

Heroes, Not Zeros

Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba in His speech on New Year Day in 1964 said that one should listen to the guru, or the Lord installed in your heart. Forget the past, do not worry about possible errors or disappointments. Substitute good thoughts for the bad and cleanse the mind of all evil by dwelling on righteous deeds and holy thoughts. That is the sane way to achieve spiritual progress.

Pundit Sathyanarayana Avadhanulu could have spoken for some more time, but he stopped rather suddenly perhaps to give Me more time. You must not grow listless when others speak; for whoever speaks here, he is giving you the nectar of the *Vedas* or *Shastras* (scriptures) and that is sweet and liberating ever. Moreover, he said that this evening we have met here since it is New Year Day, the first of January 1964!

Well, this is a delusion within the larger delusion! This day is welcomed as marking some big change, as if yesterday was something quite different for it belonged to 1963 and today is something quite distinct for it is 1964! This day is celebrated by people in picnics, in gambling, in drinking and feasting. They attend cinema shows, wear new clothes, give presents to each other, and greet all with joy and hilarity. They exhaust their money and their energy in the pursuit of frivolity, thrill, and excitement.

All this is due to the custom that views this day as something unique. In fact, the 'year' is just a convention. There are as many New Year Days as there are days in the year; many communities and countries have their own distinct calendars. It is not the first of January or the first of *Chaitra* (first month of Telugu New Year) that is unique. The year is just a name to indicate a number of months, the month a number of days, a day to indicate a number of hours, the hour is a period of time counted in minutes, and the minute is a name for 60 seconds. Each second is new. It is a gift, a chance, an opportunity, a thing to be celebrated, to be used for your uplift. That is to say, each second is a fresh chance given to you for training the mind, refining the intellect, purifying the emotions, strengthening the will, for getting confirmed in the conviction that you are the deathless *atma* (Self, the Infinite Consciousness).

Be like the lotus with head high above waters

Be thankful to the Lord that He gave you time, as well as action to fill it with. He gave you food, as well as hunger to relish it. But that does not entitle you to engage yourself in action indiscriminately. When you build a house, you install a door in

front. What is the purpose of the door? To admit all whom you welcome and to keep out all whom you do not want. It has a double purpose; you do not keep the doors wide open for all and sundry to come in as and when they like. So, too, select the impulses, the motives, and the incentives that enter your mind; keep out the demeaning, the debasing, and the deleterious. Admit the highest wisdom of the scriptures, the wisdom culled out of the crucible of experience, called *anubhavajnanam*.



All water is not potable; the stagnant pool is to be avoided; the flowing river is better. Select and drink. Use the mosquito curtain but see that the mosquitoes do not get in when you go to bed. Keep them out; do not imprison them inside the net. Sail in the boat that floats on water, but do not allow the water to enter the boat. Be in worldly life, but do not allow it to get into you. Use the doors intelligently to let in those whom you want, and keep out those whom you do not need. The lotus, born in slime and mud, rises through the water and lifts its head high above the waters. It refuses to get wet though water is the element that gives it life! Be like the lotus.

By action done with all this care, the vision gets clarified. Man is blinded by the objective world, and he believes the world to be real, meaningful, and worthy of pursuit. The cataract grows in the eye and robs it of its efficiency. The cataract is the enemy of the eye. Ignorance, the cataract of the inner eye, blinds the intellect and robs it of its efficiency. So it cannot see the divinity that is your real nature. It misleads you into the impression that you are a man (*manava*), whereas you are really God (*Madhava*).

Tread the path of liberation

The rope is mistaken to be a snake and the perceiver flees in fear. The truth is, it is not the organ-eye that sees; there are many whose eyes are good, so far as doctors can discover, but they cannot see! The eye sees because it is illumined by a microscopic spark of the rays of the Sun. The scripture says: "*Chakshos Suryo ajayatha*—From the eye, Surya was born." The soul is the motive force of all the

senses; the eye is but a window through which the soul peeps out at the external world. Of what use is the eye when the vision is not correct? That is to say when you have no *samadrishti*. *Samam* means *Brahman*, the Absolute Reality; *Samadrishti* means seeing only *Brahman*, the One, in all things and at all times. This *ekatvam* (Oneness) is the basic truth. All other experiences are partial, distorted, and false.

Dwell on that in your meditation. Fix it in your inner consciousness. That is the path of liberation that you must start treading, and today is as good a day as any for deciding to do so. You have meditated too long on riches, status, salary, children, relatives, fame, and the standard of living. They are all of minor interest, momentary value, and dubious profit. Meditate; fix your urge on the *nitya*, *sathya*, *nirmala*, and *nischala* (the eternal, the real, the pure, and the immovable).

The Eternal Charioteer

Pundit Avadhanulu referred to some incidents mentioned in the *Mahabharatha* [the epic], and so I, too, shall mention just one point that will make you appreciate the *Mahabharatha* more. The Lord had *maya* (illusion) as His consort, so to say, and He had a son called *manas* (mind). This *manas*, to continue the parable, had two wives: *pravritti* and *nivritti*—attachment and detachment. Of course, attachment was his favorite wife, and she had 100 children. Detachment was ill-treated and neglected, and she had five children. That is the symbolism of the *Kauravas* (100 sons) and the *Pandavas* (five sons) of *Mahabharatha*. Though the children all lived in the same kingdom, ate the same food, and learnt from the same teacher, their natures differed widely from one another.

The *Kauravas*, children of attachment, were greedy, cruel, self-centered, and vain. Each of the five *Pandavas* represented a supreme virtue, so that they could be said to symbolize *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* (truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence). Since they were so pure and born of detachment, the Lord became their guide. In fact, the Lord will be the guide of whoever installs Him as his *Sarathi* (Charioteer). He will not consider that position inferior. He is the *Sanathana Sarathi* (Eternal Charioteer) come to be the Charioteer of all. He is the Lord for all who seek a master, a support. The soul is the master in everyone, and Krishna is the Universal Soul personified.

Let the Lord shape your mind

There are two birds sitting on one tree, the *Upanishad* says, the *Jivatma* and the *Paramatma*—the individual soul and the Supreme Soul—on the tree of this body, this world. One bird eats the fruits of that tree, while the other simply looks on, as a witness. But the wonder is, the two birds are really one, though they appear as two; they cannot be separated since they are two aspects of the same entity. Steam in the air cannot be seen; it has no shape or form; but it is the same as ice, which is hard, heavy, and cold. *Nirakara and sakara* (without form and with form), are just two ways in which the One manifests Itself.

The minute hand of the clock is the individual soul, the bird that eats the fruits. It goes round and round, but the hour hand moves silently and slowly, with a certain dignity. The hour hand can be said to be the Supreme Soul. Once an hour the two hands meet, but the individual soul does not get that consummation fixed forever. It loses the precious chance and so must go round and round again and again. Liberation is when the two merge and only one remains.

When the obstacles in the path of truth are laid low, deliverance is achieved. That is why *moksha* (liberation) is something that can be won here and now; one need not wait for the dissolution of the physical body for that. Action must not be felt as a burden, for that feeling is a sure sign indicating that it is against the grain. No action that helps your progress will weigh heavily on you. It is only when you go counter to your innermost nature that you feel it a burden. A time comes when you look back on your achievement and sigh at the futility of it all. Entrust your mind to the Lord before it is too late and let Him shape it as He likes.

Assign to your mind the task of serving the Lord and it will grow tame. You do not hand over the goldsmith an ornament that is quite nice; you give him for repairs or reshaping the ornaments you feel have been broken or dented or are out of fashion. So, too, give the Lord your mind that certainly needs repair, if not complete reconstruction.

Man should have no fear

The blemish that affects the mind is illusion. It is like a fierce dog that will not allow anyone to approach the Master. You can manage to by-pass it only by assuming the *rupam* or form of the Master, which is called *sarupyam*, or by calling out for the Master so loudly that He comes down and accompanies you into the house by winning His grace, *samipyam* (proximity). Illusion is His pet, and so it will not harm you if He orders it to desist from harming you.

The Master comes to save not one good man from illusion, but the whole of mankind. Of course, He has to come assuming a form that man can love, revere, and appreciate. He can give joy and courage only if He speaks the language of human intercourse. Even as it is, many are afraid to approach Me for they know I am aware of their innermost thoughts and deepest desires. But let Me tell you, only helpless animals are afraid. Man, who is child of immortality, should have no fear. People pray before stone images of the snake god, but when the actual snake appears in answer to their prayers they run away terror-stricken from the shrine! The Lord manifests Himself only to shower grace, never to strike terror.

On the banks of the river near Lucknow, there was a sage who addressed dogs, crows, and men equally as God; he had realized the unity of all in the Divine Essence. That is the result of Divine knowledge, or intense *bhakti* [devotion], where you do not see anything other than your *Ishtadevata* (chosen deity) wherever you turn. Be ever in that divine bliss, the bliss that comes from God-consciousness, always and everywhere. That is the eternal bliss (*nityananda*) that the wise enjoy.

Like the silkworm that spins from out of itself the cocoon that proves to be its tomb, man spins from out of his own mind the cage in which he gets trapped. But there is a way of escape that the spiritual teacher (*guru*) can teach you or that the God in you will reveal to you. Take to the spiritual practice that will bring relief. Away with the roles of clown and clout, which you have acted all the ages. Take on the role of the Hero, not the Zero! Forget the past, do not worry about possible errors or disappointments. Decide and do.

There are some spiritual teachers who advise you to keep a daily diary where you note down every item of evil that you did; they ask you to read it as a spiritual exercise and resolve to correct yourself. Well, reading it and writing it will only tend to impress it more effectively on the mind. It is better to substitute good thoughts for the bad and cleanse the mind of all evil by dwelling on righteous deeds and holy thoughts. Forget the things that you do not want to remember. Bring to memory only those things that are worth remembering. That is the sane way to achieve spiritual progress.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 4

Sanathana Sarathi

*In Dharmakshetra... Kurukshetra
Arjuna had a Sarathi!
He was such a master Sarathi
That He won the war for him!
He held the reins of all the horses
He helped his arrows to find their prey
He gave him courage, opened his eyes
And made him a little wise.*

*He saved him many a time from wrong
He taught him statecraft, soul-craft both.
He blessed him on the battlefield
With a Vision, where he found
That He was no mere charioteer—
That He was horse and wheel and whip
Source and stream and sea
Dinosaur, daffodil, flea.*

*We all are Arjunas today
Willing to wound, afraid to strike,*

*Grasping a doubt and calling it Faith
Eager to reap, unwilling to bend
Blowing big trumpets before the fray—
God on our lips, greed in our hearts.
In Dharmakshetra, Jagat-kshetra
We all do need a Sarathi,
To teach us and train us the Gita way
And, make us fit to see Him so.*

*We all do need a Sarathi.
We haven't far to go
He is here before us, now,
With His lovely welcome smile.
The same who led to victory
Many a doubting warrior
On many a famous battlefield
Where I did fight with he
And we fell foul of they.*

*He knows each nut and bolt and spring
He knows each inch of road.
The tiniest blemish He spots and checks
No crack can escape His instant care
No leak, no streak, no squeak.*

*He knows the speed which we can stand
He knows when the breakdown comes and why
He is the Goal which you must reach.
Choose Him (He has chosen you already now)
And seat Him securely in the heart of hearts
And the road is smooth, the weather fine.*

*There are no ups and downs
It is all so cool—an easy drive
You have only to trust Him
And keep yourself mum
You can sing your way along
And when you come to journey's end
You find you are not you, but He!*

*Install Him in your heart
Sathya Sai Sarathi
This Sanathana Sarathi.*

~N. Kasturi

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Feb 1968

What Sri Sathya Sai Taught Me

Prof. S. Siva Sankara Sai was a student and Research Scholar from 1982-1989. He was the former Head and Dean of the Sciences, Department of Physics, and has also been the Warden of the Sri Sathya Sai senior boys hostel. Currently, he is the Director of The Prasanthi Nilayam campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

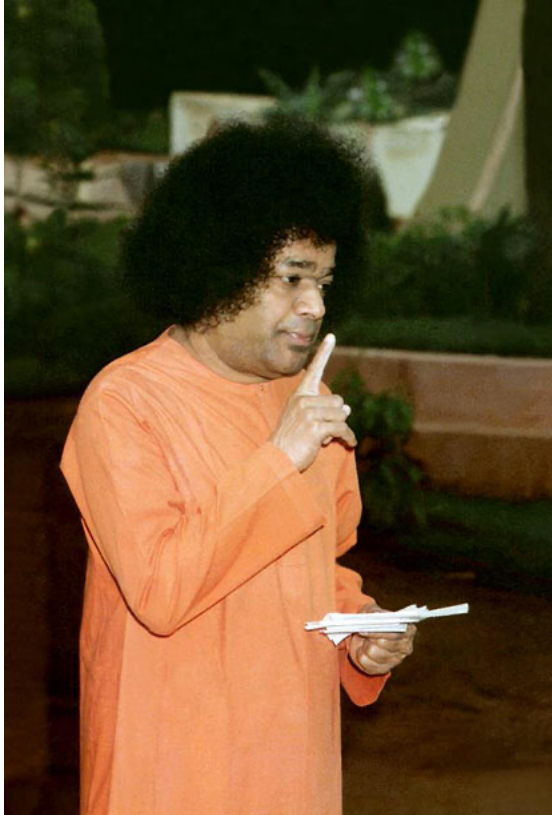
Our Lord Sai is an eternal teacher. He is praised as "*Gurunaam Guru*", the teacher of teachers. He teaches, molds, guards, and guides all of us every moment. We only need to tune ourselves to receive these lessons and teachings from Him. For some of us who stay at Prasanthi Nilayam and see Him daily, His *maya* [illusion] deludes us and we miss the Divine lessons He is teaching through His own example.

One of the most important lessons that I have learnt at His Lotus Feet is not to waste time. He never wastes a single moment of His precious time. It is said that water that flows under the bridge and the time that passes away can never be retrieved. Bhagavan not only utilizes every moment of His time but packs many things in every minute. Take the example of *darshan* [seeing a holy man] time. In the ten minutes or so of *darshan* time, He interacts, inspires, admonishes, and encourages many people through a word here, a word there, a smile here, and a glare there. He radiates love and transforms several hearts during that brief period. He is a perfect manager of time. On every birthday festival we see Him giving clothes, *padanamaskar* [touching His feet], and *prasad* [blessed food] to many people. At such times, we often see the volunteers and those who are carrying clothes for Him unable to keep pace with Him in either giving or in walking.

Paying attention to details is another unique aspect of this *Avatar*. He takes meticulous care about all details in every small endeavor. He often takes pleasure and care in enquiring about the food prepared for students in the hostel. He chides us even if one of the items is not up to standard. On a particular Thursday, our hostel mess in-charge and I were very happy with ourselves for serving big and attractive mangoes to all the students, instead of the routine Thursday sweet. We were praying fervently that Swami should enquire about that day's menu. All knowing as He is, He did ask about the menu and about the special sweet. We told Him jubilantly that we had served mangoes. His immediate question was about its cost. We replied that on an average each mango would cost about three rupees. He then admonished us for purchasing those mangoes when sweets could be made in the hostel for a lesser cost.

We tried to be smart and told that mangoes were very big and tried to show the size of the mango with our hands. He listened and quipped that "If the mango is so large in size, the seed inside would be equally big, so you need not boast about having given big mangoes." He tells us to be alert and pay maximum attention to small details, so that we may not go wrong in bigger matters.

Even though He is innately aware of His Divine nature, He is intensely human in His approach. His zest for life and His humor enlivens the atmosphere. Wherever He is, we see and hear peals of laughter and joyous 'ums' and nods from the devotees surrounding Him.



His charming nature and sharp wit make us all feel younger in His presence. He splits every word and gives a new meaning. On one occasion, we went to Bhagavan seeking His advice for a dramatic performance. He enquired the cause of our coming to the *Mandir* [temple], to which I replied, "Swami, please fix the characters for the drama."

He asked again, "What?" Thinking that I spoke too softly I repeated loudly, "Please fix the characters, Swami." He immediately retorted, "No, 'characters' cannot be fixed like appendages. They should be developed naturally with effort." I was taken aback at this revelation.

Yet another lesson I have learnt (and am still learning!) at His Feet is that we should never separate secular and spiritual life. He emphatically tells us to spiritualize everything by our own practice of mind control. In fact, the very purpose of Sai education itself is to integrate secular learning with spirituality and morality.

To please Bhagavan, on one occasion, a group of students undertook *Akhand Bhajan* [uninterrupted spiritual singing] during the night. The next day He corrected all those students (and the warden for allowing them to do so!) and said, "You have classes the next day, if you don't sleep during the whole night how will you attend the classes? Do you think your class work is not spiritual?" It is our attitude that should be changed and not necessarily the act. He declares that if one corrects one's *drishti* (looks or attitudes) then one perceives the whole *srishti* (creation) as Divine. He even gives us the advice that whenever we take bath, we should feel that we are doing *abhishekam* to the very Lord residing inside because our body itself is a moving temple!

Above all, I have experienced in my own humble way that He is the loving God who takes care of us, whether we are consciously aware of this fact or not. At the time when I was doing my doctoral study, for some reason Bhagavan was pained by the behavior of senior students, including research scholars. He completely avoided

talking to us. He often puts us through this test so that we may introspect, find our mistakes, and correct them. During that time, my mother was suffering from cancer and doctors pronounced that a surgery was required. My father did not want to take any decision without Swami's explicit blessings and consent.

He told me to pray to Him and get His blessings and *prasadam*. I wrote many letters and tried my best to catch His attention, but nothing happened. He simply did not respond or even look at me. I was thoroughly disappointed and told my father about my unsuccessful efforts and my inability to secure blessings for my mother.

He did not lose hope and told me to continue praying, which I did mentally, without making any physical effort to ask Him. Two days later, after the evening interview Bhagavan went round the devotees for the second time and saw my father stretching his hands to give Him a letter. He asked, "How is the health?" Presuming that Swami was referring about his health, my father replied, "Ok, Swami." Then Swami said, "Not yours, his mother's health." This time my father understood Swami's question and told Him about the doctor's advice that an operation was required. He immediately gave permission and said, "Yes, go ahead with the operation, nothing to worry. Everything will be alright."

On hearing this we were all very happy. True to His assurance, my mother felt His presence during the surgery in the operation theatre (at Madras). She distinctly remembered Swami walking away from her as she was recovering from anesthesia and came to the conscious state. Needless to say, presently she is no longer a cancer patient.

So, however Bhagavan might ignore us He still takes care of us directly or indirectly in His own Divine way. Let us all remember that we are contemporaries to this loving Lord who is the greatest of *Gurus*, who teaches us practical spirituality. Let us enjoy living with Him, for living with God is in itself a great education.

~Prof. S. Siva Sankara Sai

Source: *Sai Nandana* 1995 (70th Birthday Issue)

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Oh, Ye of Little Faith!

A friend with whom I work has listened to my endless tales of Sai Baba's miracles and power with doubt and teasing. But he did not ever scoff or deny His grace and even asked me for some of Bhagavan's *vibhuti* [blessed ash] when his mother was ill. His name is Tony De Paco, and although his mother recovered at the time, she made her transition a year later.

One night, Tony asked me if I would drive him to where his auto had stalled. The starter was quite active, but the motor was not responsive. I suggested we sprinkle some *vibhuti* on the motor.

Tony said that the electricity or the petrol was not reaching the motor, and that he would just leave his auto until he could return and fix it.

But I prevailed and Tony allowed me to place *vibhuti* on the motor before he tried again to start the obstinate auto that was very old and worn. The motor started, much to our delight, and Tony started the many miles home while I followed in my car.

We finally arrived where I should turn to go to my home, and there Tony wanted me to turn off and he would continue the two miles further to his residence.

But Tony was a good man. I decided I would follow him in case the auto stopped again. I was very grateful for this decision of mine when I saw Tony's auto stopped dead a short distance further.

I stopped and went toward Tony. I was expecting his gratitude for my gesture, so I was dismayed to hear him say in disgust, "Now see what you have done! You have stopped this motor again. Baba's *vibhuti* had it running, and you did not have the faith to turn off. So your lack of faith has stopped the motor."

While I was towing him home, I thought, "I *talked* like the devotee—but it was Tony who had the *faith*. How wrong I was to feel superior!"



~John Eversole, Santa Barbara, Ca. U.S.A.
Source: Sanathana Sarathi, April 1978

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Sai on Sadhana

Devotee: In the West, *sadhana* [spiritual effort] is generally taken to be a process of self-improvement. But that implies identification with the changing personality?

Sri Sathya Sai: First, there may be the urge to self-improvement. But the next stage is inquiry, the inquiry into the reality of 'this' and 'that'. Seven-tenths of *sadhana* is ENQUIRY.

Devotee: *Sadhana* as it is described seems wrong because it is a conscious effort aimed at getting a reward. It seems to me that *sadhana* is real only when it is spontaneous. That is to say, as when one naturally loves God. He cannot but help love God. And he cannot help but make inquiry.

Sri Sathya Sai: It is as you say, but you have not experienced the spontaneous love for God. It is still just an idea. You have a conviction that love for God exists naturally in you. That conviction itself is the result of many lives spent in spiritual practice.

Devotee: I have the conviction so strong that it is the very marrow of my bone that Life is One; that all others, Swami, and myself are One. The *atma* [soul] is that One and it is fully here at this moment; and I am constantly engaged in *sadhana*. So the question remains: Why do I not actually experience that Unity as no other than myself?

Sri Sathya Sai: Your conviction of unity is an idea, a thought. It is not experienced. For instance, when your wife has pain in the head, do you have it, too? If not, where is the experience of the unity? The unity must be experienced, not just felt as an idea or entertained as a thought.

Devotee: Swami! If *sadhana* and conviction do not bring the experience, how is one to get it?

Sri Sathya Sai: Through steady *sadhana*. Just as with ourselves now, in this car. We need concern ourselves only with the careful driving of the car; in due course we will arrive at Anantapur, wouldn't we? With correct and steady *sadhana*, the actual experience of the ONE will naturally come about.

Devotee: How does one really experience that he is the same as another? Because now one feels for another through compassion. Compassion is idea, understanding it is not direct experience of unity. When someone hit a dog, Sai Baba of Shirdi had the bruises. That is the actual experience of unity.

Sri Sathya Sai: All is Divine. When you are firmly established in the fact of your divinity, then you will directly know that others are divine. Compassion for others is felt so long as you consider yourself as a separate entity, as a consequence of the body-consciousness. The story of Shirdi Sai Baba that you have heard about is not fully correct. The facts are: a lady cooked and got ready a plate of sweets for Baba, and a dog ate them. The lady drove the dog away with blows. The lady then carried another plate of sweets to Baba, who refused them saying that He had eaten the sweets she previously provided, and His hunger was satisfied. The lady pointed out that this was the first time that she was offering the sweets, so how could He say to the contrary? Baba said, "No." You offered them and while I was eating them you have also beaten Me." Thus, He gave a lesson that He was omnipresent and that there was only ONE universal life.

Devotee: What does Swami mean by 'omnipresent'?

Sri Sathya Sai: Omnipresent means everywhere, at the same time, all the time.

Devotee: Swami says that at a certain stage in *sadhana*, the exterior nature ceases. How is that?

Sri Sathya Sai: There are ten stages in *sadhana*, each cognized by sounds of various types, ranging through different vibrations—bell, flute, conch, *OM*, thunder etc. The tenth stage is reached when the senses are transcended. Beyond the senses, it is the state of bliss.

Devotee: Is that state of bliss experienced only for a time? What happens in the daily round of life?

Sri Sathya Sai: That state remains always. Then it is always bliss. He thinks God, eats God, drinks God, breathes God, and lives God.

Devotee: Does everyone pass through these ten stages?

Sri Sathya Sai: No. One may go direct to the tenth, the transcendental state. Or to stage six, or seven. Or not progress at all. It is not uniform for all.

Devotee: What should be one's attitude to these stages in *sadhana* as one encounters each stage one by one?

Sri Sathya Sai: The states change, but the 'attitude' should be unchanging.

Devotee: But what value should one give to the various states?

Sri Sathya Sai: The *sadhaka* will not be satisfied with any of the states. For, complete union is the goal. Desire remains strong until the transcendental bliss is

realized, and then desire ceases. At that state, all is God. Thoughts, desires, all are God.

Devotee: These thoughts that stream through the mind, are they material?

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. They are matter. All matter is impermanent.

Devotee: Where do thoughts come from?

Sri Sathya Sai: They come from food and environment. If you have *satwic* [pure] food and desire only for good things and atmosphere around you, good thoughts only will come.

Devotee: Where do thoughts go?

Sri Sathya Sai: They go no place because thoughts do not flow through the mind. The mind goes out and grasps and gets engaged with thoughts. If the desire is for God, the mind does not go out. The best way is not to get involved in the problem - 'How to get rid of thoughts?' See all thoughts as God. Then only God-thoughts will come. The entire mechanism of body, mind, intelligence will work in a coordinated manner for the benefit of the higher goal.

Devotee: Then for whom should the entire mechanism be functioning?

Sri Sathya Sai: For the *atma*. A small example: The earth turns on its own axis, but at the same time it is revolving around the Sun. The various faculties of man should do their own work, but the *atma* is the center of their universe.

Devotee: Swami! How can one bring these faculties under the control of the *atma*?

Sri Sathya Sai: When one realizes that the *atma* is the reality, the ONE, then everything will function smoothly. It is a question of surrendering all to the *atma*.

Devotee: But Swami has said, we should ask ourselves, "Who am I that I dare talk of surrendering my mind and intelligence to God? They do not belong to me. How can I surrender that which I do not own and cannot even control?"

Sri Sathya Sai: It is not a question of surrendering or giving to some other one. One surrenders to oneself. Recognition that the *atma* is oneself is surrender.

Devotee: Then Swami means that surrender is really putting aside of that which one perceives as incorrect or false.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes.

Devotee: I now understand. "Surrender" implies a person offering himself or his possessions to another person. But, really, it is more like the abandoning of ideas and concepts for which one has no further use, or which one sees as inadequate or wrong.

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes.

~From the Notebook of an American Devotee

Source: Sanathana Sarathi, March 1974

Thought of the MONTH

Seek the Supreme *Atma*, the Source and Core of the Universe

Let us take the five elements, one by one. The living being has the first one, the earth, as its base. Water, the second, is the basis for the earth. Water is produced from fire, the third element, and fire itself emanates from the wind (*vayu*), which is the fourth. Wind arises from ether (*akasa*). Ether emerges from the primal nature, and the primal nature is but the manifestation of one aspect of the majesty of God, or the supreme sovereign *atma* (*Paramatma*).

Seeking to reach that supreme *atma*, the source and core of the universe, the individual (*jivi*), who has entangled himself in the elements, must overcome the bonds one by one, by discrimination and steady practice of detachment. One who does this is a spiritual aspirant, and one who wins in this struggle is liberated even while alive is a *jivan-mukta*.

The human eye cannot delve into the microcosm or the macrocosm. It cannot read the mystery of the virus or the atom or the stellar universe. Therefore, scientists supplement the eye with a microscope and telescope.

Similarly, sages can experience Divinity through the eye of knowledge gained by following the *dharma* of moral conduct and spiritual discipline.

When the human eye needs an extraneous instrument to observe even the insignificant worm and virus, how can a person refuse to go through the process of *mantra* [spiritual formula] to see the omnipresent transcendent Principle? It is very hard to acquire the eye of wisdom. Concentration is essential for it. And, for concentration to develop and stabilize, three things are very important: purity of consciousness, moral awareness, and spiritual discrimination.

Upanishad Vahini, Disc. 1

The *atma* is beyond sound, touch, form, taste, and smell (*shabda, sparsha, rupa, rasa,* and *gandha*), it knows no end. The senses are object-bound and outward-bound. The *atma* is the prime instrument for all activity and knowledge, the inner motive-force behind everything. This delusion of manifoldness, variety, and multiplicity must die. It is born of ignorance (*a-jnana*). The “many” is a mirage caused by “circumstances”. The feeling that you are separate from the One is the root of all this seeming birth and death through which the individual appears to go.

Upanishad Vahini, Disc. 3

The ignorant can never grasp the fact of *atmic* immanence. Those who are conscious can see things and feel their presence. Those who have lost awareness will search for the lost jewels, even though they wear them at the moment. Though one may know all things, one conceives the a *atma* as existing in some unapproachable, unreachable place on account of loss of consciousness. But the wise person, who is aware, sees the *atma* in all beings and sees all beings as *atma*. The wise person sees all beings as the same and perceives no distinction or difference. So, the wise person saves themselves from duality.

Upanishad Vahini, Disc. 2

