

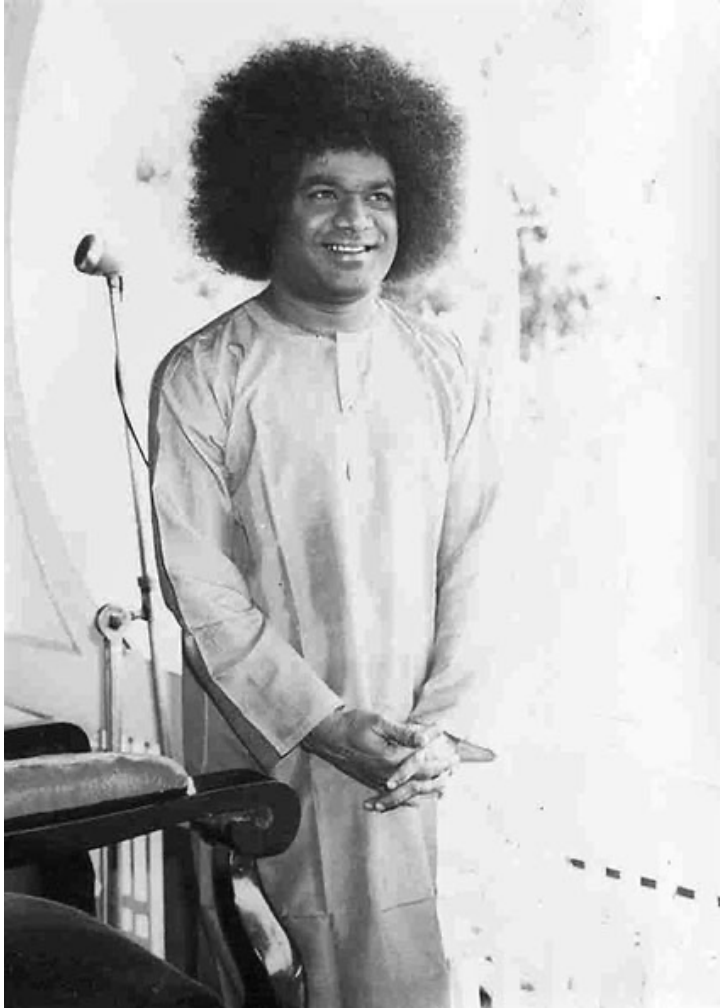
Social Life and *Atmic Sadhana*—A Message

What has sociology or the social sciences to do with the sciences of the spirit or the inquiry into the human spirit? This is a question that is commonly raised. So, too, many do ask: What has the spiritual student and *sadhaka* [an enquirer] to do with society and its problems? It must be said that both these attitudes are wrong.

No society can find its fulfillment, no social ideal can fructify, without the blossoming of the spirit of man. Mankind cannot realize the Divinity whose expression it is, without careful and constant attention being paid to the cultivation of the Spirit. How else can this Divinity express itself than in and through individuals? We can apprehend only the *jagat* [the world], this moving, inconstant, fantasia; we cannot see or hear, smell or taste or touch the Director of the Fantasia—God. In the same manner, we can apprehend the individual, but not the entity named society. For, society is no separate, distinct, complex formed out of elemental components. Society is the divine proliferation produced by the will of the Supreme.

Man is mortal; dust he is and to dust returneth. But in him there shines the *atma* [soul], as a spark of the immortal flame. This is not a term of flattery invented by the *Vedantists*. The *atma* is the source, the sustenance of every being and every organization of beings. It is the one and only source, substance, and sustenance. The *atma* is God; the particular is the universal, no less. Therefore, recognize in each being, in each man, a brother, the child of God, and ignore all limiting thoughts and prejudices based on status, color, class, nativity, and caste. Sai is ever engaged in warning you and guiding you so that you may think, speak, and act in this attitude of love.

Society cannot justify itself by planning to divide the spoils gained out of nature either in equal shares or unequal shares. The consummation that must inspire society has to be the establishment and elaboration, in every social act and resolution, of the knowledge of the one universal *atma* and the bliss that that knowledge confers. Sai does not direct, "The *atma* has no death, therefore kill the physical sheaths, the bodies." No. Sai does not encourage wars. Sai directs you to recognize the *atma* as your closest kin, closer than the members of your family, your blood-relations, and your dearest descendants. When this is done, you will never more stray from the path of right, which alone can maintain that kinship.



Familial attachment operates even against the performance of one's legitimate duties. But attachment to the Divine fills that duty with a new dedication that ensures both joy and success. It activates man as nothing else can; it confers on him during the process of doing his duty the highest wisdom. Hence the advice: Do not enter the objective world (*prakriti*) in the hope of realizing the *atma*; enter the objective world after becoming aware of the *atma*; for then you see nature in a new light and your very life becomes a long festival of love.

There are many who use their scholarship and intelligence, even *Vedic* scholarship, in dreary debate and competitive display. They are enamored of their petty

triumphs. They declare that society is an arena for winning such triumphs. But Sai calls on you to seek and strengthen another type of society, where there is no room for such trivial desires.

Disputative *Vedic* scholars crave for the fruits of their endeavors and efforts through ritual. Nature does not crave so; the clouds bring rain as a homage to God who is their Lord. But they (*Vedic* scholars) attribute it to the efficacy of their rites and use it to inflate their ego. They play about among the far-spreading branches of the tree of desire. They are entangled in the coils of the three 'ropes'—the *tamasic*, the *rajasic*, and the *satvic* [dull, active, and pure].

You have to go beyond the three ropes and the three bonds. You have to be ever in the unchanging eternal Truth. You must be established in the One, as the One, with no trace or taste of two. Earning and garnering should not interest you; you must not be caught in the pursuit of *yoga* and *kshema* [welfare], for you are *full* already and have no wants.

The ideal of a high standard of life instead of a high level of living has played havoc with human society. A high level of living insists on morality, humility, detachment,

compassion; so the competitive greed for luxury and conspicuous consumption receives no encouragement and will be destroyed. Now man is the slave of his desires; he finds himself helpless to conquer the thirst for pleasure and luxury. He is too weak to keep his nature under control; he does not know how to arouse the Divine Consciousness that is latent in him.

Mere moral practices or instruction cannot help you to achieve this. It can be done only by spiritual *sadhana* [effort]. For it is a basic transformation. It involves the elimination of the mind, which is the arch-obstacle in the path. Grace of God, if invoked and won, can endow you with the power. And the grace is available within you, awaiting the call.

Man must give up reliance on the vagaries of the mind. He must act ever in the consciousness of his innate divinity. When that is done, his three-fold nature (composed of the *gunas*—*tamasic*, *rajasic*, and *satvic*) will automatically express itself through only holy channels. That is the genuine manifestation.

Another point - the argument may be raised: "If one has to give up the desire for comfort, luxury, and pleasure, why should one be embroiled in society? This presupposes the belief that society is justified only by the provision of such worldly joys. But what kind of society can one build on such slender foundations? If built, it can be a society only in name, it will not be bound by mutual love and cooperation. The strong will suppress the weak. Social relations will be marred by discontent. Even when attempts are made to divide the resources of nature equally among all, the cordiality will be only on the surface. It will not be spontaneous. We can limit the resources available, but we cannot limit greed, desire, and craving. Desire involves seeking beyond the limits of possibility. What has to be done is to pluck out desire by the roots. Man must give up the desire for objective pleasure based on the illusion that the world is many, manifold, multi-colored etc., and not on the truth that the world, nature, all creation, is ONE. When one is conscious only of the ONE, who desires which? What can be acquired and enjoyed by the second person? The *atmic* vision destroys the desire for objective joys, for there is no object distinct from the subject.

This is the true function of society—to enable every member to realize this *atmic* vision. The men and women bound by mutual interests in a society are not merely families, castes, classes, groups, or kinsmen and kinswomen; they are ONE *atma*. They are knit by the closest of family ties; not only the one society to which they feel they are bound, but all MANKIND—ONE. *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, as the *Shastras* [scriptures] declare; the whole world is one family. This unity must be experienced by everyone.

Natural resources and wealth are now being misused for the boosting of one's ego. But when the *atmic* unity is realized, they will promote the new way of life through love. What is now 'mercy,' or legally enforced mutual 'help,' will then be transformed into 'Divine Love' that can effectively purify the recipient and the giver. This

consummation is beyond the region of common politics, ethics, or economics. They cannot transform the receiver and thrill the giver, however much they attempt to equalize. They do not have the appeal and they have no power to sustain. The equality they establish will be haunted by a shadow, the shadow of the ego. This shadow can disappear only when identity as ONE is known and felt.

It may be said that not all desires are wrong; the *rajasic* ones that harm and exploit others can be condemned; but why renounce the *satvic* desires? But desire is desire, though the object may be beneficial and pure. The fruit of effort, the mind that seeks it, the vitality that activates the mind, life itself—every one of these has to be turned toward the Lord, with devotion born out of the vision of the ONE.

Those who argue that the spiritual path is for the individual only and that the society should not be involved in it are committing a great mistake. It is like insisting that there should be light inside the house and saying that it does not matter if there is darkness outside. Devotion toward God goes ill with hatred toward fellow-men. Fellow-men and the world must be seen ever in the mirror of *Sat-chit-ananda* [being, awareness, bliss]. Kinship based on this recognition will alone last. That is the Sai Kinship. When you deepen that kinship, the true Presence, the constant Presence of Sathya Sai will be yours. Do not be led away by your fancies into the jungle of words and feelings. Be firm, true to your innermost nature.

Good and evil are based on the reactions of individuals; they are not inherent in things or events. *Vedanta* or atheism is accepted or rejected when one likes or dislikes it. They do not depend on logical acceptance or rejection. Only experience can establish their validity. Who can delineate Godhood as thus and thus? Those who do so are indulging in a futile exercise. They have no authority for declaring it. If they claim the right, they are but conceited people relying on their limited intellects.

Divinity is fully immanent in everyone; it is patent for the eyes that can see clearly and deeply. Whoever denies this is only cheating himself of his reality. He cannot dismiss it by denial, either from himself or others.

The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable that it is the duty of men to see in society the expression of Divinity, and to use all his skill and effort to promote the welfare and prosperity of society. Men must cultivate (1) this expansive feeling (2) this inclusive thinking, and (3) this intuitive vision. Without these three, man is but an inert being; if he derides these three, he loses his title to be human.

The spirit of renunciation, adherence to virtue, the eagerness to co-operate, the sense of kinship—these are the characteristic signs of man. Life that considers these as encumbrances cannot be valued as 'life'.

The brotherhood of man can be translated into life only on the basis of the *atmic* vision. All men thirst for peace, happiness, and bliss. They are the precious heritage

that is their right, for they are God's treasure. They can be earned only by recognizing the bond that knits man to man. All men are of one lineage; they are of Divine lineage.

All men are cells in the one Divine organism, in the Divine body. That should be your faith, your fortune, your fort, your fullness. Awareness of this alone gives you the right to call yourself a man. Learn to live as men. This is the *sadhana*, this is the message of Sai.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, April 1974

Krishna overturned the pot of curds and ran off with a ball of butter. Yashoda, the mother, was able to catch Him by means of the footprints on the floor left by the curd-smearred soles! You, too, can discover the footprints, impressed as truth, beauty, virtue, humility, justice, peace, and love. Train yourselves to recognize the footprints in these.

—Baba

Reminiscences with Sri Sathya Sai

Late Dr. K Hanumanthappa, M. Com, Ph.D., CCA (USA), FBIM (London), FWAIM (USA) served as the Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning from 1993 to 1996. He was former Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University and authored about 250 research papers published in national and international journals, and 15 books on finance and management. He was recipient of national and international awards and was a devotee of Bhagavan Baba for over 45 years.

Way back in 1969 Swami blessed us with an interview and said that He would take me into His University, but nothing further was revealed. At that time, I was working in Bangalore University as Head of the Department of Commerce and Management. As Bhagavan's University had not come into being, all students from Sai Institutions used to come to Bangalore University for their Higher Studies. I should frankly admit that those students were mainly responsible for my establishing close proximity to Bhagavan. That was His *Leela* (miracle).

While working in the Bangalore University, I used to go religiously to Whitefield every day to have Bhagavan's *darshan*. The period between 1969 and 1993 brought me closer and closer to Bhagavan and finally made me glide into His Divine Orbit. It was a turning point in my life. Unprecedented changes took place in my life, unthinkable transformation and reformation of the highest magnitude took place in my personality and those of the members of my family, besides unbearable trials and tribulations in my job and the environment in which I was working. Many

extreme situations and circumstances of melancholy made my life miserable. All these events compelled me to think of quitting the Bangalore University and going either to USA or UK if possible.

At that critical juncture Bhagavan Baba entered my life and started guiding and protecting me at every stage. He finally elevated me to the position of Vice Chancellor in the same University where I had suffered untold misery and suffering. It shows that in such critical periods of devotees' lives, Bhagavan, the "*Anatha Rakshaka*", gives tremendous courage and confidence to them to face all such difficulties. In an interview in 1969 Swami told me, "You are going to become everything here and don't need to go anywhere further." He wanted that I should be near Him always. Knowing well my wavering mind, Swami one day sent word through Late Sri N. Kasturi that I should not leave Bangalore and the University. This I implicitly obeyed; I stayed on at Bangalore till I became the Vice Chancellor. In response to this, Bhagavan fulfilled His promise to me.

By Swami's infinite grace and compassion, I was appointed as Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University, which was the biggest University in Asia at that time, for a period of 3 years from 1990 to 1993. After receiving the orders, I did not take charge immediately, for I wanted to take Swami's blessings and then report for duty. Though I was going to Whitefield every day for *darshan*, Bhagavan neither looked at me nor enquired about my appointment. Perhaps Bhagavan wanted to test me or it might have been His Divine drama, or He was waiting for an auspicious



day. When all the newspapers carried the news of my appointment, Srinivas, my old student, seems to have told Bhagavan about my appointment. Immediately Bhagavan called me, and expressed His great joy and happiness, and profusely showered His blessings on me. On a Thursday, I was asked to take charge. Holding my hands, Bhagavan promised my wife and me that He would look after everything during the tenure of my office as Vice Chancellor. And He rightly kept His promise till the end of my term, for which I shall remain ever grateful to the most compassionate Swami.

Just before the completion of my three-year term as the Vice Chancellor of Bangalore University, one day I went to Pondicherry to attend the All-India Vice Chancellors' Conference for three days. I got an urgent message from Swami informing me that I had been selected as the Vice Chancellor of Swami's University and that I should report on the 10th of March, 1993. Though my joy knew no bounds, getting the relieving order from the Chancellor and the Governor of Karnataka within such a short period posed a serious problem. All of us are aware that in such critical situations, Bhagavan's divine power works in response to our prayers; and His '*sankalpa*' will make us overcome all hurdles.

Initially the Governor refused to relieve me, for he was interested in extending my tenure for another term of three years. But God's Will was that I should report on a particular day as destined and designed by Bhagavan. Miraculously, the Governor changed his mind overnight and relieved me. After my return to Puttaparthi, Bhagavan told me, "I had gone to the Governor at Bangalore and asked him to relieve you immediately." All this had happened in one night, hardly within 8 or 10 hours. This incident still remains a mystery to me, because when Bhagavan was in Puttaparthi at that time, how could He have gone to Bangalore overnight and met the Governor? Therefore, God, the Divine Master can change the course of events, and make things submit to His Divine Will as and when He desires.

From day one, after taking charge as the Vice Chancellor, I felt as though I had landed in a different world altogether. Everything looked very strange and totally different from what I had seen and experienced all along in my life. Bhagavan's University looked totally different from the rest of the universities in the world. The students, teachers, and the staff looked different in their behavior, their life style, and work culture. My experience in Bangalore University and in other places could not match Bhagavan's University. On the other hand, those were contradicting and confronting my style of functioning. Bhagavan was closely observing my predicament, sometimes correcting, sometimes encouraging and at times even admonishing me in order to put me on the right track so carefully and miraculously through His Divine power. Slowly I tuned myself to the changed ambience and was in tune with the divine atmosphere pervading the Sai Institutions and Campuses at Prasanthi Nilayam, Whitefield, and Anantapur Women's College.

During my tenure as Vice Chancellor, there was not much of administrative work. Most of the things here are either done by Swami or by the students under His benign guidance. At one stage I felt as though I had no work except to be always in proximity to Swami. As the saying goes, "Old habits die hard"; I used to go to the office regularly every day at 8.30 am and come back at 5.00 pm. The result was that I was missing both the morning and the evening *darshan* of Swami. After observing me carefully for some time, one day He came to me and said, "What are you doing at the top of the Hill in the office from morning till evening?" I said, "Swami, I will be attending to the office work and then reading some books." Immediately He said, "Ours is a small University when compared to Bangalore University, which is one of the biggest universities in Asia; it takes hardly a few minutes for you to attend to the

office work. My dear Hanumanthappa, Swami has brought you here to spend more time to do 'spiritual *sadhana*' rather than routine academic work as you used to do all these years. You have already wasted and frittered away your lifetime in such mundane activities. Stop this at once."

This counsel of Bhagavan shook my whole attitude and brought metamorphosis in my life. From then onward I started spending more time in 'spiritual *sadhana*'. But even then, He was constantly testing me at every stage, in every activity, and silently bringing thorough reformation and refinement in my life in order to make me stage by stage reach perfection in every respect. His extraordinary sensitivity to the needs and problems of millions and millions of people all over the world is by all standards incredible. This 'sensitivity' is ever in operation.

Here are a few of my important reflections and reminiscences:

One distinguished devotee after meeting Swami, it seems, said, "I came, I saw, and I was conquered." Another devotee said, "He is the friend I love, the God I fear; the Krishna in whose enigmatic hands I love to be slain, making myself immortal." Yet another expressed himself in patriotic terms when he exclaimed, "God is an Indian". And yet many choose to speak in the language of silence when asked to describe their confrontation with the Divine, but their way of life bears eloquent testimony to the alchemy of His impact.

To start with, I must [talk] about the life of devotees and the society at large at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. And, secondly, the life of students in Bhagavan's Institutions and how silent transformation, reformation, and refinement takes place at different levels and at different times in individuals' life through the "religion of love". Every moment, there is a new revelation that prepares us even more perfectly for a life that is assured of reaching the goal. Every time He speaks to us, there is a renewal of hope and revival of strength that equips us better to face the challenges of life, to take its thrills and tragedies, its moments of delight and despair in our stride, and relentlessly strive to attain the supreme equipoise that is "His Habitual Disposition". His every action bears the stamp of the "Divine Alchemist" enchanting us with visions of a splendorous world of infinite perfection, that is "His Own". Indeed, "He is Functioning to Perfection".

Millions of His devotees gather at the Lotus Feet, and each would contend that there is something very special and unique between himself and Bhagavan. Their experiences of Bhagavan have been unique, singularly fortunate in gaining His Grace. Swami has a different approach, mode of dealing, and an appropriate message to give to every individual who comes within the ambit of His grace. All these contain some eclectic essence of "Supreme Identity" and are done with the one intention of making the individual consciously aware of it.

I am fully convinced that Bhagavan's Philosophy of Life centers round the "Doctrine of Universal Love" and He has indeed been its most authentic exponent. His very

nature is love and love is the Religion that He practices and preaches. To combat the disease of discord and disharmony that has undermined human relations and even imperiled man's very existence, "Love is the paramount panacea" that Bhagavan prescribes.

A devotee says, "Love is Life's spiritual integer." In the innermost recesses of every human heart, the seedling of pure love lies buried in the debris of cruder emotions and sentiments. To let this seedling sprout with the water of faith and the sunshine of "Divine grace" is to open up a spiritual dimension to the human consciousness that will ultimately enable him to seek and get the "Absolute".

Bhagavan wants to bring change in the younger generation through "Integral System of Education and Living" by opening new type of schools, colleges, and universities at different places and in different countries. Value Oriented Education is a hallmark of the Sri Sathya Sai System of Education that aims at producing a combination of action in the material world with the yearning for spiritual enquiry, leading one to higher goals. [It does this] by creating and operating a base for the graded and subtle evolution of the secular (or relative) values to the transcendental (or absolute) values, equipping students to play their dynamic role in the society both as secular and spiritual persons.

The Sai System of Education has a profound positive content based on spiritual heritage, national goals, universal perceptions, and cultural perspectives. The Sai System of Education creates in students a sense of purity of thought, word, and deed; above all it makes them better human beings.

India is witnessing unprecedented expansion of higher education and mushroom growth of colleges and universities. There is admittedly a state of near anarchy even in the administration of existing facilities leading to social tension and mediocre output. Much of this confusion is traceable to ethical, moral, and social values being divorced from the educational process. This has far-reaching consequences on the quality of manpower that holds the key to our country's progress.

Higher Education has expanded quantitatively over the years. Regardless of political system, level of economic development, or educational ideology, the expansion of Higher Education has been the most important single post-war trend worldwide. Higher Education expanded dramatically first in U.S.A., then in Europe, and currently the main focus of expansion is in the "Third world".

Bhagavan Baba says, "Value-Based Education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition, and fatalism." Therefore, Sri Sathya Sai System of Education is unique in the world and is the only panacea for the country and the whole world.

Bhagavan Baba's University is a Universal University and a Divine University; it is not only for students, but it is for all people in the world. Swami is ushering in a

“Global Reformation through Spiritual Renaissance” by means of “individual rediscovery”. Baba’s Divine Mission cannot be understood easily. His Divine design is most incredible, inexplicable, incomprehensible, unique, and beyond intellectual perception. Generations to come will hardly believe that such a person as this, ever in flesh and blood, walked upon Mother Earth!

Sitting in the *Mandir* [temple] in close proximity to Bhagavan, our students and teachers in Swami’s institutions undergo constant purification of their hearts. The heart gets filled with love that is pure, selfless, and hence divine. The attraction toward Him is indeed extraordinary, unique, and universal. The more we see Him or hear Him, the greater the desire to see Him and hear Him ceaselessly. The very thought of Baba sends ripples of emotion and divine vibrations all through the body, sometimes resulting in tears. This instantly elevates us and lifts our soul into the limitless “Cosmic Consciousness” of Baba. Bringing man to God is the greatest miracle of Baba.

Sitting with Him even in a private audience, we get the impression that every word of His has some meaning for someone or the other, which we may not be able to recognize. One devotee with close proximity to Swami said, “Every act of His transforms someone; every glance of His touches someone’s heart; every word of His molds someone’s character; every gesture of His confers joy on someone.” Therefore, we get the impression that He does not act as “Human” but as a “Human - Divine”. It is this “Divine Element” in His actions that make all of it so lovable, so touching, so mysterious, and so memorable.

There is a peculiar experience of being in the presence of Baba, may be because of His access to Infinite Cosmic Power. A sense of unfathomable mystery persists with Him, and I call it a “Divine Mystery” that is eternal, inexhaustible, and always perfect (*poorna*). We will be wonderstruck to see sometimes that His sweep is so pervasive and His interest in us is so deep, intensive, and all-embracing that we are off our feet long before we realize what has happened to us! When the ‘Infinite’ has come into the finite dimension, not understanding, but non-understanding or even misunderstanding results in confused behavior all around. But the Master as He is takes care of the situation. He relates to us as is best for our understanding and exactly as we envisage, with all mischievous glee.

Sometimes, I ask myself if I could have ever lived without Bhagavan Baba. Without Him, I would have felt utterly lonely, deserted, and desolate. My life would have been miserable, worthless, misdirected, and futile. What a great difference it makes now with Baba guiding and protecting me through all vicissitudes in my life. I have no words to express my deep sense of reverence, gratitude, and profound love to my Loving God and Living God, the Universal Mother, and the Cosmic Mother. The great spiritual power of Sai touches all shores of the world’s oceans and seas. The “*Poornavatar*” is available to all of us. It is an opportunity of a lifetime to transform and reform ourselves from a directionless existence to a life full of meaning and purpose. The onus is on us.

Sitting at the center of our heart on the golden throne, Baba keeps eternal vigil over all of us, night and day; all our thoughts, words, and deeds get automatically registered with Him. Let us pray for Baba's constant guidance and the perennial warmth of His Love. With His help, let us cross this ocean of life and try to reach the "Kingdom of Heaven".

~ Late Dr. K. Hanumanthappa

Source: Vidyagiri: Divine Vision 2006

Gratitude

I saw A Man...
His Voice was sweet, like Nectar,
(When it flows!)
And, when He spoke, the words fell, soft,

Like dew-drops on a Rose;
His step was firm where'er He walked...
His Foot-prints... shining-bright,
And, tho' gentle was His Touch,
He was A Man of Might!

And, like A Halo round His Head,
He wore His coal-black hair;
And Love, just like a sweet Bouquet,
Was offered everywhere!
He brought a new un-clouded
View unto my human-eyes,
And, tho' I knew not whence He came,
I knew The Man was Wise!

The graceful Robe, around His Form,
Caressed Him...
Like a Flame,
And then, I learned from a passer-by,
'Sai Baba' was His Name!

I sat among the growing throngs...
And, eagerly, I sought to understand
His Mystery...
That filled my every thought;
I saw Him heal an ailing child...

And, soon...

The Name of 'Sathya Sai' was chanted,
EVERYWHERE!
And, silent, as a passing breeze,
And bare-of-foot... He trod,
And 'something' whispered in my soul
"This is not Man... BUT GOD!"

The years have passed on restless wings,
And, strong; the Bond remains...
And, when I cannot understand,
He silently explains!

There is no 'goal' I can't achieve...
No Load I cannot bear
As long as (in my human way!)
I see His Footsteps there!
His Smile is Something
I recall with tenderness And awe!
For me... He spreads a Shining Path,
And opens every door...

Today...
I kneel in gratitude,
As tear-drops fill my eye,
And, whisper-soft, I speak the words
"I love You, Sathya Sai..."

~G. B. Australia
Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1987



Baba and Bhagavad-Gita

Bhagavad-Gita [Song of the Gods] is a conversation between a doubting Arjuna and a confident Lord Krishna. It was narrated on a battlefield when, suddenly, the otherwise extraordinarily competent Arjuna was engulfed with an indecisive thought whether to fight. It was a peculiar situation in which he was placed. Having waged a number of wars previously and having come prepared to decide an issue in a *dharmayuddha* (righteous battle), delusion suddenly overtakes him and he says to Lord Krishna in *sloka* [verse] 7, ch.2 thus:

*Karpanya doshopahataswabhavah
pruchchamitwam dharma sammudhachetah
yachchreya ssyannischitam bruhi tanme
sishyastheham sadhi mam twam prapannam.*

He says he was puzzled about his duty and prays for instructions, as a devoted student of His, for what is decidedly good. He almost surrenders completely and is mentally prepared to have guidance from Lord Krishna. Earlier, he tries to put forth one argument after another to justify his line of thinking for not fighting. These are nothing but ignorant outbursts since the situation was not unknown to him. All the same, he relies on some plea or other to strengthen his thinking. At the end of the discourse (Krishna-arjuna-*samvada*), he says in *sloka* 73, ch. 18 thus:

*Nashto mohah smrutirlabdha twatprasadamayachyuta
Sthithosmi gatesandehah Karishye vachanam tava.*

My delusion is destroyed, and I have gained knowledge; through Your grace, I stand freed from doubts. I shall therefore carry out Your bidding. It is, therefore, clear that Arjuna could not see through clearly since he was deluded. This delusion overtakes every one of the average categories of individuals very often during the discharge of his actions. Therefore, *Bhagavad-Gita* is as much relevant today as it was before during *Mahabharata* days. It is not a *topical* problem pertaining to Arjuna alone, but it is a *fundamental* problem facing every one of us. It will be relevant even in future till eternity since this answers a fundamental problem of human personality. Hence *Bhagavad-Gita* is verily *universal* scripture and not a *Hindu* scripture as some people ignorantly limit it. It addresses itself to all human beings irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. May one be an Indian, Englishman, American, Russian, or anyone else, one gets the immense benefit of a proper guideline for his behavior in the society.

This great country, India, inherits this scripture. Not only that, but it also had the unique fortune of having a succession of wise masters, saints, and seers from time immemorial to maintain unbroken the tradition and cultural heritage of the country. In *shloka* 7, ch. 4, the Lord says:

*Yada yadahidharmasya glanirbhawati bharata
Abhyutthanamadharmasya tadatmanam srujamyaham*

Arjuna, whenever there is a decline of righteousness (*dharmaglani*) and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I reveal Myself in a body form.

Thus, one finds that whenever there is a deterioration of human values, whenever there is a distraction from *dharmic* way of living, and whenever man has come to a stage of forgetting the inner core of his personality, then a God-man appears on the scene to remind the old cherished ideas so that they gain currency once again. It is not very difficult to discover this God-man or super-man. He has also a limited form and shape like any other individual, but he possesses all the qualities of a *Sthitaprajna* [man of steadfast wisdom] depicted in ch. 2, a *bhakta* depicted in ch. 12, or a *Trigunateeta* [reaching the state of perfection] depicted in ch. 14 of *Bhagavad-Gita*.



The *nirakara* concept (shapeless and formless) of God is difficult and not easy to comprehend by an ordinary, average, mundane individual. The *sakara* concept (with a shape and form to suit the individual's faith) has been conceived as a much more easily identifiable and distinguishable method in this country, which resulted in idol worship in temples built for several supermen like Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, etc. These supermen distinguished themselves during those days not by their military prowess or material excellence but by their super-natural way of life, which was exemplary to others. Thus, they stood head and shoulders above the contemporary

human society and were considered as Gods. We, in this era, have not witnessed them in flesh and blood, but we adore them today as God-men or Gods.

The identification of such God-men becomes difficult these days. Also, it appears that the craze for running after so-called happiness as a sequel to the acquisition of material things has been the motto for all human activities. The tendency is to run

after the unreal and run away from the real. This aberration or wrong identification of human values appears to be the cause of our present-day misery. The scientific and technological progress to establish man's excellence over other forms of life is very much welcome. But that alone does not make the earth a heaven. The correct approach or a right attitude to life is very much important to establish harmony and peace in life or, in other words, the *dharmic* way of life has to be reestablished.

I was following for the last few years the *divyabodha* (divine utterances) of Sri Sathya Sai Baba published in *Sanathana Sarathi*. I felt that Lord Krishna is once again addressing the contemporary society. The profound statements are so meaningful and thoughtful that it is no wonder that people who understand him call him *Bhagavan*. His preachings are helping in restructuring and reestablishing a *dharmic* society that is very much necessary these days. When *artha* and *kama* are based upon *dharma*, surely they lead to *moksha* [liberation]. If these pursuits after *artha* (money) and *kama* (desire) are not anchored in *dharma* (righteousness), then there is no salvation to humanity. The four pillars that Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba wants to reinforce in the society are *sathya* (truth), *dharma* (righteousness), *shanti* (peace), and *prema* (universal love) and I offer my felicitations with all humility unto Him.

~Prof D. V. Ramana Rao, Rourkela

Source: Sanathana Sarathi, March 1977

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Obstruction of Past and Present

Bhakta: Some people describe *Brahmam* as *asthi-bhaati-priyam*; what does it mean? How are these related to *Brahmam*?

Swami: Is that the doubt? *Asthi* means 'that which is'; *Bhaati* means 'that which shines'; *Priyam* means—of course, you know, don't you? ... Pleasing? Desirable, capable of satisfying. All that is *priyam* to you is *Brahmam*!

Bhakta: I have understood it clearly, Swami. Now I know what is meant by the 'obstruction of the past'. What are 'the obstructions of the present'?

Swami: Good, I shall tell you. The obstructions of the present are of four types: attachment to sense objects, cynical criticism, dullness of understanding, and absurd conceit. The first is the cause of attachment to objects that attract the senses. The second makes men discover wrong meanings in the teachings of the *Guru*. The third causes confusion because things explained by the *Guru* are not grasped at all. The last obstruction makes one feel that one is a great scholar, *pundit*, or ascetic, mistaking the body and the senses for the *atma*.

Bhakta: And the 'obstructions of the future'?

Swami: Oh! they come always through sinful deeds. They come and obstruct unawares!

Bhakta: How are we to meet them, Swami?

Swami: It is not possible for all. The aspirant can to some extent be cognizant of the approaching wrong and its wiles; it creates a desire, which puts on the cloak of want. Then you must recognize it as an 'obstruction of the future'. It is difficult to be forewarned like this as the result of the effort of one single life. It may take many births to acquire this education.

Bhakta: Are there any who have so learnt it?

Swami: Why, there are. The scriptures speak of Bharatha and Vaasudeva; Bharatha required two or three births; Vaasudeva had to be born once.

Bhakta: That means these three obstructions cannot be overcome except after many lives. Can we not succeed without all that bother?

Swami: Why? The aspirant can, by reasoning out the nature of these three, escape from being worried by them. Otherwise, it may take many lives.

Bhakta: Swami, how to get over the 'obstruction of the present'?

Swami: There is a way for this also. Through *karma* [action], the appropriate *karma*! There is no obstruction that cannot be surmounted. Attachment to sense objects can be removed by *sama*, *dama*, *uparathi*, *thithiksha*, by developing, purity, self-control, withdrawal of desires, and the ability to suffer. Dullness of understanding can be removed by listening again and again. Constant meditation on the things heard will abolish the habit of cynical criticism. All absurd conceit will vanish through the teachings one imbibes.

Bhakta: Swami, to master all this seems impossible for everyone! To make it easy for all, tell me which is important?

Swami: My dear fellow, to know a thing *vijnana* [knowledge] is necessary. *Ajnana* makes one ignorant, don't you know?

Bhakta: So many people say so many things about this *vijnana* and this *ajnana*. What is the basic thing about this *vijnana* and this *ajnana*. What is the basic thing behind both, tell me.

Swami: Now you have come again to the very first step. *Ajnana* is the mental attitude that has reference to the external Object and *vijnana* is the mental attitude that has reference to the internal Subject. *Ajnana* is known also as *manas* [mind] and *chittam* [will]. When the activity and attitude turn inward, they are called *buddhi* [intellect] and *anthahkaranam* [inner activator].

Bhakta: Some say that the *jnani* [knowledgeable] will have only two things, the desire to attain the other world and the burden of the past *karma*: is that true?

Swami: Both the *jnani* and the *ajnani* [ignorant] will have desire, absence of desire for the other world, and the burden of past *karma*, all in equal measure. Their experiences also will be in equal measure. Only, the *jnani* will not have the consciousness that he is the doer; so he will not be bound. The *ajnani* is conscious that he is the doer and so he gets bound. This is the distinction. I have already told you, haven't I, that 'the mind' is the cause of bondage as well as of liberation? The mind is the cause of everything.

Bhakta: Mind mind, they keep on saying. What is it? What is its form?

Swami: "Cognition", "understanding" is its form. If you know the basis of that knowing, there will be no bondage at all!

Bhakta: What is the basis?

Swami: The basis is what you refer to as I. Seeking for the I, if you are in that I state, however many "understandings" come or do not come, you will remain unaffected.

Bhakta: Right. That is very good, Swami. Please make all this soak into our brains, so that we may realize the purpose of our lives...I shall take leave, Swami.

Source: *Sandeha Nivarini*

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Thought of the MONTH

Prakriti

Prakriti (Nature) has no beginning. She is timeless. She cannot survive without the company of *Purusha* (Creator). She can be compared to a pious wife. Her beauty is beyond all description. Her strength is enormous. She can push anyone into the confusion of a family when one forgets God. She can cause trouble to even great people. *Prakriti* has been communicating a lesson to us that there can be no pot without the mud. There can be no ornament without gold. There can be no cloth without yarn and there can be no world without the Brahman. It is erroneous to separate *Prakriti* from *Paramatma* (God) and regard them as distinct and worship nature alone. We should not be subservient to nature but make it subservient to us. Nature is not anybody's property. It is not even the property of all the people put together. Nature belongs to God.

Therefore, if you want to keep nature under control, you will have to do so only after earning God's grace. If after acquiring God's grace, you undertake to conquer nature, it will herself yield to you. Today, by neglecting and forgetting the Lord and believing that nature is the only thing that is important, we are attempting to use nature unsuccessfully for selfish purposes.

Summer Showers 1973 - Indian Culture and Spirituality

Multiplicity is how the One appears when It assumes name and form. Then It becomes the *Jagat*, the Flux, the Cosmos, the Universe. God was alone before the Cosmos appeared. He projects, He protects, He dissolves, and draws it into Himself. This is the Truth. Man has the rare good fortune of adoring nature as the body of God and offering grateful worship to God. But, is he conscious of God being the source and sustenance? Does he give God the first place in his thoughts that is His due? Or is he engaged in the activities of life in total disregard of God? It is a pity that, instead of paying attention to God, nature, and man, in that order, men today are concerned most with themselves, more with nature and very much less with God. From birth to death, from dawn till night, man pursues fleeting pleasures by the exploitation, the despoiling, the desecration of nature, ignoring the truth that it is the property of God the Creator, and any injury caused to it is a sacrilege that merits dire punishment

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 18 (1985)

God's creation is very sacred. Do not pollute it. How sacred are the five elements given by God! But, today, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, the sound we hear—everything is polluted. All these sacred elements have been made unsacred by humanity. That is why the world today is afflicted with so many diseases. That one is a true human being who makes sacred use of the five elements. Never waste natural resources.

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 29 (1996)

Just as hands, eyes, nose, mouth, etc. are the limbs of the body, likewise all human beings are the limbs of society. Society is the limb of nature and nature is the limb of God. Seeing this vast nature, one should not think that it is different from God. One should understand the fundamental truth that Divinity pervades the entire creation. Bulbs, their colors, and wattage may vary, but the current in all of them is one and the same. Likewise, names and forms of individuals may be different but the principle of the *atma* that exists in all of them is one and the same. The service you render will become meaningful only when you understand this truth. You should not think that you are different from the one whom you are serving. This kind of dualistic feeling gives rise to evil qualities like hatred, jealousy, etc.

In fact, all evil qualities like desire, anger, greed, etc., are of man's own making. They arise from the head, whereas noble qualities like love, compassion, forbearance, originate from the heart. Head sees unity as diversity, whereas heart proves unity in diversity. Hence, head symbolizes *pravritti* (outward path) and heart stands for *nivritti* (inward path). Never think that society cannot progress if you do not render service. Society does not depend on you. If not you, someone else will do the needful. God governs everything. In the first instance, try to understand the meaning of the word "service". It is possible to understand this once you understand who you are. You are a *manava* (human being). *Manava* does not mean the physical form alone. It is synonymous with the principle of the *atma*. Human being is the manifestation of the five elements. The ancient sages had total control over the five elements and thus could enjoy peace and security. Man will shine forth as *atmaswarupa* (embodiment of the *atma*/soul) once he becomes the master of the five elements.

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 33 (2000)