similar schemes. East Godavari and West Godavari Districts are also being covered under similar schemes now. Such schemes have not been taken up on such a large scale by any Non-Governmental Organization in the country. The compassion shown by Baba to the poor is unparalleled. This made me feel that Baba had come to serve *Daridranarayana*, the poorest of the poor.

Between the years 1996 and 2000 another remarkable change occurred in my understanding of Baba's role as an *Avatar*. I was posted as Secretary to the Department of Telecommunications, Government of India, in November 1996 and held that post till August 1998. I could experience first-hand the sweeping changes that were taking place all over the world due to the advances in telecommunications and information technology that enabled people from different parts of the world to communicate much better with one another. However, the mindset of the human beings had not changed.

Though the temple and the mosque had indeed become an integral part of the landscape in many of the Western countries, there were the invisible walls that separated the people based on race and color in multi-racial societies that had emerged over the last few decades. There were no effective channels of communication among people belonging to different faiths. Apart from the individual and racial barriers, there were political barriers, too, as the concept of the nation-state was still fiercely active in all parts of the world. It was at this stage that Baba's message of world unity attracted me. I understood much better the significance of His message: "There is only one caste, the caste of humanity; there is only one religion, the religion of love; there is only one language, the language of the heart; and there is only one God, He is omnipresent."

I would regard this as the third stage of my understanding of Baba, in which Baba's global approach to the question of spirituality unfolded itself vividly, intensely to me. On my retirement in August 2000, I continued reading the Sai literature. The attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001 and the events that followed thereafter shook the whole world. Like many other friends of mine, I, too, brooded on the problems of terrorism and fundamentalism that show signs of ascendancy today and wondered what the solution to the problem could be.

I read Professor Huntington's book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, to get a better perspective of the global menace. On a thorough analysis of the global scenario, Prof. Huntington comes to the following conclusion: In addition, as many have pointed out, whatever the degree to which they have divided humankind, the world's major religions—Western Christianity, Orthodoxy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism—all share key values in common. If humans are ever to develop a universal civilization, it will emerge gradually through the exploration and expansion of these commonalities. This approach is conducive to world unity as it recognizes the underlying unity among all religions while respecting their diversities at the same time.

The philosophy based on pluralism is superior to the other philosophies based on exclusivism and inclusivism. Exclusivism, the idea that one's own way is the only true way, may not be trivial as deep belief is central to any religious faith. However, if this logic is extended it means that all other religions are false and cannot be tolerated—the implications of this for humanity are dangerous. Inclusivism, the idea that there should be a single world religion or that one's own religion is sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate all others is also not workable as it does not respect diversities among the world religions. All religions are deeply rooted in the respective geographies. A Muslim can never dissociate himself from Mecca nor can a Hindu from the River Ganges.

At this stage, I realized that Baba, unlike the professors and intellectuals, does not merely theorize, He translates His ideas into action by setting an example. Like a magnet He attracts people belonging to different faiths from different parts of the world. His is the philosophy of pluralism based on equal respect for all religions as exemplified in the *Sarva Dharma* emblem. He wants all to follow their own religions and makes them better Hindus, better Christians, better Muslims, better Jews, better Buddhists, better Jains.

What is stated above is best described in a book entitled, *A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba*, by Don Mario Mazzoleni, a Catholic priest from Italy, who narrates how he was excommunicated for writing a book which, though it begins with the praiseworthy intent of seeking the action of the Spirit of God in every man and in every religious experience, ends up disavowing the truths of the Catholic faith. According to the Church, "the assertions moreover that accept Sai Baba's claim to be

a Divine incarnation, that defends His works, miracles, sayings, and doctrines are grave affirmations against the faith.”

Don Mario Mazzoleni, on the other hand, said, “As the author of the book in question, I reaffirm that I have not lost my Catholic faith. On the contrary, after my encounter with the great “Indian Master” Sri Sathya Sai Baba, I feel that I live it with greater intensity in a spirit of real communion with all other religions. These all share the one goal of reaching the same and the only God, who transcends all changing names and forms.” The experience of the Catholic priest from Italy is indeed a moving one. It shows how he accepted the essence of Baba’s teachings despite the heavy price he had to pay for such acceptance. It convinced me that Baba alone can save the world from a major catastrophe like the one that occurred in September 2011. This, I would say, marks the fourth stage of my understanding of Baba.

I have tried to delineate the four stages of my developing perception of the Sai *Avatar*. The more I see of Him, the more I feel and experience His inexplicability, and His ‘Holy Dread’. I pray to Baba to give me greater insight and strength to understand Him and the complex cosmic phenomenon that He is.

Source: *Sai Sparshan* 2005 (80th Birthday offering)

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Truth and Untruth

Hislop: We do not perceive life with absolute clarity, and yet we are acting all the time, and unclear action makes for a confused life. We are unhappy about that confusion, and in an effort to remove it we accumulate ideas of truth, God, reality. But those imaginings do not remove the confusion. Life is still confused. So the question is: what is the big factor that prevents us from seeing the truth of life clearly?

Sai: You say that truth, God, reality are imagination. Why do you think they are imagination? They are not. Time, work, reason, and experience; these four in harmony together, that is truth. When the four are found not to be in harmony, then you feel it is untruth. An example: Yesterday you came to Bangalore, and from there to Puttaparthi, by car. Travel is work. It took you four hours to come from Bangalore. That is time. You came to see Swami. That is the reason. Having seen Him, you got happiness. That is the result. On the other hand, last night you dreamed that you were in America and were shopping. In this, the four factors were not involved. There was no work, there was no time expended, and where is the result?

This is untruth. That experience was imagination, only mind work. This is the difference between truth and imagination.

Hislop: But truth, that is in terms of work, time, reason, and result—you look around the world and you see those things in operation, and the world is in a mess. So there must be more to it than that?

Sai: When you don't have absolute faith in the result, then doubt arises. An example: Now it is daylight and the objects in the room are seen very clearly, and there is no doubt regarding them. At night when it is fully dark and you must grope around and do not see any of the objects, there is no doubt about that situation. But at dusk, when it is half-light and half-dark, doubt can arise, and you may see a rope and imagine it to be a snake and be afraid. Light is not full, and vision is not clear. Full light is wisdom, and full dark is ignorance. Doubt arises when there is half-dark and half-light. The half-light is wisdom, and the half-dark is ignorance. Ignorance and wisdom, when there is half and half, there is doubt. Now you are in the middle stage where you have this little bit of wisdom and some ignorance [they] are mixed. You are not fully experienced.

When you have proper experience, the doubt will vanish. Because you are not experienced, you are having this doubt. A small example: While suffering from malaria, you have eaten a sweet but feel it has a bitter taste. It was not that the sweet was bitter, but in your experience it was bitter. It is not the fault of the sweet. Ignorance is also a disease like malaria. And the cure for this disease of ignorance is *sadhana* (spiritual practice). Man has doubt only while he does not know the truth. Once you experience the truth, doubt will vanish. Truth is one, and for all time truth is truth. Whatever changes, know that as untruth. Once you were small and you grew bigger. That is also untruth. Where is the body of the ten-year-old? All has merged into the present body. First, untruth, then when we have the experience we know the truth. Dark and light are not different, they are one only. A small example: Last night you ate fruit. In the morning it becomes stool, and you pass it out. It was fruit yesterday, but the bad and the good are the same, only one. In one form, it was fruit, in the other form it was stool.

A Visitor: The explanation is good.

Sai: It is the same with light and dark. When the light comes, the darkness goes. But really, the darkness does not go anywhere, and the light does not go anywhere. When one comes, the other is unknown; it does not go anywhere.

Hislop: This mixture of light and darkness, of ignorance and wisdom, that creates unhappiness, that creates trouble—Swami says that the mixture fades away with the right experience. The question is, what is the basic factor that prevents us from having that right experience?

Sai: We don't have the intensity that is required. Even to study books, how much is needed to come to the stage when we can read difficult books. How many years, how many hours of toil we put into it. If you have the same intensity in spiritual practice, you will surely know the truth. But we are not as intense as we should be on the spiritual path. We do not apply concentration and one-pointedness. Full concentration is needed, even in the world, in walking, talking, reading. Without concentration you cannot do anything. Even in little things of the world we use concentration. But when we try to think of God, then we get restless, and the mind is unstable.

Why do we do the things of the world with full concentration? Why? Because we are fully interested in it. And with God we have these doubts. In whatever work you love deeply, you have full concentration. In whatever you don't love deeply, then concentration is not full. A small example: You are driving a car. And at the same time, you are talking to your passengers. The road becomes narrow and dangerous. You say, 'Please let us not talk now, I must give full concentration to the driving.' Why do you say this? It is because you deeply love your life, and you must concentrate deeply to avoid an accident. Because you have this love for body, you concentrate on its safety. When you have deep love for God, then concentration on Him will come automatically.

Hislop: But that is the point, there is the whole point.

Sai: In all these experiences, we must hold to the truth, to life. You love life. Because of life we have all these experiences. So we cling to that sort of pillar that is life, for we know that without life we don't have experiences. Life gives so many things externally, but life does not change. Life is the same. That life is truth and that is God. The unchangeable is truth.

Hislop: Since we are that truth, we would like to have love in our hearts and flow naturally with life and not according to our arbitrary wishes. Yet we don't. Swami says we do not because we lack the intensity. So we say to ourselves, 'Well, I must get that intensity.' So we strive toward that goal, and striving toward that goal makes the thing stronger and that prevents the desired intensity.

Source: *Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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Thought of the MONTH

Love

Swami has declared this year to be the year of love. What is the nature of love and why is it important for us to cultivate love? Here is what Swami says.

"Love is my highest miracle. Love can make you gather the affection of all mankind.

Love will not tolerate any selfish aim or approach.

Expand your heart so that it can encompass all.

Man is love embodied. He thirsts for love and finds real joy in loving and receiving selfless love. Love all as the embodiments of the same divine principle.

The bliss that you give the love that you share, these alone will be your lasting possessions.

Love alone can bind you to others and to God, who is the embodiment of love. Love knows no fear, no untruth, no anxiety, no grief. I am love. I shower love.

God is love and can be won only through the cultivation and exercise of love.

Love is expansion and expansion is divine life. Sow love, it blossoms as compassion and tolerance. It yields the fruit of peace.

Unless you cultivate love, tolerance, humility, faith, and reverence, how is it possible for you to realize God?

Love activates. Love fulfills. Fill your hearts with the sweet fragrant water of love. Then every act of yours, every word (that is like the water drawn from the tank through the tap) will be sweet and fragrant. If the tank is polluted how can the word be helpful or the thought beneficent or the deed commendable?

When you know that you are but a spark of the divine and that all else are the same divine spark, you look upon all with reverence and true love. Your heart is filled with supreme joy and the canker of egoism is rendered ineffective. Man is seeking joy in far off places, in quiet spots, not knowing that the spring of joy is in his heart, the heaven of peace is in himself. Love is God; God is the embodiment of perfect love. So, He can be known and realized, reached and won only through love. You can see the moon only with the help of moonlight. You can see God through the rays of love."

~Spirit and the Mind, pp.133-134

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