

Ascent to the Divine

*More effulgent than the Sun,
Whiter and purer than snow
Subtler than ether in space,
The Paramatma dwells in all,
Permeating the entire Cosmos,
Shining in every atom.*

*You are in that Brahman
That Brahman is in you
You are that Brahman
And Brahman is you
What greater truth
Can I convey to you?*

The vast Cosmos, with its myriad animate and inanimate objects, having countless names and forms, is a manifestation of Brahman. It has emanated from the Brahman, is sustained by it and dissolves in it. When the unmanifest Brahman manifests itself, it is cognizable as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). *Sat* indicates that it is self-existing with no other basis than itself. *Chit* indicates the awareness of its self-existence as a self-illuminating consciousness. *Ananda* (Bliss) is the expression of that awareness. What is the reason for the Brahman manifesting itself? It is for making known its infinite potencies by self-evolution.

Kosas and purushas

Man is not a mere combination of the physical, the mental, and the intellectual. He is enveloped in five sheaths: the *Annamaya Kosa* (gross body), the *Pranamaya Kosa* (the vital sheath), the *Manomaya* (mental sheath), *Vijnanamaya* (intelligence) and *Anandamaya* (the sheath of Bliss). The *Upanishads* [scriptures] have pointed out the importance, the sacredness, and the divine characteristics of these *kosas* (sheaths).

The physical form that is sustained by the food that we consume is the gross body. Thereafter, we have the *Pranamaya*, *Manomaya*, and *Vijnanamaya Kosas* (subtle bodies) that together form the *Lingaswarupa*—the "Within Body" or 'Sense Body'. The third form is the *Anandamaya Kosa*, the subtle body that has "knowledge of the Real Self".

There is an entity that keeps under control the three subtle bodies—*Pranamaya*, *Manomaya*, and *Vijnanamaya Kosas*. This is the *Antaratma*—the Indwelling Spirit. This *Antaratma* is also known as *Chaitanya Purusha*. The seat of this *Chaitanya Purusha* is a "cave in the heart" (*Hridaya Guhyam*). The "heart" referred to here is not the physical heart in the human body, but the spiritual heart that is all-pervasive, all-knowing, and boundless. The scriptures have called it "*atma*" (the soul). The *Isavasyopanishad* has described the many forms of this consciousness and the *Chaitanya Purusha* (the Indwelling Spirit).



Levels of consciousness

The spirit (*atma*) when it is associated with the physical body is called *Annamaya Purusha*. This is the state of ordinary consciousness. When the spiritual consciousness is associated with the Vital Consciousness (the *Pranamaya Kosa*), the *atma* is known as *Pranaswarupa* (Life Consciousness). When the *atma* is associated with the mental consciousness, it is known as *Manopurusha*. The fourth consciousness transcends the human senses. It is called "Atheetha *Manasatwam*" Transcendental Consciousness. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* have described this state as "*Brihat*" and "*Ritam*". It transcends human limitations and comes close to divinity. It is called Super Mind. The *atma* in this state is called *Vijnanapurusha*. Above this state is the *Anandamaya Purusha*—the

enjoyer of Bliss. It is a state of Super-Consciousness, which expands in due course to merge in the Universal Consciousness.

This all-pervading Universal Consciousness has been called "*Chit-Tapas*". It is the highest consciousness that encompasses all other levels of consciousness and is the basis for all of them. That is the "*Suddha-Sattva*", the "All-effective Will", "The Super-Divine life". This is the "*Sai-tattva*" (the Sai Principle).

The *Suddha Sattva*, which constitutes the Sai Principle is omnipotent. There is nothing that is beyond its power. It is the embodiment of all powers. Everyone should aim to strive to recognize this Supreme Principle.

Awareness of divinity

There are some clearly defined methods for achieving this aim. Man's vision, which is now turned outward toward the phenomenal universe, should be turned inward toward the Indwelling Spirit. One should manifest the divine consciousness inherent in him. He should submit himself to that consciousness as a spiritual discipline. This is called "Conscious Realization of the Inner Divine."

The first task is to develop awareness of the Divinity within. The next stage is the realization of the truth that the divinity that is within oneself is equally present in all others. One must recognize that the veil or barrier that appears to separate him from others is born of delusion and every effort should be made to remove it. Only then will it be possible to experience the oneness of all living things. "*Aham eva idam Sarvam*" says the *Shruti*. "I am indeed all this." The realization dawns: "All this is contained in me." And then there is the consciousness, "I am Divine. The Divine is me. I am Brahman. Brahman is myself. There is no distinction between Brahman and me." "*Eko devah sarvabhootheshu guudhah.*" "The One God is present in subtle form in all beings." That is the all-pervading Universal Consciousness that is present in diverse forms. Recognition of this truth is "Realization of the Cosmic Divine."

Six mental states

After attaining this stage there is a third stage, which has been characterized as the "*Aarohana-Avarohana*" stage the "Ascent-and-Descent" stage. Man has six different kinds of minds. They are: 1) The ordinary mind; 2) The Super-Mind; 3) The Higher Mind; 4) The Illuminated Mind; 5) The Intuitive Mind; 6) The Over-Mind.

The starting base for the six levels of mind is the ordinary mind. At the summit level is the Over-Mind. In the mental processes what goes on is an ascent from the ordinary mind to Over-Mind as well as a descent from the Over-Mind to the lowest level. It is when the ascending process and the descending process meet that there is fullness in the human being.

There is no difference between one kind of consciousness and another. All consciousness is alike because it is a manifestation of Brahman (the Absolute). It is Brahman that has manifested itself as the Cosmos.

The doctrine of evolution is being discussed widely and widely accepted. But one should try to understand how evolution takes place in nature. Evolution in nature is really the gradual unfoldment of the inherent powers of nature.

The evolutionary process

For instance, life has evolved from matter and mind has evolved from life. What is meant by matter? Matter is that which is encased in life. Consider the example of paddy. As long as the rice grain is covered by husk it is called paddy. When the husk is removed it becomes rice. Paddy has the power to germinate as long as the husk remains. Likewise, the vital principle is contained in matter. It may thus be seen that life came from matter. Likewise, the mind evolved from life. Today men are prepared to recognize that mind evolved from life and life from matter. But they are not ready to go beyond this stage in human evolution. Human evolution cannot be complete unless it goes beyond the mind.

The next step in human evolution is the Super-Mind. But man has to go forward even from the Supra-mental to the ultimate stage of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* to realize his final destiny. The day when man is able to experience the divine state of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss) is really the holy day of "*Shivaratri*". Till then, he is in perpetual darkness. Until the fruit ripens on a tree, its juice is not sweet. When the fruit is fully ripe, it drops from the tree. Attachment to the tree is gone. Likewise, when a man achieves spiritual maturity, he acquires automatically "*Vairagya*" (detachment). Man has to endeavor to reach this level of maturity by spiritual practices for transforming his consciousness. In the evolution of consciousness several changes take place.

Quest for the unknown

Today everyone knows about electrical energy and atomic power. There was a time when these were not known, but that did not mean they did not exist. To deny the existence of something merely because its existence has not been proved so far is a mark of foolishness. What was unknown yesterday becomes common knowledge today. What appears non-existent today may become a reality in the future. No one has the right to say that what is not known cannot exist. There must be a continuous quest to discover the unknown.

When a person is attached to the body and considers the physical alone as real, he is bound to remain ignorant. The gross body is sustained by food and is limited by its material basis. But there is a subtle body that transcends the physical. This is called the *Linga-deha*. After understanding the nature of this subtle body, men should try to proceed further to know the nature of the causal body (which is subtler than the *Linga-deha*), which is the experiencer of *Ananda* (divine Bliss). Everything has its origin in Bliss (*Ananda*) and is dependent on Bliss. Bliss is present in a subtle form in every object in creation.

The urge to change

Of what avail is the study of the *Upanishads* or the *Gita*, if there is no transformation in our thoughts or way of life? There must be the urge to change and progress toward a higher state of consciousness. It is only when we reach the supra-mental stage that we can grasp to some extent the relationship between the phenomenal

universe and the Divine. In reality we are all embodiments of "*Sat-Chit-Ananda*". Your real "I" exists in all the stages of waking, dream, and deep sleep. But in the dream and deep sleep states you are not conscious of your body. The entity that exists in all the three states undergoes no change. You must try to understand the nature of this "I".

You must examine where all your *sadhanas* [spiritual effort] are leading you. You have to proceed from the purely mental stage to the highest stage of "Over-Mind" and experience oneness with the Universal Consciousness. You may regard this as extremely difficult. But if you have dedication and perseverance, it will be quite easy. There is nothing in the world easier than the spiritual path. But when there is no earnestness, it appears difficult. That is why the *Gita* has declared: "*Shradhavan labhathe Jnanam*" (The earnest aspirant acquires the Supreme Wisdom). If you are deeply interested in anything, you will accomplish it.

The Cosmic Consciousness

Hence, you should constantly remind yourself: "I am the embodiment of Divine Consciousness. *Sat-Chit-Ananda* constitutes my form." Man, today, has forgotten his true nature and looks upon the world entirely through the senses, the mind, and the intellect. But behind all these organs there is the *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, which is fundamental. It is because of this *Atmic* Bliss principle in him that man is ever seeking bliss. The whole Cosmos has emanated from the *Parabrahmam*—the Omni-Will. It appears as a material object. But from the material, we should proceed to the spiritual—the Universal Consciousness.

Take, for instance, an egg. At first it appears as an inanimate object. Through incubation, life develops in it. Similarly in all the objects you perceive, consciousness [*Chaitanyam*] is immanent. We have to recognize the omnipresence of this consciousness.

There is the "Higher Mind" in man. It is present to enable man to transcend the physical and mental and reach for the Divine. Ordinary life consists of Matter + Mind. But Matter + Being is beyond the mind. It leads to the Super-Mind.

The mind attracts many objects that it sees. It promotes a variety of qualities, attitudes, and attachments. Above all, it encourages the inflation of the ego (*ahamkara*). Puffed up by his ego, man loses all powers of discrimination and forgets what is evanescent and what is permanent. He makes himself an object of derision. It is only when the ego is deflated and eliminated that man can gradually realize his spiritual essence. Spirituality cannot be understood as long as the ego is dominant. And of what use are spiritual studies and discourses to one who has no understanding?

The world is real

Embodiments of Divine Love! You are engaged in various spiritual exercises. Some call this world illusory and ephemeral. It is described as "*Maya*" or "*Mithya*"—as illusion or delusion. This is entirely wrong. I am Real (*SATHYAM*). You are Real. The whole universe is Real. Consciousness is immanent in everything. Everything is a manifestation of Brahman. When we recognize this unity that underlies everything, we shall be able to know the nature of Divinity.

To go about describing the world as unreal, illusory, and impermanent will amount to practicing a deception on the people and not proclaiming the truth. If the world is unreal, even the teaching that it is unreal is equally unreal and has no meaning. No. That is not so. This Cosmos is real. It is not a question of seeing truth within the unreal or the unreal in the truth. It is recognition of the real in the real ("*Sathyamuloni Sathyamu*"). It is only when this basic truth is recognized that we shall be competent to grasp the nature of our inherent reality.

The Cosmos is real. The forms in it may change. Bodies may change. It is the nature of bodies to undergo change. Change is the characteristic of the evolutionary process. But what should be recognized is that at the core of all things is a fundamental reality. This is the triple Principle: *Asti, Bhaati, Priyam* (Existing, Shining, and Pleasing) or *Sat-Chit-Ananda* or *Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram* (Truth, Goodness, and Beauty).

Reality and change

When we recognize that the body, which is the basis of life, is subject to change, how can the phenomenal world be described as a delusion just because it is also subject to change? The universe has come from the Brahman, the Universal Consciousness. The multiplicity of forms is like the different kinds of figures made from sugar to attract children. The forms are different, but the basic consciousness is one. Just as the doll made from sugar is dissolved in the mouth, the external form of the body should dissolve in the experience of *Atmic* Bliss. The source of life is Brahman. Change and evolution are natural to it. But the presence of the unchanging Divinity should be experienced within the changing body.

In the evolutionary process, the Brahmic Principle existing in matter evolved to life. The mind evolved by a leap from consciousness in life. The mind should not stop there. It should evolve toward consciousness of the Divine and ultimately merge in the Universal Consciousness—the *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Sathyam-Jnanam-Anantam

Every human being should strive to progress toward the ultimate state of "Over-Mind" consciousness—the state that has been described by the seers as *Vijnanamaya-Kosa* (the Super-Intellectual-Mind). Modern science (*Vijnana*) is concerned with analyzing physical objects. But the *Vijnanamaya-Kosa* (the Super-intellectual Mind) is concerned with exploring the Supreme Reality—the

Omnipresent Consciousness. This alone is true scientific enquiry. It is from the *Vijnanamaya-Kosa* that one proceeds to the *Anandamaya-Kosa*—the state of Super-consciousness, of total Bliss.

It may appear difficult to attain this state. But without making the necessary effort, it should not be treated as beyond one's capacity. Listen to my words. I shall show you the way. If merely you listen, but do not practice what I say, you will not reach the goal.

It is a natural process. In a bud, there is very little fragrance. When it grows and blossoms, it acquires fine fragrance. Likewise, when the human consciousness expands, it finds fullness in the state of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. Starting with the ordinary mind, the Consciousness rises to the Super-Mind level. Then it moves up to the state of the Higher Mind. The next higher stage is that of the Illuminated Mind. Through all these stages, the continuing entity remains the same, as in the bodily changes from infancy to old age. That is the Universal Consciousness, which is present in everyone—the One in the Many. That Universal Consciousness is the Truth (*Sathyam*). It is *Jnanam* (the Supreme Wisdom). It is *Anantam* (Infinite).

Turn your minds toward the Divine. Repetition of the names of the Lord has been prescribed as a spiritual discipline to turn your mind away from the things of the world. If you devote the whole of this night to thoughts about the Lord, your minds will be transformed, even if you are not able to reach the highest state of "Over-Mind". Ever bearing in mind the triple characteristics of the Divine—*Sathyam*, *Jnanam*, *Anantam*, *Brahma*—strive to achieve the supreme goal of man.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, March 1988

Lessons from Sri Sathya Sai in the Kodai Hills

I have been blessed to be a part and parcel of the Institute since the year 1997. I sometimes wonder as to how this institution is able to transform ordinary individuals to men and women of character in a short span of time. Is it the academic rigor in the Institute with focused and disciplined attention, the practical learning in various self-reliance departments of the hostel, the time spent in the *Mandir* in the Divine Presence, or accompanying the Lord on occasional trips to Kodaikanal that brings in the desired transformation? The answer is neither straightforward nor does it exclude any of these factors. But, certainly, the opportunity to observe the Lord from very close quarters and come under His transformative influence in the *Mandir* and to a much greater extent during the Kodaikanal trips is unique to Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, facilitating

imbibing of incomparable and invaluable lessons from the One whose life itself is a living message.

Certainly, there is no better place to transform ourselves into better individuals than being with Bhagavan in Kodaikanal. The *Vedic* injunction of *Atithi Devo Bhava* (consider the guest as God) and the definition of being cultured as, 'having concern for others' come alive from the very first moment we are in the presence of Bhagavan in Kodaikanal. He plays the role of a perfect host. From the inspection of bathrooms to the serving of dishes as per the taste and health requirements of individuals—nothing escapes His keen attention.

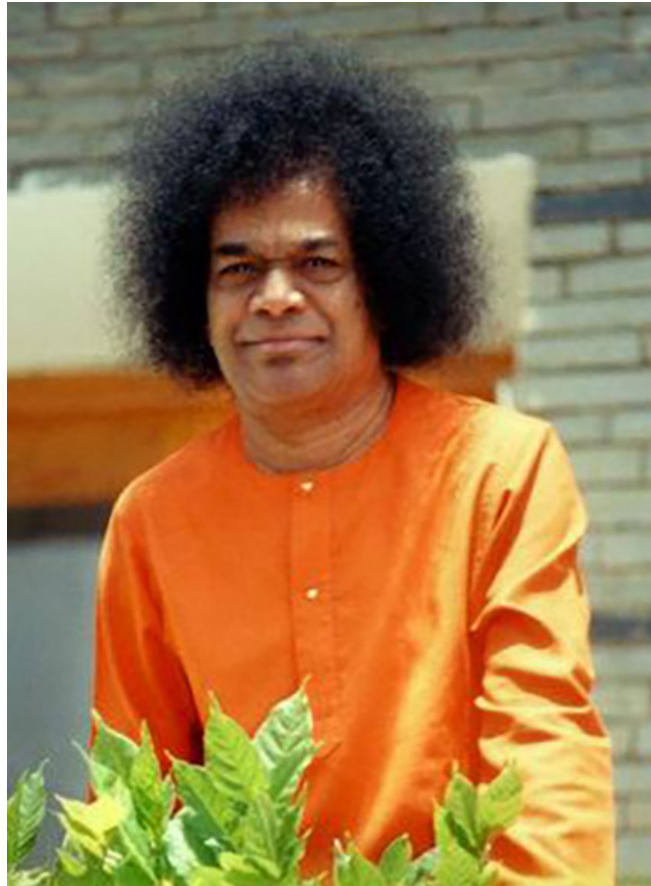
In the year 1998, the new air-conditioned bus that we were travelling in was unable to keep pace with Bhagavan's car and, thereafter, a traffic jam on the way left us miles behind Him. Feeling lost, in the middle of nowhere, we were pleasantly surprised to see an elderly devotee of Bhagavan approach us in his car with plenty of snacks, which He said Bhagavan had sent for us. We were moved to hear that Bhagavan had enquired about us tens of times and had repeatedly refused to have food or retire before seeing His children eat. Tears flowed freely from our eyes. Finally, when we reached Sai Sruthi, well after 9 p.m., we found the Lord standing at the doorstep with intermingled feelings of anxiety and joy writ large on His face. He welcomed us in with smiles and a loving pat on our backs, asking each one about his comfort. The Lord ushered us straight into the dining hall and asked us to wash our hands and sit for dinner with Him. He personally inspected the serving of one of our most sumptuous dinner sessions in decades and only then, to satisfy us, did He take a mere spoonful of rice, before retiring. Our fatigue had disappeared, and our hearts were full of an indescribable ecstasy as we spread our beds just next to the door of His room. I could hear the footsteps of Bhagavan moving inside, and immersed in His love we slept with His thoughts.

From the very next day, we realized that we would be having sessions of over seven hours each day with the Lord. Deepest of philosophies and peals of laughter intermingled with perfect ease in His presence. "This has to be heaven", I concluded, at the weather, the beauty of the place, a beautiful lake with lotuses, with clouds floating all around, and the presence of Bhagavan. That day, the Lord said that He would take us for a picnic to the Hill Top bungalow.

The Lord had just materialized the gigantic ring that King Dasharatha had gifted to Lord Rama before the marriage. It had happily fitted the right thumb of Lord Sai Rama. Everything just seemed perfect—the milieu, the presence of the Lord, and we, like monkeys, surrounding Him and laughing with Him, our beloved. Suddenly, the Lord became serious and peered out through the drawn curtain. He asked the bus to be halted and we were all surprised. The Lord pointed toward two poor women carrying bundles of firewood on their heads at a distance and asked them to be escorted closer to the bus. The middle-aged women, when told that Sathya Sai Baba was calling them, rushed to the presence of Bhagavan. The Lord enquired about

their welfare as a loving father and blessed them with His smiles and *Abhaya-Hasta*. He then directed and ensured that they were given Rs.500 each. The women were quite stunned and looked dazed at their great good fortune. After the Lord had showered His blessings on them, He asked the security personnel to help them keep the bundles of firewood back on their heads. "What a great lesson for all!" I thought.

Two days later, we were having one of our dining sessions with Bhagavan. I was part of the serving group, which served everybody before having its food at the end. After we consecrated the food with a prayer to Lord Brahma in the very presence of Lord Sai Brahma, to our great surprise and joy the Lord got up from His chair and keeping a small towel on His right shoulder walked between the two rows of dining tables, carrying with Him a small silver bowl containing salted white peas. He ate a few as He ambled along, aware of the students' furtive looks and asking us occasionally to serve again the items some boys had finished eating. Standing afar, I prayed to the Lord. When the Lord turned back, I knew He would answer that prayer of mine. The Lord came close, looked straight into my eyes, smiled, took a spoonful of peas, and to my great delight, gave them to me. Then, purposely, He dropped a spoonful of peas on the ground. I went on my knees behind Him and collected them all.



I was beginning to realize that sumptuous food of diverse variety can both be a blessing and a curse. With an average of 20 items, sweets and fruits included, like many others after the first three days I began running to tables where plates were not yet full, giving me a choice of how much to eat. Sometimes, some of us would find ourselves in front of Bhagavan with plates filled with delicacies that we could neither eat nor leave. Sometimes we suffered mild indigestion even. Whenever a boy was found missing from a meal session, the Lord's motherly eyes would immediately seek him and enquire from the elders the reason. When informed, the Lord would Himself walk up to his room and ask about his well-being. He would sometimes chide the boy lovingly for not going for a full round of the lake in the morning, that explained his lack of appetite, or Himself check his temperature with a thermometer. Later He would bless the fortunate boy with *Prasadam* [consecrated

food] and instructions about restricted diet for him the next few days. Observing all these outpourings of love and personal attention, most of us would actually feel like falling sick! Man's needs are God's opportunities.

But His great love and concern were in no way confined to His students alone. For Him, all are His own reflections and the only relationship He has with one and all is one of supreme love. An instance that revealed His immense concern for others, especially the sick and the forlorn, was witnessed by us during the Easwaramma Day celebrations on the 6th of May. The Lord had organized *Narayan Seva* and sumptuous food and new clothes were distributed to all those who assembled at Sai Sruthi. After the distribution, the Lord asked a jeep to be loaded with rugs and went around Kodaikanal spotting old and decrepit people who could not have made it to *Sai Sruthi* and distributed the much-needed rugs to them. It was with the same concern that the Lord gave us money and asked us to purchase woolen clothes for our parents from the Nepali sellers who take a lot of trouble in manufacturing these goods and transporting them to Kodaikanal.

After a few days, we started praying to Bhagavan to take us out for another picnic. The Lord said that as people follow Him in large numbers, some of these picnics earlier had been difficult to manage. So, instead, He would take us on a sight-seeing drive. Bhagavan consulted a local police officer on the ideal place around Kodaikanal to visit. The officer promptly suggested a particular spot, listing a few things in its favor, such as its proximity and scenic beauty. The Lord asked him to lead the caravan the next day and made all the necessary arrangements for the same.

The next day, we happily boarded our bus that followed the Lord's car, while the police jeep led from the front. But this presumed journey of less than one hour seemed endless! The condition of the road where it could be called one and fallen trees after a recent storm made the job of the security-men and drivers 'memorable'! The Lord, who travelled with us for some time, commented on the lack of planning and foresight on the part of the police officer. We all assumed that a thorough reprimand from the Lord awaited the police officer once we reached. At the end of what can safely be described as a 'torturous' journey, the Lord called for the police officer close to Him and most lovingly mentioned to him that the journey was a bit longer than expected. He then materialized a beautiful diamond ring for him and posed for photographs with all the officers.

Sometimes the Lord parts the veil of *maya* (illusion) and reveals His Supreme Divinity. During one of [our] sessions with Him, the Lord said, "will give a prize to the one who tells correctly who I am." Prompt flew answers in search, not of Him, but the promised reward. "You are God, Swami," said one; "You are Dattatreya, Swami," said another; "Shiva-Shakti" said another; and "Krishna", another. After some time, we looked at Swami who seemed to be enjoying the titles being conferred on Him, but none had satisfied Him. The Lord said, "Wrong answers. I am I. When you say, 'I am God', there is duality as you consider [I] different from 'God'. For Me there is no duality."

In the stillness of the silence that followed, we tried to come to terms with His and our realities. This was one of the times when the Lord gave lessons directly, but there were equally revealing times when the Lord said something that again brought us face-to-face with the Principle that He is. Once, as the Lord appeared from His room in the early morning and stood facing us, He asked one short boy to stand next to Him. He then asked, "Who is taller, you or Me?" The boy was quite nonplussed and after a little while said, "Swami, You are taller." The Lord gave a loving pat on his back and said, "No, wrong answer, *Anoraneeyaan Mahato Maheeyaan*" (I am smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest).

On another occasion, the Lord was conversing with us and narrating significant and amusing instances from His childhood when He had visited many places. In the course of this recollection Swami mentioned the Queen of the princely state of Jind in pre-independence India. One of the elders mentioned that the Queen was present among the ladies. The Lord looked at her and asked, "Jind Rani, what is your age now?" Having been very close to Bhagavan for decades, she replied childishly, "Swami, I am elder to you by three months." Instant was the reply of Bhagavan who said, "Not me, this body. I have no age." Another significant instance in this regard involved two brothers who were part of the entourage in the year 1999 and were visited by their parents and sister for a week. The Lord blessed them with an interview and an opportunity to have meals with Him.

It was Friday morning and during the session, the Lord asked one of the brothers, "When are your parents leaving?" The boy folded his hands and said, "Swami, they say that they would leave whenever Bhagavan says." The Lord smiled and said, "Did they not come to meet you yesterday evening and say that they were planning to leave on Saturday to be in time for your sister's exam on Sunday? Where am I?"

Having thus seen glimpses of His Reality and the practical messages of His life, let us now go on to those golden words uttered by Him that are practical scriptures for those on the path of spirituality for all times to come. One of the instances that comes to my mind is when the Lord invited spiritual questions from us. Taking the opportunity, an elderly devotee asked, "Swami, whatever *sadhana* we do, finally it is You who being pleased grant us liberation. So please tell us what pleases You the most, so that You quickly bestow upon us Your blessings of liberation." The Lord smiled and replied, "Bangaroo, to please Me is very simple—just follow what I say."

In Kodaikanal, Bhagavan gives occasional discourses in the *Bhajan* hall after the evening program. One day, the Lord spoke elaborately about the need for all to master the mind and become a mastermind. But all through, the Lord did not reveal to us the way to achieve the same. I was determined to ask Bhagavan for the easiest way to achieve it. After we came inside and sat around Bhagavan, He again mentioned the importance of mastering the mind in the spiritual path. At that point I raised my hand and sought permission to ask a question. The Lord looked at me and said, "Ask." I prayed, "Swami what is the easiest way to master the mind and become

a mastermind? The Lord smiled and said, "The easiest way to master the mind is to love God more and more, and the best way to love God is to love all and serve all."

After descending from the hills of Kodaikanal, we experienced a sea-change in weather and found the journey to Madurai quite warm. The road-top ahead reflected the scorching sun. The Lord's car was in front of us, preceded and followed by two police jeeps. Suddenly, the Lord's car stopped and with that our bus and the whole entourage. The door of the Lord's car opened. Expecting the unexpected, the barefooted policemen from the jeep following Bhagavan's car jumped out, only to jump back immediately, with the burning tar painfully scorching their soles. As they frantically started to wear their shoes, the Lord kept His tender and lotus feet on the ground and walked slowly and majestically the entire 50-meter distance with a smile on His face. He then distributed tetra packs. I thought He had forgotten me, sitting as I was holding His lotus feet on the floor of the bus. He asked for a pack, pushed in the straw, and reversing His hand, in one quick gesture inserted the straw straight into my mouth, without even looking toward where I was sitting!

~Dr. Deepak Anand

Source: *Vidyagiri: Divine Vision* (2006)

The Darshan at Dawn

In the darkness of the misty morn
Rise silent prayers from a waiting crowd,
Each, in the solitude of his own thoughts,
Waits and watches.

The sun hath not risen yet,
The mist still settles in the heavy air,
All around, Nature in her native glory
Waits and watches.

The doves are hidden in the niches,
Each, in her turn, bides her time,
As the lonely elephant
Waits and watches.

Anon, as from nowhere,
In the center of the temple door
The Living God appears,
"Brighter than a thousand suns,"

Radiant in form, robed in red,
A halo of hair holding a beautiful face,
Slender in figure, of graceful import,
BABA stands before the silent crowd.

There is a stir in the air,
All hands are clasped in prayer,
Gently, softly He walks
A few steps forward,
To feast the fasting eyes
Of many a man, woman, and child,
And cast an all-embracing glance,
As though drawing each soul to Himself,
Moving His hand in circles slow,
Palm upward, one couldn't guess why.

"Om Sri Sai Ram," "*Om Namō Namostu*"
Rise like a soft whisper from all around,
An awe fills the air, a bliss sublime;
All eyes are fixed on that form divine,
Hearts full to the brim, with love
That knows no understanding,
Eyes, overflowing with joyful tears,
Hands clasped together in ardent prayer
That one moment those divine eyes
May rest on each lowly form
And bless it in abundance.

The air is still, the distant hills
Stand in obeisance,
Peace reigns supreme, and then,
As though all good things must end,
The Radiant Form retreats
Toward the silver door,
A moment, and He is gone, —still
Leaving behind His Presence unseen.

Was it a command?
The mist lifts from the air,
The birds are aloft,
All nature hums with life,
A stifled shuffle of footsteps,
And the lingering crowds disperse.

~Ratnavathi

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Feb. 1974

Loving Care

I would like to share an experience that seems to point out a very important message.

On Wednesday, July 14th I awakened remembering the tail-end of a very vivid dream in which I found myself in a group of people waiting to be tested by judges, but I did not know the nature of the test.

Finally, my turn came, and they said with surprise that this one, meaning me, was able to breathe the full breath.

Apparently, this was the test, and I remember being very surprised as I do not practice *Pranayama* and had not been aware of breathing differently from usual.

Shortly after waking, my husband Sidney and I started our usual morning routine of Tai Chi Chih physical exercises followed by the meditation according to Baba's suggestions in the Guidelines.

A few minutes after starting the Tai Chi I was very strongly aware of Baba standing in front of me, only a short distance away, and I was most impressed with the fact that although I did not actually see Him, I knew the space He occupied in the room, and His size and height compared to my own.

Then I noticed that He was literally pouring into my solar-plexus what felt like energy, and I was amazed at how very easy it was to relax and breathe it in; and wondered why it had never seemed so easy before and hoped that I could continue to be so open to receive from Him.

I didn't connect this with the dream until later.



I had awakened with a headache, so I thought that Baba must be helping me with that and thanked him.

This awareness of Baba continued throughout the exercises and on into the meditation, until I began to feel that Baba was inside of me and that his energy was circulating all through my body with a tingling sensation.

I did not mention this to Sidney at the time, as it was such a subjective experience.

After breakfast I took a shower in the bathroom that Sidney always uses instead of the one I usually use, which is being re-painted.

As I stepped out of the shower Sidney stepped in, and the next second I heard him crash as he slipped on the tile and fell on his back on the tile steps.

He could neither breathe nor speak, only groan, as he lay inert.

As Baba's presence was still so strongly with me, it was easy and natural for me to call on Him for help.

Somehow, I was able to move Sidney out of the shower and onto a mat on his stomach and was horrified to see that his rib-cage on the right side was caved in, and there were two red marks across the back, and black and blue bruises beginning to appear on the upper back.

I quickly got *Vibhuti* [sacred ash] and the *mangalasutra* that Baba had materialized at the spiritual marriage he gave us last year, and putting them on his back, started to rub it gently with the *Vibhuti*, massaging it in as I talked out loud to Baba, asking for help.

I was profoundly moved as I watched the ribs move up under my hand and the upper back resume the normal shape, at that point he gasped in and was able to breathe again and speak.

As I continued to rub the *Vibhuti* into the injured area, the black and blue bruises began to fade as if they were being washed away.

I could feel the broken ribs move under my hand, and could hear the broken ends rub against one another, and later the X-ray pictures showed that he broke three ribs.

The amazing part is that there was no puncture of the lung; the broken ends were close together so that it was not necessary to operate to pull them into place; and there were no bruises visible.

I feel certain that Baba must have known that this was about to happen, but as He has said He will not interfere with our *karma* [actions]. He prepared me ahead of time (without my knowing the reason) so that I would be alerted to call on Him for help immediately, and already be filled with His energy so that it could pour into Sidney, and so prevent the accident from being more serious than it is.

The chief reason for me to share this is that so many devotees think that as soon as they come to Baba they will live happily ever after, free from problems, as we were taught in the fairy stories we heard as children. And [we] are deeply disappointed and disillusioned and often begin to doubt Baba when the exact opposite often takes place, and they appear to be under an attack with barely enough time to recover from dealing with one problem before new ones loom up.

However, Baba has told us that He often accelerates our *karma* when we come to Him, and as He will not erase it, He helps us handle it if we call on Him, knowing we cannot deal with it alone.

In the experience I have just shared, not only did He fill me with His presence, but He led me (without my knowledge) to be right there, only inches away when Sidney fell.

If I had been anywhere else in the house he might not have survived, as his condition made it impossible to call me, and I could not have heard the fall with the bathroom door closed.

For me, it is much more realistic to know that Baba is always available to help us with our problems, than to expect Him to wave a magic wand and avert them, and in so doing take away the chance to learn the necessary lesson through handling them with His help.

I am filled with awe as I look back and realize the loving care with which He came ahead of the accident to prepare the way to lessen the severity of it.

~Ms. S. D. Krystal, Pacific Palisade
Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Sept. 1976

Q&A
WITH BHAGAVAN

Swami: Well! You look so full of joy today!

Bhakta: You have yourself said that man is the embodiment of joy, isn't it?

Swami: Then you must always be in this mood; do you remain so?

Bhakta: I am trying as far as possible.

Swami: Why say 'trying'? Does not sorrow flee the instant Reality is known?

Bhakta: But what is the Reality, Swami?

Swami: All that 'is' is unreal! The efforts you undertake, the words you utter, are all unreal; when you know this, the Reality will be evident. Remove all the unreal ideas, opinions, acts, and the Truth that is hidden can be seen. Piling up all this on top, if you ask, what is Reality. how can it be seen?

Bhakta: How is it possible to take all that is done, spoken, seen, felt, listened to, as unreal?

Swami: First, understand who is experiencing all these. You refer to the body as 'I', 'I', isn't it? That is unreal. When the experiencing 'I' is itself unreal, how can the experiences be real? All have the same *atma*. The person who experienced is not 'you', the person who listened is not 'you'. You only witnessed all this.

Bhakta: You said, Swami, that in everything there is *atma*; is there *atma* in a dead man?

Swami: Oh! A good question, indeed! Is it more to solve your doubt or the doubt of a dead person?

Bhakta: Mine.

Swami: Well, it is only when you have awakened from deep sleep or *sushupthi* that you are aware there is an 'I', isn't it? In the same manner, there is the *atma* in the corpse also.

Bhakta: Then how can it be called dead, how can death happen when there is *atma*?

Swami: If you discriminate properly, there is no dying and no living. A moving body is called living and a still one dead. In dreams any number of living bodies and corpses are seen. On waking they do not exist. Similarly, this world, both moving and still, is non-existent. Death means the fading out of the 'I' consciousness. Re-birth happens when 'I' consciousness comes again. This is what is called birth and death, my boy! *Ahamkara* [ego] is born, *ahamkara* dies, that is all.

Bhakta: So, I exist always, is it?

Swami: Of course, you do! When the 'I' consciousness is there, you exist. When it is not there also you exist. You are only the base for the awareness; you are not the awareness.

Bhakta: But they say, 'attained liberation', 'attained *mukti*', etc. What is that?

Swami: Understanding the root of death and birth, one must destroy completely the awareness of the separate 'I'; that condition is '*mukti*'.

Bhakta: So, when I die, I and You are One, isn't it?

Swami: Who said 'No'? That feeling of One, when you are firmly established in it, there is nothing separate at all.

Bhakta: Until then, in order to identify the real 'I' in the unreal 'I', they say that the support of a *Guru* is wanted; how far is that true, Swami?

Swami: It is only when you have so many 'I's that you need someone's support, is it not? When all is One, why seek another? Still, until that *aham* or that 'I' fades out, this speaking 'I' and this listening 'You' have to be there. When that I is gone, whom to speak to? Who listens? All are One: The reflection of *atma*, conditioned by *chith* is Easwara: Easwara conditioned by the *anthahkarana* is the *jiva*, is it not?

Source: *Sandeha Nivarini*

Thought of the MONTH

Experience!

Another disease has now begun to spread in the world to weaken and lessen peace. There are plenty who, parrot-like, purvey wholesome advice on morals, religion, and discipline but who do not practice even a single bit of it themselves. The so-called elders know only how to speak, not how to act. How do those who teach how to act know enough to speak about it? Words devoid of experience, that is the illness that afflicts the world today. This disease must first be treated and removed, for peace is warped thereby for mankind. Speaking is easy for all. The real spiritual aspirant, however, acts and then speaks from experience.

~Prasanthi Vahini

Do not rest content by mere listening to advice. What you have listened to must later be reflected upon, and what has thus been imprinted on the mind has later to be

experienced and expressed in thought, word, and deed. Only thus can the truth be a treasure in the heart; only then can it flow through the veins and manifest in full splendor through you... The yearning must be deep and persistent. The longing to know and experience the truth will then become *yoga*, a process of union.

~Vidya Vahini

Even this path of devotion cannot be defined and demarcated as such and such. Since it has many forms, roads, and types of experience, it is impossible for anyone to describe it accurately and fully. Each devotee gets bliss only through their individual experience. Through the experience of other devotees, at best they can get only encouragement and guidance. The experience changes from one person to another, so it eludes comparison and even description. If anyone describes it by examples and limits, be sure that their experience is not real.

The limited soul is immersed in the limitless love of the Lord, and how can words describe that experience called by the *Upanishads* as the unbroken unflow of sweetness? One cannot express that state of unbounded devotion in human language. By outward signs that can be cognized by the senses, one can feel that the devotee is in a high state of bliss, but who can gauge the depth of that joy? It has no relation with the senses at all. Devotion must be realized in your own experience, though great souls can illumine the path a little for you by their examples. With their help, you can grasp something of the path, but always remember that words fail when they approach the Beyond. They are useful only for purposes of the objective world. They are instruments of no value in regions of experience where comparisons are impossible.

What spiritual aspirants must do now is this. First, develop wisdom with discrimination (*viveka*)—that is to say, the capacity to distinguish the eternal from the transitory and to decide which is worthy. Second, make a sincere attempt to experience what is chosen as worthy and true. Third, don't give up discipline, whatever comes in the way. These three can be called genuine spiritual austerity (*tapas*). From this austerity alone is born real peace and joy.

~Prasanthi Vahini

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