

The Purpose of Human Life

You say *atma, atma!* What is this *atma*? Earlier, the sages had seen *atma* as perfect love. But *atma* is higher than perfect love. There are four objectives of life for every man. They are *dharma* (duty), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desires), and *moksha* (liberation). Man ends his life longing for these four objectives of life. However, there is also a fifth purpose for life. That is perfect love. With that perfect love, we can attain liberation and merge with God. Without love, you cannot achieve anything. Love is the primary cause for everything. Love is life. Love is God. Live in Love. Start the day with love, fill the day with love, spend the day with love and end the day with love. This is the way to God. We should spend our day with love.

Today, all our days, hours and minutes have become polluted. How can we attain God then? You have great desires, but your actions are mean. It is impossible to obtain God while indulging in bad actions. We have to develop pure love. We should remove all the dirt in our love. Where does the dirt come from? It is born from the tree of attachment. The fruit of love has the skin of worldly desire covering it. Without removing this skin, and taking out the seeds of worldly desires, we cannot enjoy the juice within. So, first remove the skin of desires by nurturing detachment.

Do not lose the golden opportunity—now

What is detachment? Give up that which is not useful to you. You have to take only the essence of everything that is good. But, today, students run after futile things all the time. They do not entertain useful thoughts at all. If we really find out for ourselves where we are, we are in a zero state. We are not able to carry out even a small job by ourselves.

It is only because of Swami's grace that you all are here, very near to Me. It is not because of your deeds or your parents' love for Swami. It is only because of Swami's grace. You should realize what good fortune you all are having. You should inquire within yourself as to what could be the reason for attaining God so easily. It is only because of the merit earned for many years. Now that you have obtained Sai, you should ensure that you never lose Him.

If you are not aware of this, you are spoiling your own fortune. It will turn into misfortune, resulting out of your bad actions. Whatever you have attained, protect it well. How can you protect it? Only through love can you safeguard it. There is nothing higher than love. In ancient days, sages undertook penance in dense forests,

where wild animals moved freely. They did not carry any weapons with them. They had only one weapon—love. Because of this weapon, they could develop kinship with the animals and lived happily. If you have this weapon of love, you can achieve anything.

People say bombs are more powerful. Hydrogen bomb or Oxygen bomb, no bomb is more powerful than love. In this world, no power is higher than love. With love, you can even reach God. So, develop love. Because of your petty desires, you are losing the very Divine power. You do not understand now. Gradually as you grow up, you will realize it. What is the use of worrying at that time? This is the right time. Think for yourself. This is the golden age. Only you can safeguard this holy age. Even if one second is lost, it will not come back. Past is past. Forget the past. Do not worry about the future. Time is only in the present. Not ordinary present, but 'Omnipresent.' Look after this 'present' carefully. If you save this present, you can achieve whatever you want.

Hanuman's devotion

Human mind is a monkey mind. Not an ordinary monkey, but a mad monkey. How can mad monkeys attain God? However, we must remember that even monkeys



served Rama. They kept on chanting the name of Rama. We know that Sita had to undergo many hardships. Hanuman is a great devotee who served Sita and Rama as his own parents. All the time, he was thinking of Rama.

During Rama's coronation, when the distribution of gifts was going on, Sita said, "Hanuman is the jewel among the monkeys who helped Rama accomplish His mission. He is a great servant of Rama, who entered into the mighty kingdom of Lanka repeatedly and attained success." She praised Hanuman in this manner and asked Rama to give him some reward. Rama said, "Sita, I know the essence of love contained in the devotion of Hanuman. He does not want any reward except Me." Saying this, Rama went to Hanuman and said to him, "Hanuman, the service you rendered to Me is priceless. I offer Myself to you." He hugged Hanuman

saying, "I have given Myself to you". But in that big gathering, Sita thought that there should be some material reward given to Hanuman. She presented him with a valuable chain of pearls given by her father, Janaka. As soon he received the chain,

the mischievous Hanuman started biting all the pearls apart and threw them away after searching inside.

Why did Hanuman behave like this? Was he unaware of the value of those precious pearls? When Sita asked the reason for his act, Hanuman replied, "Mother Sita! My whole body is filled with the name of Rama. Even though it is a priceless pearl, it did not have the name of Rama within. So, I threw it away." Then Sita said, "You have not left your monkey acts. How can you see the name of Rama in pearls?" Hanuman picked one hair from his body and kept it near her ear. Mother Sita could hear Rama's name echo in it. Hanuman had filled his body with the name of Rama. '*Antar Bahischa Tat Sarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthitaha.*' (The Supreme Lord Narayana is both within and without. He pervades the entire space.)

Wherever you see, you can find love. This principle of love brought Hanuman near to Rama. Hanuman felt proud in that court. It was pride filled with love, of Divinity, and of purity. It was pride full of humility. From that day onward, wherever Rama was, Hanuman would be there beside Him. He was a great devotee. How could he fill himself with the name of Rama from top to toe? It is possible only with love. The only thing that achieves everything else is love. A heart without love is equal to a stone. What kind of love do we have today? We have worldly love that is physical, ordinary, individual, temporary, and untrue. How can you attain God with such love? You should obtain Him with eternal love.

There is only one 'I'

Be broad in loving. Only then, can you merge in God. As you blow air into a balloon, it becomes bigger and bigger and bursts after some time. Then the limited air in the balloon mixes with the outside air, which is everywhere. Body is like a balloon. The Divinity exists in it, but in a small quantity. You must expand your love. You should have expansion of love, not contraction of love. When you nurture this love it widens, and the body attachment bursts off like the balloon. When you attain detachment, you merge with the Self. Remove your body consciousness. Less luggage, more comfort. Then only will you have pure feelings. How can you have Divine feelings if you drown yourself in worldly desires and forget your own reality? You should ask yourself, "Who am I?" If you know the answer to this question, you can definitely recognize the principle of 'I' in this world. It is not just a single 'I' principle. You think you are 'I'. The next person also thinks he is 'I'. However, there is only one 'I'. If you recognize this 'I' principle, you can definitely recognize the unity in diversity.

Therefore, we should develop pure thoughts in our hearts. When you are purified, you can merge with the principle of Divine. Before you drink water, you clean the tumbler. First, clean the vessel of your heart. Install God in your heart. Then, you can really feel the Divinity in yourself. Where is God? He is everywhere. He is also present in your pure heart. All the time, let your heart contemplate on the Divine. Love all. '*Adveshtha Sarvabhootanam*' (Do not hate anyone). So, love all. Through love,

you can attain God. You can see God, whom you could have never seen before. The form of the Divine is love. This is the real principle of God. Students! How much ever you study, how many ever degrees you may acquire, it is of no use. This secular education is of little value. For the sake of the stomach, it may find you a job. However, is filling the stomach that significant? Even animals are filling their stomachs. What education do they have?

The real education is that of love. That is the pure education. That is the highest education. That is immortal education. That is the real education. It is in the form of nectar. Krishna declared in the Gita, "Son! Listen to the truth. You are '*Amrutasya Putra*' (son of immortality)." We must live up to that title. What is the use of saying that you belong to so and so? You should be able to tell, "I am the son of immortality." But how can you become one? What is the way to immortality? Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality. That is the true principle. Give up all the bad qualities. Cultivate love. If you forget this love, you have only the burial ground left with you. If you have love, you will become immortal.

Swami is not angry with you!

Sometimes, I enquire about the feelings in the hearts of students. I do not have hatred or anger against anyone. However, some students are not able to understand this. They still think Swami is angry with them. Primary school children are better than these students. If you really know Swami's love, can you have these doubts? Do you think Swami has anger? However, sometimes in order to transform your mind, He will use some harsh words. It is only because you are making your hearts like hard stones.

In order to set this right, proper punishment should be given. You can cut butter with a finger. But iron can be broken only with a hammer. As is the feeling, so is the outcome. So depending on your feelings you will get the treatment. Swami is not angry with you. He loves all. Every man should be full of love. He should become the embodiment of love. We sing, "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho, Rama Rama Ram.*" What does it mean? Fill your mind with love and chant Rama's name. We should speak with love, live in love. If you have real love, Swami Himself will come to you. But you do not have such love. You only have the useless love. Even a *Neem* [also called *Margosa*] fruit when it becomes ripe tastes sweet. But that is not the real sweet. You should have that kind of love which comes from the heart. You should never speak wrong things. You should have the feeling that you are the child of immortality. Only then you become a real human being.

Be ready to sacrifice anything for God

In *Upanishads* [scriptures], it is said that nothing is higher than God's love. Once upon a time, a sage was angry with God as he thought that God never responded to his prayers. He went on criticizing God. God kept quiet as He knew his state of mind. He did not say anything. In later stages, the sage was born as a pig. He was moving

freely in the fields. He got another pig as his wife. A pig will get only another pig as a wife! Both the pigs got married and lived together. They gave birth to 10 to 12 piglets. They started enjoying their lives in a dirty pond.

God was compassionate toward them. He felt sad that such a person, who was always with Him, was in such a condition. He wanted to make the sage realize the truth. So the Almighty God took the form of a sage and went to that sage who was living in the form of a pig. He said, "O son! At least now realize yourself and come with Me. I will transform you. Let us go to *Vaikuntha*. Let us go to *Kailasa*. Let us go to Heaven." The sage now in the form of a pig said, "I don't want Your *Kailasa* or *Vaikuntha*. My wife and children are *Kailasa* for me." It was his fate that he lost the grace that was showered upon him. We should not be like this. We should be ready to give up anything for God.

'Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Tyagenaike Amrutatva Manashuh'
[Neither by action, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but only by sacrifice can one attain immortality.]

If you sacrifice, you can attain God. This is the easiest path to God. Still, you find it difficult to follow it. You do *bhajans*, singing them with *Raga* (tune) and *Taala* (tempo). But what is the use of *bhajans* if you do not think of God while singing? You should have divine feelings while you are singing *bhajans*. When you have divine feelings, everything looks divine. *Raga* and *Taala* also will follow it. If your mind is centered on God while singing, *Taala* will follow automatically. Everyone should try in his or her own way to reach God like this.

Source: Discourse 5, *My Dear Students* Volume 1

Swami's Continuous Divine Grace

I had the grace of Bhagavan's *darshan* [sighting of a holy man] three times in India in 1990, 1994, and 2010. Yet when Covid hit in 2020, I slipped into a deep depression, and it was as if I had acquired a total amnesia of all the many enchanting spiritual experiences I had encountered with Swami.

In 1986 one night, when I first attended Thursday evening Manhattan Center meetings, I happened to mention a disheartening work conflict to a long-time devotee. The next week she lovingly gave me a portrait of Krishna entering Arjuna's chariot on the *Dharmakshetra* [the field of righteousness where the final battle between good and evil was won by Krishna]. I meditated in front of the scene often and the work situation calmly resolved, by Swami's grace.



In 1988 I was struggling with a persistent mental and emotional fog. I was still able to go to work and attend Manhattan Center meetings, however I was very despondent. One evening I had a dream that I was in a beautiful garden courtyard with dusty tan soil. Two men in white uniforms were fighting. I was a few safe yards away, exhorting them to stop. A large ornately carved brown door opened near the men, and Sathya Sai Baba emerged with His hands up in *Abhaya Hasta* [blessing to remove fear]. The men immediately stopped fighting and walked quietly away. Then Swami sweetly smiled and beckoned me to follow him up a flight of stairs to His room. I henceforth increased chanting the *Gayatri* [the most

sacred Hindu *mantra*] daily and was better in a month or so, by His grace.

In 1989 I had a very brief vision of Shiva in my meditation room in Brooklyn; a few months later my ailing beloved older brother Vincent silently merged into eternity, by Swami's grace.

In 1997, for 3 glorious seconds I saw Krishna on Bay Ridge Avenue near where I reside in Brooklyn, New York; shortly afterward my gravely ill dear older sister Marie Joy blissfully left her body, by Swami's grace.

Fast forward to 2020 and my anxiety and profound sadness during Covid was relentless. I spent three years on daily anti-depressants and in weekly psychotherapy sessions, both of which helped enormously. I remained devoid of any spiritual feelings or practices, however.

Last December I had a dream of the blessed Mother of Jesus who silently stood resplendent in front of me. I started to again recite the Hail Mary and *Gayatri* daily and earnestly, by Swami's grace. After a short trip to Disneyland, I resolved to have fun sometimes as all the children around me were so enjoying the Disney Princess Parade!

What I have learned about Our Lord's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence is that He is *always* emanating *prema* [Divine love], and that we have but to just turn our suffering gaze toward Him to obtain relief. Swami has stated many times, "Take one step towards me and I will take a thousand towards you."

Pranams at His Lotus Feet,

~Felicia R. Gironda, USA

Sri Sathya Sai On: How to Become Best Sai Students?

In the following discourse to the students in the hostel, Bhagavan said that as Sai students they should not only be serious about their studies but also inculcate discipline and purity in letter and spirit and set an example to others.

Today, without understanding what the class is, what the subject is, what you are going to study, the discipline you are specializing in, the manners that students should possess, students crave to endlessly study, get the degree anyway and secure 'O' grade (75% - 100%).

*Today, not even one out of 100 students reads the text books
But yearns to pass the examinations
The modern system of education has verily become a sham!*

Do we become students if we write the examination memorizing a few things? Do we become learned then? What sort of help does the society beget with this education? There is no use of it to you. There is no use of it to the society. You forget all that you have studied in just one year's time. There is no relation between what you study and your job. General knowledge and common sense are very important as far as life is concerned. All these are not present in the textbooks. To teach you the path of truth required in the daily life you should listen to all that I am saying. Study all your textbooks for the sake of employment and jobs.

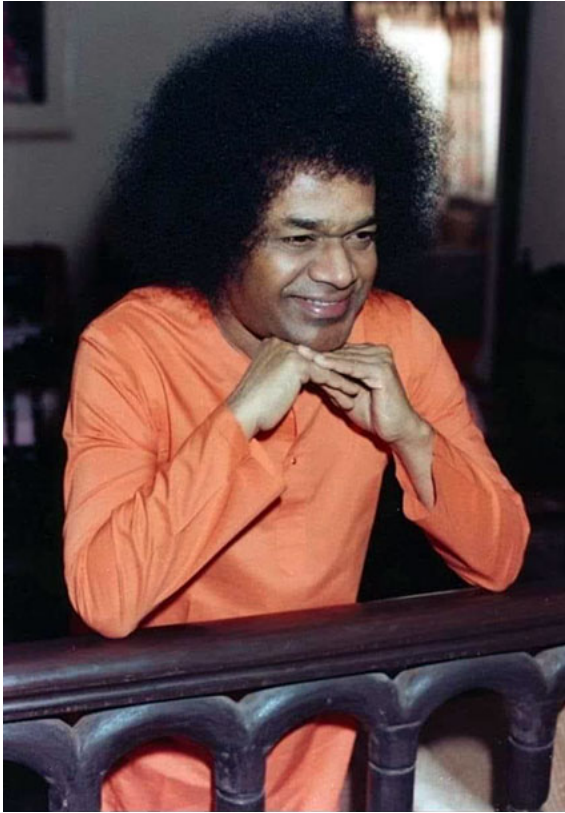
Students! You can enquire for yourself. You go to the laboratories and perform various experiments. According to the subjects like physics, chemistry or biology, and depending on the experiment, you memorize the quantity of chemicals, the sequence in which you have to mix them, and how to arrive at the answer. You test whether this is right or wrong only in the laboratory. But in day-to-day life how do you check if the way in which you are going is right or wrong? You are not trying to find this out. You believe that the worldly aspects are eternal. There is a lot of gap between the time when you are pursuing your education and the time when you will gain employment.

Knowledge is of five types. Bookish knowledge is relevant only for today and tomorrow. Day after tomorrow it turns into 'allergy'. You rely on this bookish knowledge and enter your professions with only superficial knowledge. Because of this superficial knowledge, general knowledge is becoming zero. When general knowledge is zero there is no discrimination knowledge. How can you attain practical knowledge if you have not got the discrimination knowledge? The world today needs practical knowledge. Water is formed from two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen. This is found only in the laboratory. But when you sit for lunch will you mix two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen? This is practical science. In your day-to-day life, you see if the water is pure or not, if its taste is good or not, and whether it has some impurities. Hence, in the daily life our behavior should not

have any lapses. The life that is very enjoyable has to be experienced in the right way and at the right time.

Discipline is the Hallmark of Life

Consider a small example. You are about to have your food. You mixed *dal* [lentils] with rice. *dal* is a little saltier. Just because the *dal* is salty you waste it even though it takes only two hours for digestion. You express dissatisfaction over the *dal* being salty. If you develop dissatisfaction over *dal* that gets digested in just two hours, shouldn't there be a little taste in life that spans over 80 or 90 or 100 years? Shouldn't there be some value attached to it? Should you not give a serious thought to the fact that if you do not adhere to the discipline, the world is going to criticize you? You must think of all this in the daily life.



You think that the bus will arrive at 5 o'clock. It becomes six, seven, eight, nine and the bus does not arrive. What do you feel then? You start abusing the driver, the department, the government. You start to abuse that the schedules of buses are without discipline; buses, trains, and planes do not turn up on time. If you abuse to such an extent a bus or a train that has no life in it when it does not

turn up at the right time, will not this world abuse you as a conscious individual when you do not adhere to your discipline, code of conduct, and duty? If you do not follow the discipline, how do you have the right to abuse the buses and trains? Hence, first you should pass the test of discipline. You must adhere to the disciplinary standards at the hostel and the college. At 5:30 a.m. you should attend the *Suprabhatam* and *Omkaram* [morning prayers]. If you don't adhere to the discipline, yours will become a life without the life sustaining force (*prana*).

Become Best Students! (as per previous sub-title)

Students! Understand clearly. A machine when not working properly and left unused gets rusted. Just as a machine gets rusted when it's not being used, so will the body get rusted if not used properly. Where has the rust come from? All the dust has accumulated on the machine as it is not being used. This dust gets converted into rust. Because of this rust, the machine loses all its efficiency. Then it will have to be taken to the workshop for test. In the workshop, during rest when it is overhauled, it turns out to be the best! When does it become the best? It becomes the best only when the dust and the rust on it are removed. Hence, what should you

do if you all want to become best students? The rust and dust in you that is the evil intentions and the wavering mind should be submitted to the Lord. That is the workshop. There is the real rest. If you take proper rest there, you will turn out to be the best student. Else you will become the worst student. You must decide if you want to be the best or the worst.

Students! We started this Sathya Sai Institute with the intention that the students passing out of this college should set examples in all walks of life. This is a *Rishikula-Ashrama* (place to gain knowledge). These *Rishikula-Ashramas* existed in the erstwhile society also. But with the advent of modernization the 'r' syllable was left and '*Ishikula Ashramas*' came into picture. Those *Ishikulas* have now become 'schools'. We must develop the legacy of the Rishis' system of education.

Knowledge + Action = True Education

Rutam means the truth at mental level. *Nijam* (fact) means the worldly truth, truth related to the body. Today we have lost the truth at the mental level. We must restore it. That is what we have to do. Students! I don't tell you to completely neglect your subjects. You must pass in your courses at the college also. You must get good grades in those exams. But along with that, you must essentially develop spiritual knowledge also. What is the use of all these fans and bulbs if there is no electricity? All your subjects are like fans and bulbs. Only when there is the electricity of spirituality, can these subjects find true use and application. Knowledge without action is foolish.

Action without knowledge is useless. Hence you have to develop the relation between these two also. Only when you develop the spiritual feelings, you find application of the knowledge in the worldly pursuits. If you see the world outside, you can really think how unrespectable life has become. There is no humanness anywhere. Students! You should develop as human beings. You should enter the world outside and purify the impurity. You should jump into action with courage and bravery. You are admitted and trained here for this very purpose. Only when you are trained here today for that purpose can you go and work outside. Without this training what can you do outside?

*"Shreyohi Jnaanamabhyasaat, Jnanaat Dhyanam Vishishyate
Dhyanaat Karma Phala Tyagaha, Tyagaat Shantiranantaram"*

(Better indeed is the knowledge than imperfect practice.

Better than knowledge is meditation on God.

But better than meditation is renunciation of the desire for the fruits of the actions; for there follows peace immediately.)

The importance of practice and discipline

There should be practice for everything. A person used to offer prayers to God in a temple. He used to offer *Arati* [waving the flame] at the end of the prayer. He used to give *Arati* and simultaneously ring the bell. He got used to it. One day he passed away. The villagers appointed a new person to offer prayers. He was not used to the

practice of giving *Arati* and ringing the bell simultaneously. When he was ringing the bell, he was not able to give *Arati* and when he was giving *Arati*, he was unable to ring the bell. A small thing like this requires so much practice. Imagine what amount of practice is required for illuminating a life full of divinity. This training is available in our organizations and our University, not anywhere else. You have to earn the value and deservedness. It is enough if you can maintain that fame. Nothing else is necessary.

Today, there is no one to tell students what is right and what is not. At home, parents are diverting their children more into worldly education. In the classes the teachers themselves don't know much. What can they tell the students? They are teaching them the respective subjects, but they are not teaching them discipline, devotion, duty, and behavior.

Suppose a student comes late to class by 10 minutes, teachers allow him to sit in the class. They don't ask him why he was late by 10 minutes. You are not day scholars. You are all coming from the hostel itself. All of you should come at the same time. Why should one student alone be late? You cannot have petty reasons for coming late like you missed the bus or the train. Teachers have to take this discipline as a part of the curriculum. This Institution has been established to impart spiritual education as a main component and worldly education as a secondary one. Students! I expect you to think of this, practice this purity in letter and spirit and set an example to others. I bless you thus.

Source: 'Seek the Treasure Within', *My Dear Students Volume 3*



Sing the Glory

Here comes the Morning Star! The day intends to dawn!
Awake from deep slumber and sing with birds the song!
The World is Paradise now since Sathya Sai has come!
Redeemed is all mankind, from sin sorrow and pain.

He came in every age, and conferred man courage;
Let us listen to His voice! It frees, fulfils.
O God has come again, to lead and liberate!
His boundless Love does bring Him down to bless.

You and I are graced; we breathe the air He breathes
We behold; we can hold, His voice in happy ears,
We Learn what He teaches; we strive to walk
The Path he trails, to the Goal He sets.

Beside us, our Guide. He ever resides!
Call on Him 'Sai'! He is *seen* in a trice!
Act as He asks, He reacts quick!
His charm you can see in flower gem and wing!

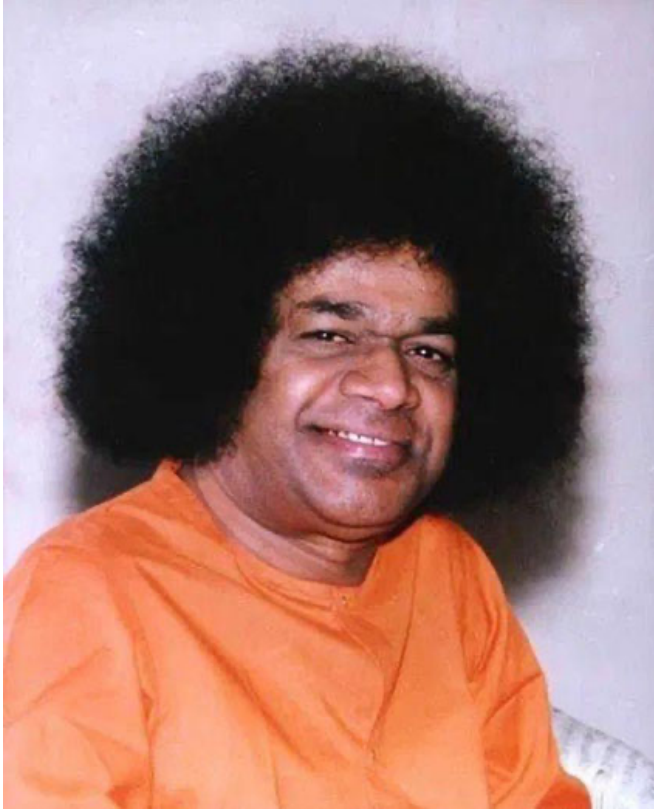
His Love is the sky under which we live!
His Power is the wheel that moves our blood.
His Wisdom sustains the Universe from age to age!
His Grace is the treasure we must acquire.

—Vivian Joseph

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1971

A Letter from Liverpool

I arrived in London on Thursday, 12th September [1963], and found I could not get admission in any college for the course in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. I went to Glasgow but there, too, I was told I was late. I was very upset by these reverses and I proceeded to Edinburgh; there also I was disappointed. I was late everywhere. The colleges had closed their admissions. I returned sad and tired to Glasgow. I cried out at night to Baba. I had no one in this strange cold land to rescue me. He had asked me to proceed to Britain for higher studies in Tropical Medicine and He had facilitated my passage and journey. Now I was on the verge of despair. Where am I to go next? I did not know. There was no one to advise me. I had no friends.



That night, Baba appeared in my dream. I saw Him clearly in the dream—dark red silk robe, lovely assuring smile, full of grace. "My boy!" He accosted me, "Go to Liverpool early tomorrow. I have reserved one seat for you there. How can I neglect you when I have Myself sent you to the U.K.?"

I took the train to Liverpool the next day. I saw the Administrative Secretary of the School of Tropical Medicine and I told him, I wanted to do my D T M & H. Believe me, Mr. Kasturi, a great leela [Divine play] of Baba happened! The Secretary said, "You are very lucky. Today is the last day for admissions to this course. We had no vacancies till just an hour ago; but here is the letter from a candidate whom we had admitted, cancelling his

application! It looks as if you have come just in time to fill that vacant seat! I congratulate you on your good luck." He did not know that my luck began the day I was accepted by Baba.

I got admission on Thursday, my second [KK: not clear what my second means], in Britain! Classes have begun; and I pray that I may remember Baba's grace every moment of my life.

—Dr. D. J. Gadhia, M.B.B.S.,
Hotel, Liverpool, 21-9-1963

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1963

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

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

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

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Dhyanam

Bhakta: Swami, I have a few doubts concerning the subject of *dhyana* that You are now writing about, can I ask You?

Swami: Of course, you can ask and have your doubts removed. It is good for you and it gives Me joy.

Bhakta: Some people practice *dhyana*, but they are unable to know whether the *dhyana* has progressed or not! What do You say about that?

Swami: Progress in *dhyana* means the attainment of *ekagratha*, concentration. Each one can judge for himself without doubt how far he has been able to succeed in concentration, can't he?

Bhakta: Some say that they see all sorts of things during *dhyana*; some hear all types of sounds. Do these indicate progress?

Swami: They are delusions. They handicap progress. They implant conceit and disperse concentration. The distraction of sights and sounds is no sign of *dhyanam*.

Bhakta: Then what is to be done when such are seen?

Swami: Don't allow the mind to wander on to them; never lose sight of the Divine Form that you have pictured for yourself. Be convinced that these are but obstacles designed to scatter your attention away from the Divine Form. If you permit these sights and sounds to creep in, the original Form will be dimmed, your *ahamkara* [ego] will increase and you will lose your way.

Bhakta: But, Swami, some people do say that these things are signs of progress in *dhyana*!

Swami: That only means that they themselves are not practicing *dhyana* properly! Besides, not knowing what *dhyana* is, they delude their disciples also by talking like this, to please them. That is the only profit earned.

Bhakta: Well, does it mean then that by means of *dhyana* we cannot see the Lord?

Swami: Why not? Certainly, it is possible. If you fix your attention on the sublimely beautiful Form of the Lord and concentrate on That alone, you will receive His grace in that Form itself in various ways. While doing so, many a disturbance might intervene. You should not be deluded; be on your guard, never forget the auspicious Form. Picture to yourself that all creation is immersed in it.

Bhakta: But really, can we not know at any time what stage we have reached in *dhyana*?

Swami: You can identify the progress or decline of *dhyana* only when you know this is stage number so and so, this stage is such and such etc., isn't it? The *dhyananarupa* is beginningless and end-less and so its fruition also cannot be declared, complete, and finished.

Bhakta: Then, do You say that *dhyana* is endless?

Swami: What is generally called the end is the end of the I and the merging of all in the one form. *Dhyana* has no end.

Bhakta: How are we to understand its stages?

Swami: You can have an idea of the stage if you examine daily how you are able to concentrate, how far you have subdued the wandering nature of the mind, and how deeply you taste the Divine Form; that is all. The stage reached cannot be cognized. What you receive and at what time depends on His grace. The *sadhaka's* mission is to practice *dhyana* without deviating from the path. The rest is all His grace. It does not depend upon the number of days or the length of time. Some may require many births; others may realize the goal in a few days even. It depends on each one's *shraddha*, *bhakti*, and *sadhana*. It cannot be calculated and reasoned out.

Bhakta: That means, we should not worry about our *sadhana*, its progress, its stage, possible decline, etc.

Swami: Exactly. Worry about the discipline needed for the *sadhana*, but not about its fruition. The reality, the realization of the reality, these have no steps or limits. Do not yield to all sorts of delusions or desires for this stage and that. Stick to the goal and the journey. Never give up the discipline of the *sadhana*. Do not change the time of *dhyana*. With one aim and unchanging attitude, strive to attain it. That will vouchsafe the fruit. That will bless you with the bliss. Do not be led away by what others speak about their imaginary experiences. For you, nothing can be as genuine as your own experience. Therefore, first attempt to gain undeviating concentration, *ekagratha*; let that be your one aim.

Bhakta: *Dhyanam* means vision of the Form of the Lord, isn't it, Swami? When such a Form is actually seen, they say it is not real and genuine! What do they mean by this?

Swami: Seeing the Form of the Lord is the goal of *dhyanam*. To achieve that is the aim. But before that goal is reached, there are some obstacles in the way. These are to be guarded against.

Bhakta: What kind of obstacles are they? How are we to guard ourselves?

Swami: You have boarded a train to reach a village. You have heard that the particular village has a station. Many a station of the same type come during the journey and the train halts at each of them. But just because the train halts you do not get down at any of them with your luggage, do you? If you get down, you will not be reaching the place where you have to go, is it not? It is no good alighting at intermediate stations, for you miss your goal and suffer many hardships, not to speak of delay. The wiser course is to note even before starting on the journey the names of the intermediate stations etc., by approaching some persons who have travelled on the same route before.

Bhakta: Everyone appears as if he is a seasoned traveler on the route! How are we to distinguish between those who pretend and those who know?

Swami: Of course, this must be pondered over. Each one might have travelled by a route of his own. Some might tell you the details of the route, the stations etc., with the aid of maps only. If that is so, you should not follow their directions on that basis. Consider wherefrom they started and wherefrom you are starting; consider the route they traversed and the route you have to take. Moreover, it is impossible to consult those who have travelled as far as the goal, for they will not come back; they won't be available for consultation at the stage where you are. Therefore, you need not take the trouble to search and secure persons who can tell you their own experience of the route. It is best to take the help and the advice given by the veterans in the *Gita*, the *Shastras*, the *Vedas*, and the *Upanishads*; rely on the words of the Lord and follow the *Upadesha* (spiritual guidance) of the *Avatar Purushas*. Besides, there are countless great men who can guide you as far as they themselves have traveled and not beyond. How can they tell you things they have themselves not experienced?

Bhakta: Well, then how can we get the opportunity to reach that path and attain that goal?

Swami: If they are destined for it, it won't be difficult at all. The chance will come seeking them. You must have heard the saying, "The man who went in search of a creeper, tripped over it on the way." You need not doubt this will happen.

Bhakta: Swami, some people say that if we do not get some visions and sounds and lights during *dhyanam*, we can take it that our *dhyanam* has not progressed! Do You say that they are wrong?

Swami: It is the image of their own idea. Perhaps they do *dhyanam* in order to get such sights and sounds! Therefore, they experience them. They are things by which each one of them is deluded; they do not analyze the truth underlying the visions! Really speaking, they should not seek these impermanent delusions.

Bhakta: Then what are we to seek, Swami?

Swami: Seek and desire the Principle of everything: that which if known, everything is known; that which if seen, all is seen and understood. Do not seek the drops in your attempt to know the flood. When you have attained the ocean (the basis of all the drops), you will not have delusion of the drop.

Bhakta: Some *sadhakas* picture to themselves during *dhyanam* the *Guru*; is that correct?

Swami: The *Guru* shows the path; he teaches what is beneficial. So he has to be shown respect and gratitude, of course. But the *Guru* should not be taken to be all-powerful and all-inclusive. Of course, the Lord is in everyone as the *atma*; give each one the status that is his due and not more.

Bhakta: But some great men declare that the *Guru* is both father and mother; that he is Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara, all in one.

Swami: Based on the *atma* that is correct. But such *Gurus* are rare. You can speak of him as father, mother, God, etc., on account of love and regard, that is all. How can he be so, in fact? As loving as the mother, as protective as the father, you can say. But then, what do you say of those who gave you this body and brought you up even before you got the *Guru*? First and most important, be grateful to the mother and the father; serve them; make them happy; respect them. Respect the *Guru* as the person who shows you the path, who looks after your progress, and is interested in your welfare.

Worship the Lord as the witness of everything everywhere, as the master of creation, preservation, and dissolution, and as the all-powerful One. Remember, you can consider only the Lord as the Universal Form and as the Universal friend and protector. All others have to be treated for just their individual status: the mother as mother, the father as father, the *Guru* as *Guru*. In truth, these cannot be one. Ponder over this. If you seek *atma-sakshatkara* (Self-Realization), you have to install in your *dhyanam* the Form of the Lord that you like most and not the picture of your *Guru*. It is not proper. The Lord is of a status higher than the *Guru*, is it not? Of course, have his words as the foundation and try to attain the origin of all things; that will give the fruition of all efforts.

You are asked to treat the pebble as a gem, the gem as a pebble! Of course, through compulsion and bound by order, people may obey and accept, but can that feeling be genuine? It is no sign of *dhyanam* to have one idea outside and another inside. Unless this conflict is resolved and there is the same idea outside as well as inside, there will not be any stability in *dhyanam*; nor will there be any success.

Bhakta: Very good, Swami. Without knowing matters fully, many a *sadhaka* is wasting years in what he calls *dhyanam*. They observe no law or limit. For all such,

Your advice shows the reality. It will establish them in the eternal. Today I am indeed blessed, Swami.

Source: *Sandeha Nivarini*

Thought of the MONTH

Ravana

Lessons to absorb and put into practice

The bad qualities and the cruel ideas that are in us are symbolic of the aspect of Ravana [King of Lanka in the epic *Ramayana*]. The good in us is symbolic of Rama. It is only when we can let these two aspects confront each other and get Rama to defeat Ravana that we can imagine that the coronation of Rama within us is possible and has taken place.

We should not think that Ravana was a person or character only in the story of the *Ramayana*. Our whole life is a *Ramayana*. Our heart is a meeting place for the good and the bad. Without there being some bad, there cannot be good alone. By the presence of both bad and good, bad will try to suppress the good to some extent. We must make an effort to see that the good in us is not suppressed that way.

You are listening to so many good discourses everyday.... During the period in which you listen to these discourses, they look very nice and attractive. But once you go out after listening to them, they do not appeal to you, and you do not want to put them into practice. It is only when we can digest the food that we have taken on a particular day can we again eat food the next day. If you eat something today and do not digest it till tomorrow, you will suffer from indigestion. Just as we should make an attempt to digest the food on the same day that we eat it, so, also, whatever ideas you listen to on a particular day should be absorbed and put into practice the same day. It is only when you take to such a path that you will be able to have a body and mind that are strong and sturdy.

-*Summer Showers 1977*

Today, the power of *Kali* [Age] affects everybody without any distinction. Realizing that Ravana would pass away in a few minutes, many sages, scholars, and noble men came to Ravana and asked him, "O Ravana! You performed many good deeds as well as evil deeds. What is it the most memorable thing that you have discovered in your life?"

Ravana replied, "Sirs! Don't delay the noble acts you want to perform at any time. Put into action whatever noble thoughts and feelings that arise in your heart instantaneously. Procrastination is the thief of time. It is dangerous to delay. At one time, I thought of connecting the earth and heaven with a ladder. I wished to turn the saline water surrounding Lanka into sweet water. I wished to bring comfort and solace to the residents of Hell. Though I decided to do these things, I delayed acting. Thereafter, I could never succeed in doing them. Translate into action whatever good resolve emanates in your minds. We waste our time in postponing the good deeds. We should be ever ready to put into action all the good thoughts that arise in the mind."

This is the noble advice that Ravana gave to the people who came to him at the end of his life. Since he delayed the performance of good deeds, it brought disaster to him.

-Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 35 (2002)

Once the intelligence is purified and dedicated to spiritual effort, there should be no slipping back whatever the obstacle, whatever the temptation. Hanuman, charged with the mission of discovering the place where Ravana had confined Sita, decided that he should take a leap over the sea toward Lanka to search for her in that island of Rama that he carried in his heart and on his tongue. A mountain immersed at the bottom of the sea felt a strong urge to do him some little service, for he was the instrument of God and engaged in an exhausting adventure! Its name was Mynaka. It rose above the waters and called upon Hanuman to rest awhile on its crest and refresh himself with the fruits upon the trees that grew thereon. Hanuman declined to delay his landing in Lanka; he was engaged in a Divine Mission, which brooked no rest, no delay, no dallying. He turned a deaf ear to the importunities of Mynaka and sped forward to fulfil the command of the Lord. Ponder over this incident: Consider the compassion and the eagerness to serve that the 'inert' massive mountain felt! Consider the steadfastness, the undeviating faith, the single-pointed loyalty of the monkey, Hanuman! Do they not teach invaluable lessons to man—lessons of heart that melts at suffering, a head that refuses to swerve from the path of duty? The whole duty of man is to engage himself in good acts with the gross body, scatter good thoughts and good influences around him with his subtle body, and earn self-realization and bliss through his causal body.

-Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 11 (1971 - 72)