

Four Steps

On His birthday in 1974, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba said that people are neglecting the lessons of the four stages of life ashramas in search of material pleasures and joys.

These are for teaching the values of life so that they can know themselves.

Stages of Life

The culture of this ancient land is as deep as it is vast. It is built on strong and sustaining principles of human development. But Indians at the present time are neglecting its lessons and entangling themselves in the search for material joys and pleasures. They ignore the true and eternal values. They turn a deaf ear to the call of the Divine; they respond to the siren voice of the worldly. This is the 20th century, the Age of Science and Technology. There are plenty of material comforts and sensual pleasures easily available. So driven by an insane urge for the temporal and the trivial, man rushes into ruin and loses the precious heritage of *atmic* treasure that the culture promises him.

In fact, if only man knew the purpose and plan of life, he would not waste his years and his skills in the pursuit of mere time-bound joys. That he is everywhere engrossed in these endeavors is a pitiable fact, which can be attributed to his misfortune or his ignorance. Of course, man has lost faith in himself; so, there is no wonder that he has lost faith in God also. Only those who know themselves and have confidence in themselves can acquire knowledge of God and confidence in God. Know thyself first; then your attempt to know the world will be rendered simple.

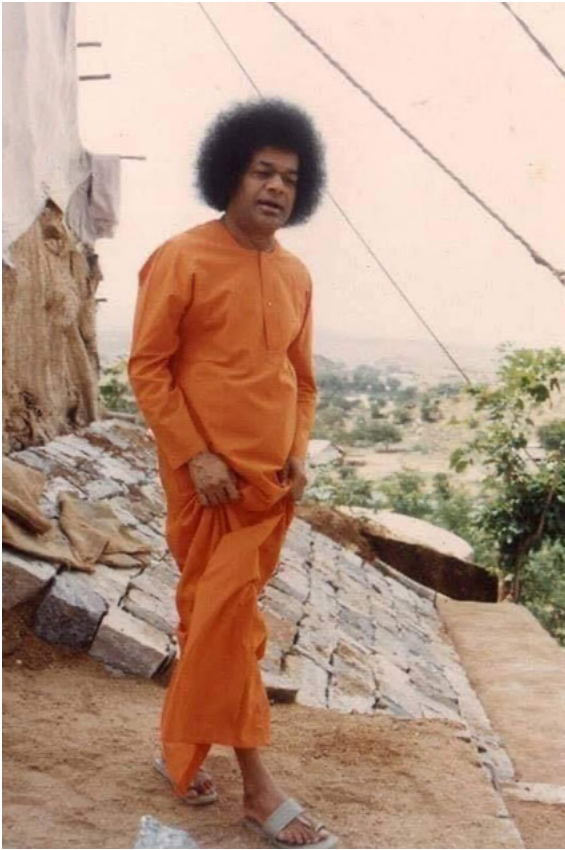
Indian Culture has laid emphasis on the four stages of individual development to assure everyone with the education needed to know himself. For *atmavicharana* [self-enquiry], *ashrama-dharma* [specific duties of the four stages of life] is very essential. Through adherence to the regulations and prescriptions of conduct and study assigned to each stage or *ashrama*, the earning of knowledge and wisdom is made easy and automatic. Wisdom can come only through work as worship; the *ashramas* guide man to sublimate all activity into worship.

Just as we have four stages: childhood, youth, middle age, and old age, we have four corresponding *ashramas*: *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha*, and *Sanyasa*—studentship, householder-ship, recluse-ship, and monk-ship. During the years of childhood and teenage, man has to equip himself with the information necessary to share in the work of society, to derive health and happiness thereby, and acquaint himself with the tools of knowledge and the paths along which wisdom can be

garnered. As a householder raising a family and sustaining a society, he has also to uphold the ideals of justice and truth and promote them by his actions. He must learn the innate majesty of mankind and live in accordance with that high status. As a recluse and monk, in old age, he must be the guide and teacher of the people around him, imparting to them the fund of wisdom he has won through his experience.

What *Shastras* say

The *Shastras* lay down the lines along which man has to direct his thoughts and activities. Sincere adherence to these laws and limitations alone can guarantee



wisdom or *jnana*. Otherwise, man drifts aimlessly along the cross-currents and whirlpools of life and ends up ignorant, both of the nature of the *loka* (world) and the glory of *Lokeshwara* (God).

The higher path must be trodden from childhood; it cannot be adopted at an advanced age. The child must learn to be truthful in word and deed and avoid the cowardly habit of falsehood. Later, boys and girls must become conscious directors of their senses instead of being automatic slaves. Heads of families have to adhere to the schedules of rites and worship prescribed for them. They must supervise the behavior and conduct of the members of the household. They have to render hospitality to guests and deal charity to the poor. They have also to equip their sons and daughters with the processes by which they can have mental peace and equanimity under all

conditions. Because these obligations have been neglected for some generations, the forces of atheism have earned strength now.

The ripening fruit

When the seeds are ridden with defects, how can the tree yield richly? When parents and elders do not provide good examples to the children growing under their shade, how can the country prosper and be free from anxiety and fear? You cannot separate the rind, the pulp, and the seed that a tamarind fruit has when it is still green. But once it has ripened, the separation is quite easy. So, too, until a person becomes ripe in experience and can be pronounced wise, he cannot discard his identification with the body, the senses, and the mind. He will not be able to differentiate between *atma* and non-*atma*, *kshetra* [place] and *kshetrajna* [one who

knows the place], *prakriti* [natural state] and *paramatma* [supreme Self], *guna* [qualities] and *trans-guna*, and such other entities.

Let me tell you a small example: Krishna killed Kaliya—the serpent that was poisoning the Kalindi river and destroying all trace of life for miles around—by means of the deadly fumes. No sooner was Kaliya killed than the 'wives' (serpents) of his harem prayed to Krishna for succor and surrendered to Him. This is the story according to the *Bhagavatha* [the scripture]. Now, what does this signify? In the mind-lake (*Manasa-sarovar*) of man, there lurks a poisonous serpent, desire. When that is destroyed, the various frailties and frivolities, triumphs, trials and failures, pains and pleasures that desire brings in its train surrender to God.

Desire can be killed only when faith in the *atma* as the very core of being is firmly established. Since all efforts are now directed to the accumulation of material goods and the satisfaction of sensual desires, man is tossed about on the waves of fight and faction, falsehood and greed. The individual is intimately related to society and so his restlessness affects society, too.

The individual will is ultimately responsible for the welfare and well-being of the world. The world is but a mental image of the individual. How this happens is a mystery. One can only say that just as sleep is the cause of dreams, *maya* or the basic ignorance is the cause of creation. Doctors ascribe dreams to various reasons: indigestion, the compulsions of thought, the confusions of mental pictures, etc. But we can be certain only of one reason, namely, sleep! Dreams are nullified when the person becomes a *jnani* (one aware of the truth). At that stage, one gets rid of the night-dream as well as the day-dream.

The grand design

The four *ashramas* have been devised in order to awaken man into the *jnani* stage. Education today, in all grades, is a process of packing information in the brain and skills in the hands. It is useful only for parading scholarship, dialectical controversies, and mutual recrimination. It does not instill humility, a sense of balance and equanimity. Of course, spiritual training is totally absent. Perhaps, the feeling is that spirituality is a solitary pursuit, which can be undertaken only in the silence of the forest. No! True spirituality is the awareness of the fundamental unity of man in God.

People celebrate the birth of a child; they are happy when the child grows tall and strong. But the fittest event for such celebration is when the child justifies its birth by achieving good fame as a benefactor of man or a servant of mankind. Emperor Dhritharashtra [from the Epic *Mahabharata*] had hundred sons! He must have celebrated their birthdays, too. But not one of them did any one any good; they were all arrogant, greedy, and full of spite. Therefore, they accomplished only the extinction of the entire dynasty and all who were attached to it!

Sons and daughters are now keen to share the properties of their parents and spend their portion as quickly as possible. They do not care for the much more precious wealth of experience that their forefathers have earned for their sake. They waste their years in fallow efforts so much that even their health is destroyed; children wear glasses when barely ten; they dye their hair when barely 14; they age fast and show signs of senility when barely 16! To praise the habits that people adopt today as 'modern' or 'conducive to progress' is ridiculous to say the least.

As the ancients emphasized, food habits and recreation habits have to become *satwic*, that is to say, such as cannot arouse and feed the passions of man, or make him dull and stupid, idle and listless.

Above all, everyone must realize (and guide himself accordingly) that the main mission of man here below is march toward the ideal of Unity and Peace.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Jan. 1975

Try to be like Jesus...

Baba in His Christmas message said that Jesus teaches infinite love and compassion. To resurrect love and compassion, you must kill jealousy and selfishness, purify your hearts. Follow the path shown by him and reach the position he holds.

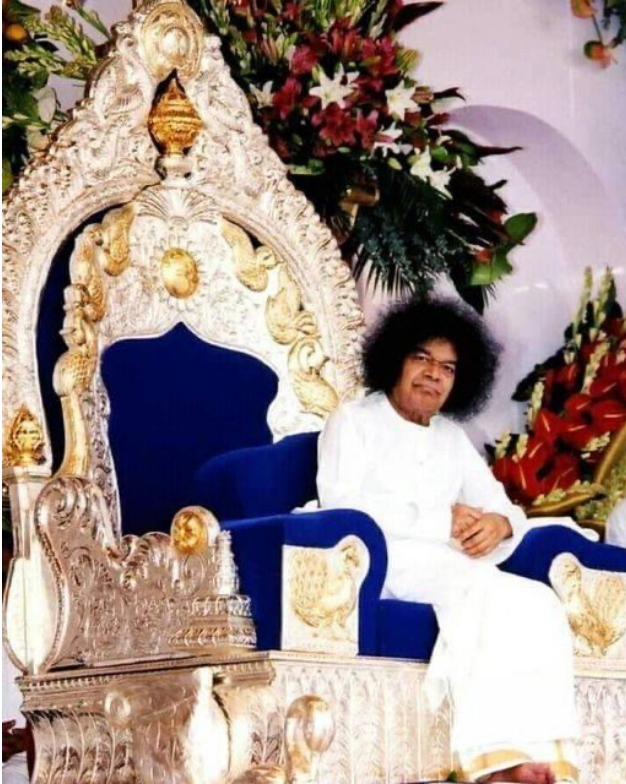
There are four types of persons—those who see only right everywhere, those who are less spiritual in their vision and so see right as right and wrong as wrong, those who shut their eyes to right and see only wrong, and lastly, the worst of all, those who judge even the right to be wrong. No one brings wealth when he is born or takes it with him when he dies. Whatever riches one has accumulated have to be freely shared with others. Flowers scatter fragrance while trees offer fruits in plenty. Instead of learning the lessons they teach, man pursues his own sense-cravings, and his urge for fame and authority over others. Contentment is the most precious wealth; greed brings misery in its train. Contentment alone can lead man to the goal of life viz., the attainment of Divinity.

A tender heart is more valuable than all material possessions. When moral and spiritual excellence is gained, the divinity in man becomes patent. Vishwamitra was a powerful king, proud of his might and the vastness of his kingdom. He wished to defeat the Sage Vasishta but could not succeed. Thus, he learnt the lesson that material, physical, or mental powers are too weak to win over Divine power. So he entered upon spiritual *sadhana* (effort) to rid his mind of anger, greed, and envy. As a result, he himself became a sage.

The Kaurava [from the epic *Mahabharata*] brothers, a hundred of them, were intoxicated by greed for more, though they had riches in plenty and kingdoms vast in area. So they contended with their cousins, the God-fearing and God-led Pandava brothers, who were only five in number. In the end, the Kauravas destroyed themselves to the last man and the Pandavas were blessed with victory.

Every man in the world is a messenger of God

The brothers Hiranyaaksha and Hiranyakashipu succeeded in securing as boons from God mastery over the elements, but they misused this power and spread havoc



over all the worlds. Man must acquire mastery over the foul urges in his own mind—lust, anger, hatred, jealousy. Then only can he enjoy the Divine peace that is his birthright.

Every living being is on a pilgrimage—whether it is aware of it or not. The *Bhagavata Purana* (story of glory of Divinity) says that the destiny of all beings is to return to their origin. Lord Krishna has declared in the *Gita* [the song of God] that all beings have emerged from Him and must merge in Him. The Sun causes the clouds in the sky to raise water from the sea as vapor; the waters of the sea fall as rain, the rainwater accumulates and flows as streams and rivers, until it merges with the source—the sea. It is

faithful to its destiny; it confronts bravely all the hurdles and obstacles on the pilgrim path. Every man has come into this world as a messenger of God.

Jesus announced himself as a Messenger of God. He spent many years in austerities so that he could shower compassion and love on all humanity. Later, he asked himself, "Am I just a messenger, or am I more closely related to God, a part of God with the Divine as my essence?" Jesus spent 12 long years wandering alone in deserts engaged in this inquiry. At the end of this period, he returned to the society of men and announced, "I am the Son of God."

In Kali Age Judases have multiplied

At that time, the priests of the holy temples of Jerusalem had become corrupt and commercialized. They had deteriorated into proud and selfish men. Jesus condemned them and tried to root out the evil practices. For, all forms were in the eyes of Jesus, divine Forms and He could not tolerate any action that belied this

status. So when asked by people who He was, He could reply, "I and my Father are One." Jesus tried to teach everyone the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

Tradition-minded and egoistic men considered Jesus a false prophet and they tried by every means to thwart his mission. Jesus, however, did not waver. Faced with opposition, he continued to be an example of living the Truth, and to purify society. Many disciples followed Jesus, but throughout history it has been the experience of Rama, Krishna, Jesus, and Muhammad that disciples however close are seldom fully dedicated. Most are only part-time devotees. Jesus had 12 disciples, most of whom had faith in him and lived his teachings. But Judas yielded to greed. He betrayed his Master for a mere 30 coins. He could not find joy in life after this treachery. His mind gave him no peace. He had to seek refuge in suicide.

Betrayal by people who pretend to adore is happening since ages. Corrupt, greedy, and selfish people spread falsehoods about their own Masters. We hear of a Judas 2,000 years ago. But in the *Kali Age* [Iron age], people are obsessed with money and Judases have multiplied. They seek to amass paltry riches whereas good character, good conduct, and knowledge of God are the three real treasures to be gathered. Land and buildings, silver and gold, dollars and other currencies are temporary and trivial. They are possessions only until life lasts. But those three treasures will stay on, sustain and strengthen you until you attain union with the Infinite.

Three real treasures to be gathered

Man has mastered astronomy; he knows all about the earth. He is conversant with all that is happening in America, Russia, and England. But he does not know who he is, and so all other knowledge does not make him wise. He is eager to collect information about everything else, but he never asks the question "Who am I?" though he uses the expression 'I' and 'my' freely almost always. You are the farmer; the body is the field. Sow the seeds of goodness, you can get the harvest of happiness; sow the seeds of evil, you reap the harvest of grief. You are the cause of either of these. Do not blame others or impute partiality to God. Above all, do not rely on this impermanent objective world; it is full of sorrow and change; cultivate detachment, equanimity, self-control, and love.

This life is a temporary rest place

Develop knowledge about the higher levels of consciousness and the higher planes of existence. Knowledge leads to skill. From skill in using such knowledge, one acquires balance. You must recognize that this life is a stage in the long pilgrimage and that we are now at a hotel, a temporary resting place that also has a watchman. The mind is the watchman. So do not feel permanently attached to the mind or the body. This 'negative' body has the 'positive' Divinity within it. When you become all-embracing infinite Love, the Divine will manifest in and through you. Try to be like Jesus. Jesus was a person whose only joy was in spreading Divine Love, offering Divine Love, receiving Divine Love, and living on Divine Love.

There are various theories about the birth date of Jesus based on the 'bright star that appeared at his birth.' It is visible once in 800 years, it is said. Some say he was born on the 15th day of September. But he was born at 3:15 a.m. (early morning) on December 28, 1,980 years ago. It was Sunday. The Star that appeared that day appears only once in 800 years. Its appearance had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. There is no rule that when Divine Energy or Divine Incarnation descends on Earth, a star must appear. That is the opinion of devotees only. But Jesus was himself a 'Star' of infinite value, spreading brilliance of infinite dimension. Why posit another less brilliant glow?

Today is the Birthday of Jesus, celebrated amidst December snowfalls with lights and Christmas trees, and prayers. But it is useless to pray just one day and forget God the rest of the year. That is an empty show; it does not emanate from the heart. We are true Christians only when we live according to the teachings of Christ and practice them in daily life. Even if we follow two teachings of his, that would be enough. Christ said, "All life is one, my dear Son! Be alike to everyone."

Be engaged in doing God's work

If we truly follow this, it would be enough to fulfill our destiny. When he was on the cross and overcome with agony, an unseen Voice said from Heaven, "Death is the Dress of Life." The body is the dress that the Divine Spirit puts on. Therefore, we should not weep when the body is worn out or falls or is injured. Death is an event, that is the very nature of the body. Men seek the cause for death, but no one seeks the Divine source of life. Be engaged during the brief span of life in glorifying God and in doing God's work.

God has incarnated in human form to inspire man to follow higher ideals not only in India but foreign countries also. Men may have different languages and lifestyles, but God is One and He is present everywhere. All religions speak of Him as Love and as attainable through love. Forms of worshipping God differ for they are shaped by time and place, but love is the basic content of all the forms. The language of love is understood and spoken by all hearts. There is only one race really, and that is the race of mankind. We now consider petty distinctions of nationality, race, religion, and language as vital and hold back love that must flow to everyone from the heart. That was the life and message of Jesus. Nurture it in your hearts. Experience Jesus as your Messenger sent from God.

Become what you truly are

Love alone can reveal the Divinity latent in all. Love is God. Live in Love. Love lives by giving and forgiving; Self lives by getting and forgetting. Love is selflessness; Selfishness is Lovelessness. Do not waste your life pursuing the narrow interests of the self. Love! Love! Become what you truly are—the embodiments of love. No matter how others treat you or what they think of you, do not worry. Follow Jesus Christ. Love for your own evolution and not for what others say. Do not imitate others. Cultivate your own life. You have your own heart, your own opinion, your

ideas, your own will. Why then imitate? Imitation is human, they say, but creation is Divine.

Follow your chosen path. Let your own experience of God be your guide and master. Do not go into the grave weakly copying others. You won't find God if you search in the outside world. Your own heart shining with Love is God's Love. Follow the Master. Face the Devil. Fight to the end and finish the game. You are God. The true you *is* God. You are not one person but three—the one you think you are, the one others think you are, and the one you really are. You think of yourself as your body and its sense cravings, others think of you as a personality. You are truly infinite spirit Divine. You should constantly remind yourself, "I am God" "I am God." "I am God." The day you see yourself as God, you become God.

If you think I am only human, you will be led astray. Do not allow your body and the senses to dictate your moves. Develop the inner vision. The body is the cart, the spirit is the horse. Do not put the cart before the horse. Spiritual practice is the only means of acquiring mental peace. If all the cars in America are placed end to end, they would reach the moon; but there is no true happiness there, no peace of mind. Cultivate not riches, not comfort and luxuries, but divine virtues. Then you become fit to receive God's grace. Why trade permanent peace of mind for impermanent physical luxuries?

Speak sweetly; shed comfort with every glance of yours. Do not be slaves to your sensual desires. Prahlada told his father who had conquered the three worlds that he had failed to conquer lust and desire. You should conquer lust and vanquish anger. Exile from your mind greed, hate, and jealousy. Dedicate your hands to the service of mankind. Jesus teaches infinite love and compassion. To resurrect love and compassion, you must kill jealousy and selfishness, purify your hearts. Earn the true mercy of Jesus. Follow the path shown by him and reach the position he holds.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 14

'His' First Step, 'His' Hundred Steps

Swami says, "If you take one step toward Me, I will take a hundred toward you."

One of the most memorable and cherished experiences that one can ever have with Bhagavan is how He first enters our lives and draws us toward Him. This is my story of how the Lord took me into His Divine fold and changed my life. I was not chosen by Bhagavan to join His educational institution when I tried for admission in the 11th standard for reasons He knows best. So, after two years I applied for the Undergraduate program of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. This time the call letter for the admission test arrived but left me in a dilemma.

I had applied for another entrance examination as well in my place and found that the test dates were scheduled on successive days in June. The examination centers were Puttaparthi and Darjeeling respectively, almost 2,000 kilometers apart, so I had to choose only one test to write.

My parents have always encouraged me to make my own decisions and this time, too, they let me decide. I was in a fix because selecting one option would be deserting the other, and there was no guarantee of getting admission in both cases. Also, back then even though everyone in my family were Sai devotees, Swami was not so much a part of my life as He is now. My mother saw my confused state and told me that it was up to me to choose, but the opportunity of getting admitted to Bhagavan's College was not an ordinary one. She told me that I could get an education anywhere but finding a place where God resides and values are imparted was rare.



Needless to say, I took her advice and when I look back now at that moment four years later, it was the most important advice I have ever received. However, carrying the choice was still not as easy as it seems. "Test is My taste", says the Lord and He was true to His words, for what followed was His difficult test of the decision of coming to Him. All these so called 'plans' of mine to come to write the admission test in Puttaparthi was made in mid-April of 2011 and just a few days later the unexpected happened, as Bhagavan left His physical body.

After recovering from the initial shock of the news, doubts slowly began to surface in my mind as to whether I should consider changing my plans. 'Would things still be the same there?' 'Would I even make it through the test, forget about the interview?' were the thoughts that I was having. More importantly the main question was, 'Was He still there in Puttaparthi?'

However, in this moment of chaos, a small voice inside me kept saying that it was a decision made for Him and changing my decision would be turning my back to Swami. So, gathering all my faith and trust in Him, and leaving it to His Will, my father and I left for Puttaparthi. After arriving at Puttaparthi I felt at home. Even though the physical frame of the Lord was not present, His Divine presence still lingered on. I had visited Puttaparthi once before with my parents, but I was very small at that time. Now, after going around the place and looking at the

institutions, I wanted to study here even more and my prayers to Swami became more intense.

The day of the entrance test finally arrived and I found that except English, the rest of the papers were quite tough, especially the Chemistry section, which was definitely not my forte. I was halfway through with my paper when I realized that some boys had already finished and were leaving, too. This scared me at first but there was still time left and I managed to complete on time.

When I returned to the room, my father asked how I had written, and I managed a weak “Good” as I wasn’t sure whether I would make it or not. The results were to be put up the next morning at 4.00 a.m., and considering the odds stacked against me I did not feel so confident of finding my name there, even as my father insisted we go and check the next morning. I offered a prayer to Swami that night with a heavy heart and went to sleep.

I had a very strange dream the next morning. In the dream I found myself in the South Indian canteen, and funny as it seems the names of the selected candidates were supposed to be put up on the wall there! I saw two boards with lists of names on the wall and then searched for my name (much later I discovered that Swami’s photos were hung there). It was not there! Even in the dream I felt immense sadness as my hopes or rather my faith was slowly crashing down. I would have even cried, but then I saw an old South Indian ‘*Amma*’ (mother) in a *sari* walk toward me.

The entire canteen was empty except the two of us, and I could see that she was short-statured with white hair. She asked me lovingly as to what happened, and I confided my disappointment to her. She asked me my name and looked at the board as I stared down at my feet completely broken. Suddenly she took something in her hand (which looked like a metal spatula with a long, thin handle) and pointed out my name. “Here it is son... the spelling is wrong, that’s all,” she said smiling.

To my utter amazement, I looked up to find my name there on the same list I had gone over thoroughly, with my surname comprising three alphabets spelt wrong. It was typed ‘Vivek Rui’ instead of ‘Vivek Rai’, a ‘huge’ spelling error for me to have overlooked but for the Master’s *maya*! The feeling of happiness and relief had just begun to sink in when suddenly my father woke me up at 4.30 a.m., having returned after checking the selected names.

“Well done, son, you’re selected,” he said to me as I opened my eyes and I replied with a smile on my face, “I know Papa,” and hugged him. The successful interview and my admission into His College that followed were smooth like a breeze for I knew that He had already chosen me as His own. His test was over for the time being with others to follow in Brindavan campus where I did my undergraduate course.

More than four years after being taken by Him into His Divine haven of love and care, experiencing His benevolence in a myriad forms and instances in Brindavan and Puttaparthi, all I can say is that He is forever with us, guiding and guarding like our mother. As I look back, I realize how my dear Sai Amma took those steps toward me, first through my physical mother and then (someone pointed to me the obvious fact on sharing my experience of the 'South Indian Canteen dream') through the form of His own physical mother.

I can only conclude that even the 'apparent' first step of ours that we take toward Him is in fact actually His own, just unseen and unrecognized by us. As an offering of my gratitude and love to You on the occasion of the 90th year of Your advent, Swami, please accept this small piece of those priceless experiences that You have granted me.

~Vivek Rai

Source: *Sai Nandana* 2015 (90th Birthday Offering)

Baba the Sun

Through the royal banner
Of the rising sun,
Sink forever.
In the fathomless ocean eye,
Tumble down
To the garden beyond.
Rise;
To the garden here.
Hidden holiness revealed,
In every drop of rain,
In every drop of life.
See the throb
Peacefully pacing;
The rumbling rolling river
Fruitfully flowing;
From blossom to blossom,
From sea to sea.
The enlightened eye
Sees all souls.

—*Anthony, Malta*

Baba the Moon

A quiet breeze
Rustles the leaves.
Clouds scatter
Revealing the purity
Of the moon:
An eye
In the sky.
Hanging;
Watching;
Filling the earth
With waters of love.
Floating;
Dancing;
Like white butterfly fingers
Over sitar strings,
He harmonizes man.

—*Anthony Malta*

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, March 1971

God is Love, Live in Love

Once while I was sitting at His Lotus Feet, Swami asked my son who was also present in the Interview Room, "Whom do you love most?"

Swami Himself, proceeded with the answer, "All the relatives in the world are bound to depart from this world one day or other and love toward them is also a passing phase. Before we marry, there is no wife and until we beget a child or children there is no father or mother. All these relationships evolved one day or other during this lifetime, and your love with such persons are also developed through attachment and selfish desires. This love is not permanent. But one should remember that God is with you through and through, in your past births as well as in this birth, and in the forthcoming births, too. So, if you love God without any condition, it will be pure and selfless love. We should develop constant faith and love toward God, who alone is eternal."

There were a group of devotees from Australia with Swami during the interview. Swami turned toward one of them and asked from where they had come. He replied that they were from Australia. Swami asked him the reason for this visit to Prasanthi Nilayam. He replied, "Swami, we have come here to see God." Pat came

the Divine reply by way of another question, "Oh! Is that so? Then you do not have God in Australia?" The devotee could not say anything. Somehow another one from the group replied, "Swami, there is God in our country also, but we have intense desire to see God in human form, who is none other than Baba Himself."

Bhagavan was pleased with this reply. Swami advised, "We should love God without any conditions or reservations in mind because God is one who is our ever-lasting friend, relation, and everything during all our births. This intense love toward God should be continuous and a constant feeling and should develop a feeling to be with Swami as much as possible. In faraway places, when devotees think of Swami, they should pray to Him, or sing of His glory, whenever they feel lonely. They could also reach out for *satsang*, company of other Sai devotees that would to some extent satisfy their longing to see and to be with Swami."

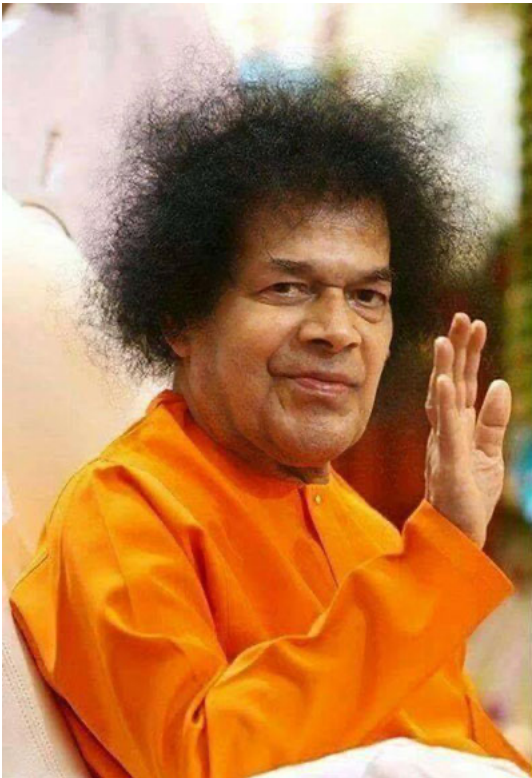
Swami continued, "There are some devotees who reply that Swami is always in their heart, and they need not go to Him very often. This shows their lack of enthusiasm. What does this reply indicate? Here is a kerchief, and I am holding this in my hands. This means my hands are bigger than the kerchief and it can hold the same inside the hand. Likewise, when somebody claims that Swami is in His heart, then it means that he is much bigger than Swami. This is not correct. Sure, Swami is in your heart. But He is also in front of you, behind you, around you, and all over the place. He is omnipresent. There could be some compelling reasons for the inability of the devotee to come to Me. One reason is lack of enthusiasm. It could be due to the pressure of your work from which you could not escape and come to Swami. Another reason could be the lack of resources. But if only you have enthusiasm and intense desire to be with Swami, then the obstacles could be overcome by His grace."

'Love is God', is a repeated maxim of Swami. The God incarnate Bhagavan is Himself the embodiment of Love. If only we spend a few minutes in His Divine presence with intense love and prayers in our hearts, we can positively experience the strong divine love flowing from Him. Swami's love envelopes everybody, even in an assembly of lakhs of devotees who throng for His *darshan*. One has only to experience this bliss all by himself to understand what Divine Love is!

I wish to narrate a scene on 'Love on Motion' that I witnessed. The Divine Love pulls the multiplying millions of devotees to His presence. In *Dwapara Yuga*, it was the melody of Lord Krishna's flute that made the devotees of Brindavan gravitate toward His presence. The *gopis* [milk maidens] lost any consciousness of their body, mind, and spirit, dropped their work and other activities. They were absorbed by the melody. How lucky we are to witness today the re-enactment of the same phenomenon by Sai Krishna at Parthi. The devotees run to catch a glimpse of Swami

even at a murmur of the news that Swami's car is approaching. They feel elated and truly blessed by the chance *darshan* even of a fleeting second as the car passes through.

Once Swami graced me with a rare chance of following His car from Puttaparthi to Brindavan (Whitefield). Swami's tour program is always unpredictable and unannounced. Nobody can dare to set the exact timings of such tour program. On that blissful day, Swami left Parthi about one and half hours earlier than scheduled. I was fortunate to be provided with the experience of following Swami's car. I followed Swami's car as the second one for quite a long distance till all other cars in the caravan showed up. I could not really believe the emotionally surcharged sendoff given by the devotees even at such short notice.



From Gopuram onward, up to and far beyond the gate of the Super Specialty Hospital, devotees had lined up in good strength on both sides of the road. Even the devoted Sai Gita [the elephant] turned up with her majestic presence to greet Swami as the car passed by the side of the gates of the shed. Hundreds of devotees were showering flower petals on the car. I saw many of them breaking coconuts on the street in front of the car. Indeed, it looked like a real car festival in our villages when people offered special *poojas* in front of the Divine car as it passes through the streets. Swami's' car was bedecked with the petals offered by devotees.

But the measure of attraction that the Divine drew all along the villages and the paddy fields had to be seen to be believed. All the villagers enroute were out in the streets in time for the divine *darshan*. How did all these villagers and agricultural workers come to know the time of Swami's moving presence in their areas?! It could only be divinity-induced intuition that foretold the people in the villages the possibility of the Divine *darshan*. The Divine Love, in motion, was attracting the entire mankind all along the way!

Swami once said, "The snow on the mountain peaks softens during the day as the result of the sun; and it hardens during the night since the sun is absent. So, too, your hardened heart hardens me; your soft heart softens me. Understand this. Each of you knows the love of a single mother only. But my affection, My Love, toward each one of you is that of a thousand mothers! Do not deny yourself that affection, that love, by denying Me your love!"

Those were the days when the journey to Prasanthi Nilayam was very tedious and tiresome. On one such day, Swami said the following lines in His discourse:

"A word spoken in love is balm to the tired feet. You come to Prasanthi Nilayam by road, rail, or bus; you walk into the garden exhausted and eager. I ask from the verandah, O, when did you arrive? Others may doubt, why is Baba asking this question? 'Does He not know?' Surely, He must be knowing all about him and us. Why then this query? But you to whom this question is put, you are elated that 'Baba spoke to me as soon as I walked in!' I seek to give you joy and so, though I know I ask such questions. If I do not ask, but you keep quiet, you feel forlorn and frustrated, don't you? You know that I am asking you not for the sake of the answer that I am asking you, that I am already aware of, but for the sake of the satisfaction My words give you. So also, I may ask, 'How are you?' though I know that you are well and that is why you could come or that you are unwell and that is the very reason that has brought you to Me! This is the *mayashakti*, the spirit that charms; If it speaks, if it casts its eye, if it does something, you derive pleasure thereby! It is *yogamaya*, which makes you happy when I accost you or talk to you or do something to you."

Swami further says: "Scatter the seeds of Love in the dreary desert hearts; then sprouts of Love will make the wastes green with joy. Blossoms of Love will make the air fragrant; rivers of Love will murmur along the valleys, and every bird, beast, and child will sing the song of Love!"

In another quote, Swami says: "Every worker in the organization must rid himself of the idea of separateness or distinction between one person and another. He must always be eager to share the sorrows—and what is more difficult—the joy of others. My desire is that whenever any slight misunderstanding arises among you, you must set it right among yourselves, exercising love and tolerance. You should not plunge into a passion over it and let things blaze into a quarrel or a factional split. Recognize that you are engaged in the exercise of widening your hearts, of reaching the Feet of the Lord through the expression of Love. Unless you cultivate love, tolerance, humility, faith, and reverence, how is it possible for you to realize God?"

At the present time, when we see all over the country confusion, fear, and anxiety, each worker, each devotee must contribute his share of cool, calm love to suppress the anger and fury. No government authority can suppress it effectively and as quickly as you can by *love* and brotherliness.

Swami had declared that He is the richest person in the world, nay, in the universe itself, richer than Kubera, the Lord of wealth. Swami further clarified that His richness does not consist of money or materials; the most valuable asset of Baba is Love. He is the embodiment of Love itself.

The whole world is an expanse of love enveloping all the living beings one way or another. Even the driest-hearted human being or for that matter even any wild

animal exhibits sparks of love in its own way. Such love may be of selfish nature with attachment or bondage to one's kith and kin or to outside people who are admired or revered. It is only the consistent spiritual *sadhana* that slowly and steadily leads us up to a level in which we can transcend the narrow frontiers of selfish love into the vast expanse of divine love enveloping the whole of humanity. "*Premaswarupalara*", Swami addresses very often while delivering Divine Discourses to the gathering. Because this is the real nature of mankind.

Swami's advent of this Avatarhood is to regenerate mankind with human values, informing both our view and way of life. As all of us know, these values are *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* [truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence]. If only the prime value of universal *prema* is fostered and developed in our life, it will be very easy and almost automatic to develop the other values. How do we go about it? According to Bhagavan, it is very simple; it only requires a degree of earnestness in our efforts.

Man is by very nature love personified. But the self and the desires of the self, have come to grip our thoughts and actions in our lives past and present. Our efforts, therefore, should be to purify our *chitta* [will] by removing the accumulated dirt slowly, so that the ever-present quality of love surfaces in all our thoughts and deeds. Swami is, in fact, making us aware of the inherent 'Love' in us by inculcating subtle methods of spiritual *sadhanas*.

To develop universal love, we must first realize that the universe is only a manifestation of Divinity, and that Divinity is inherent in all living beings— what Swami calls as 'Resident Divinity'. We should extend our love to every living being as a manifestation of the same divinity in the same way as we love God. Swami also invariably emphasizes the need to have expansion of love and not contraction of love, which means that love should be selfless and with not selfish motive. We love family members because they happen to be our wife/husband, son, daughter, father, or mother. The love extended to all these relatives are only selfish in nature. Our love is conditional based on our relationships. We even find variations in the intensity of love toward different relatives depending upon the degree of attachment with each one of them. But divine love is not conditional. It is selfless. Our love for God should also be selfless. "Love is selflessness and self is lovelessness", says Swami.

Our feelings get reflected in others. When we show hatred to anyone, the other party also responds with hatred. When we show love, they also extend their love to us. Love is reciprocated by love. Swami often points out the simple analogy of a person looking in the mirror. If the person puts on an angry face, the reflection is also the same. If we smile, the reflection also smiles!

Thirty thousand feet above the earth, when an aircraft was being hijacked, a devotee heard the command from Swami to "Love the hijacker." How could you love a hijacker when he was threatening to blow up the plane killing everybody on board?

And yet this was the command. The lady devotee, on hearing the message, mentally extended her love toward them. It was reported that the hijackers subsequently lost their nerves to live through the tension drama and ultimately surrendered to the authorities.

It is not enough if we say that we love somebody. In case of pure love, we follow it up by with positive action. When we love our child, we try to express our love by purchasing and presenting something for the child to bring joy. Any sincere feeling of love manifests itself into an action.

When we love God, God's love also manifests. In fact, God is ever loving and at times we are not able to feel and enjoy that Divine Love because of certain inherent blocks in our feelings of love. The magnetic power in iron automatically attracts the ordinary iron. But in case the ordinary iron is densely covered by rust and impurities, the magnet cannot attract it. The rust in our feelings must be removed and our *chitta* purified to be able to absorb the abundant Love from God. And we, too, should love God unconditionally.

When once we develop love toward someone, we start listening to him or her with interest and act in the best way possible to please the party whom we love. When we say we love God, it implies and involves total commitment to the Divine commands and direction. We can then claim that we love God unconditionally. This aspect of obeying Swami in totality was mentioned in His Divine Discourse on 14th of this month (January 14, 1999).

What is it that Swami is instructing us? "Start the day with Love. Spend the day with Love. Fill the day with Love. End the day with Love." We hear the sayings of Swami several times, but we fail to put them into practice in our daily life. 'Start the day with Love'. But what do we do? A slight delay in getting our morning coffee or in sighting the newspaper boy makes us agitated. We have sharp remarks in reserve for the maidservant if she comes late or slips up in work. In our conversations we exhibit irritation because it has been our way of life all along. We seem to have lost the faculty of tolerance and softness in speech. Only when we are free of mental agitation we can speak softly and sweetly.

Swami has been teaching us to mend our habits and has shown us the ways, too. Early morning if we sit for meditation followed by *japa* [repetition of Lord's name] and *pooja* [prayer], our mind becomes calm and gets itself conditioned to accept the events as they come and to develop tolerance, which in turn removes anger and hatred. Love resumes its place in our mind. This is what Swami wants from us under item No.1 of the Nine-point code of Conduct, which has been prescribed for all the devotees.

As we go out into the world during the day, we encounter various personalities. Some of them you may like and many others you may not like. We react differently to different people. You feel happy to see and talk to the one whom you like. We

breed a sense of aversion to those whom we do not like. It is very difficult to condition the mind. Yet, we must try and attempt to foster and develop a proper balanced attitude and behavior toward everyone. Constant remembrance of Swami in such situations would to some extent direct us to stick to proper behavior. Swami teaches us to mentally extend our love toward such persons. Our smiling face would elicit the same smile from the other party, too.

However, at times when we are engaged in conversation with someone, the subject matter quite often turns to those on whom we may have reservations. We pass comments and criticisms on them. Swami warns us to be cautious and careful about this habit and behavior. Remember Swami's dictum in the Nine-point code of Conduct, which says, "Don't talk ill of others, especially in their absence."

As the day closes in, we prepare ourselves to retire for the night. While doing so, we should spend a while in self-retrospection. What are all the mistakes we have done during the day? Have we strayed away from the path of Love any time during the day? We should contemplate and try to improve our performance the next day. It should be a continuous process. This is the *sadhana* of self-discipline.

As long as hatred and anger prevail in our mind, it is very difficult to cultivate love in our hearts. Anger and hatred must be eliminated gradually by constant practice and tolerance and love assumes its place automatically.

The most tolerant person may encounter a very difficult man who may even inflict mental or physical pain on us. Then what are we to do? Here, too, Swami says that we should not act in the manner of 'tit for tat'. For all the pain inflicted, it is our duty to pray for forgiveness and for his welfare despite all that he has done to you. This pleases Swami very much.

'*Sarva Jana sukhino Bhavantu*', (Let all people be happy) is the prayer we offer three times at the end of each *bhajan* session. Suppose on that day somebody, one Mr. X, had done harm to you causing mental or physical harm, what will we mean by the prayer mentioned above. Will we mean, "Let everybody except Mr. X become happy?" No, there is no provision there. Let everybody means everybody including Mr. X also, who would have done harm to you, is included. When we pray, we should mean the full implications of that prayer. This could be possible only when we develop Love toward each and one, whether friend or foe.

Swami wants us to live happily forever with overwhelming Love in our Hearts, for God is Love!

Sai Ram!

~"Mumbai" Srinivasan, India

Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

Tapas

- Q. Can one realize the *atma* [soul] and merge, as You say, in the *Pranava* [cosmic sound—*Om*] with this material body composed of the five elements? Can the *atma* be isolated from the body? How is that done?
- A. Man can, by *dhyana* [meditation] and other disciplines, by the recital of the *Pranava mantra*, discover the *atma* and isolate it from the body. It is something like getting butter from curds [yogurt], oil from sesame, water from the sub-soil, fire from wood. Churning, squeezing, crushing, boring, turning—these processes are needed, that is all. What happens is the separation of the *atma* from the body, the disappearance of the belief that the body is the *atma* or the Self.
- Q. Swami! Many elders and sages say that we should visualize the *jivatma* [individual] as *Paramatma*; that we should cultivate that feeling, that conviction. How is that possible?
- A. Why do you think it is difficult? Is it not easier to speak the truth than to speak falsehood? You are now declaring a falsehood as true and so all kinds of difficulties arise; accept the truth that the *jivatma* and *Paramatma* are the same, then things become easy. First, recognize the *atma*, the “*jivatma*”, unrelated to the body; you can do this by *dhyana*, etc. As scent is separated from flowers, sugar from cane, gold from rock, thus separate the *atma* from the physical body. Then by means of *nidhidhyasana*, etc., single-pointed reflection and meditation, you can visualize the *jivatma* as one with *Paramatma*. That is the consummation of *tapas*, the final *nirvana*.
- Q. What exactly is *tapas*, Swami?
- A. It means the end of the activities of the senses; one must be the master of all of them. There should be no trace of craving or appetite. It involves effort to attain Brahman, incessant yearning for that end; it must be expressed through moderate food and sleep: it means agony to realize the principle. Such *tapas* is called *satwic* [pure].
- Q. What then is *rajasic tapas*?
- A. Those who simply starve the body and make it weak without curbing the senses and controlling the emotions are doing only *rajasic tapas*. They do not study or meditate upon the *atmatatwa*; they lay emphasis on physical asceticism.

- Q. There must be *tamasic tapas* also.
- A. There is. To propitiate the Gods for favors, and then with the favors as instruments, to desire the exploitation of the world—that is *tamasic tapas*. Only that *tapas* is proper which has as its aim the attainment of God, the realization of Brahman, the achievement of the highest wisdom. That type of *tapas* alone is approved by the *Shastras* [scriptures]. All the rest will lead you astray, away from the goal. Only the *tapas* approved by the *Shastras* deserves that name. The others are *tamas*, not *tapas*. *Tapas* means ‘heat’; the heat burns out sin and reduces all *karma* [action] to ashes.
- Q. The *Shastras* say that the *Rishis* had in their *ashrams* things like the *Chinthamani* jewel, the *Kalpavriksha*, and also the *Kamadhenu*, which gave them whatever they wished for. I cannot understand why they should do *tapas* at all. Please make this clear to me.
- A. Think about it well. Then you will know that *Chinthamani* is not a jewel, nor *Kalpavriksha* a tree, nor *Kamadhenu* a cow. They are all names for the fruits of *tapas*. They are powers that automatically accrue to a person as a result of *tapas*. He realizes all that he wishes for. It is called *Kalpavriksha-siddhi*. When he subdues all desire, it is called *Kamadhenu-siddhi*. What is the *Chinthamani-siddhi*? It is the stage when you have no *chinta* or worry or mental agitation, a stage when all sorrow is kept afar. When *chinta* ends and the supreme *ananda* [joy] is won, it is *Chinthamani-siddhi*. *Chinta* must disappear from thought, word, and deed.
- Q. They also speak of mental *tapas*. What does that mean?
- A. Observe control of speech: cultivate purity of feeling; practice humility: let your thoughts be always on the *Brahmatatwam*. Then it can be said that you are in mental *tapas*.
- Q. And physical *tapas*?
- A. That, too, is good in its own way. Revering elders, spiritual teachers, saints, and sages and God make for purity, non-violence, sympathy with all beings, straightforwardness, all contribute to physical well-being, health and wholesomeness. Mental *tapas* leads to the purity of the mind. Verbal control or *tapas* leads to purity of speech. By these three, the precious possessions of *Kamadhenu*, *Kalpavriksha*, and *Chinthamani* are attained. They are attainments, not just cows, trees, or jewels.
- Q. Are there any who have attained *Brahmatatwa* and *Dharmatatwa* with the help of their success in *tapas*? Who are they? Please tell me.

A. Kapila-mahamuni attained *Brahmatatwam*, Jaimini-mahamuni attained *Brahmatatwam*, Narada became a *Brahmarishi*, Bhagiratha brought the Ganga down, Gouthama persuaded the Godavari to flow on earth, Valmiki realized the force of *Rama-mantram* and was enabled to compose the *Ramayana*, Gargi was established in Brahmacharya, and Sulabha in spiritual wisdom—all through *tapas* alone. Why go on quoting examples one after the other? Through *tapas*, even Brahma and Rudra become one's collaborators.

Q. Swami! In order to reach this high stage, do you say that birth in a high caste is necessary? Or is *sadhana* of a high order enough?

A. Caste without character is meaningless; it is just an empty label. *Sadhana* without the base of character is like the journey of a blind man. Morality, virtue, character—these are vital. Based on these, if *sadhana* is done according to the scheme laid down for the path one has selected, then there is no doubt of success. But you must take note of a caution that is essential. You must not give place to sloth simply because *jaati* or birth is not important. *Neeti* or moral standards accrue according to *jaati* also; and so, to foster them the consciousness of *jaati* is helpful and important. But if through the accumulated merit of past births, one has the treasure of goodness and virtue, then one need not attach much importance to *jaati*. Only those who practiced *Yoga* in previous births and who could not complete the process will have that type of excellence. The main thing is to acquire the *neeti* that is prescribed for the *jaati*, foster the *jaati* with *neeti*, and make yourself fit and full, with a high status in life. For some distance on the path of *sadhana* and spirituality, both *jaati* and *neeti* will help. The *gunas* [qualities] will be sublimated through these two.

Q. Therefore, there must be some who through the merit of previous lives have attained Godhead. Give some instances please.

A. My dear man! You should not seek to discover the source of a river or the ancestry of a *Rishi*. They may be quite unimpressive. You should be satisfied with their services. Their experience is what is most valuable; be inspired by them, be led by them to similar efforts. If you go in search of the beginnings, you lose the vital core.

Still, since you have raised the question, I shall tell you. Vyasa was born of the fisherman caste, Sounaka was of the Sunaka clan; Agastya was born in a pot; Viswamitra was a *kshatriya*, Soota was born in the fourth caste. In addition, we, have among those who were virtuous and good, who had their eyes always on the moral standards of their *jaati* and *neeti*, who renounced all and stuck to the ideal of liberating themselves from the bondage of birth and death and the illusion of physical values: Sanjaya, Sathyakama, and many more.

My dear man! Self-effort, *viveka* (discrimination), *tapas*—these qualify man to attain the highest status. Without purity of the inner instruments, no man, however high his caste, can reach the highest. If inferior copper is added to gold, the alloy loses in value. Just as pure gold becomes an alloy through contact with copper, the Universal, the *Viraatrupa*, gets the inferior ego added to it in this *samsara* [world]. The *Viraatrupa* becomes transformed into the *jivi*. Now, what has to be done to get back the real gold-*tatwa*? Through *tapas* and *vrata* (acceptance of codes of conduct), through polishing and cleansing the *buddhi* [intellect], the original stage has to be regained. You wash the feet after walking through the mire; the mind, too, has to be washed of the mire of attachment to objects. *Jnana* alone can burn the seeds of attachment so that they may not sprout again. So, if a person has the treasure of *jnana*, he gets liberated easily.

Source: *Prasnothara Vahini*

Thought of the MONTH

Recognize the Power of Mind

Today man has to understand the true relationship between matter and mind. When one is asked about the mind, he says, “Don’t mind.” When he is asked about matter, he answers, “It doesn’t matter.” By this sort of casualness, man is failing to understand [both]

mind and matter.

Only when man understands the nature of the mind can he recognize the true nature of humanness. What is the mind? it is not something negative. It is positive. It represents the power of the *atma*, the power of *sankalpa* (will). It can travel any amount of distance in space. It can explore the powers of the atom. The mind can recognize the truth that is valid for the three categories of time—the past, the present, and the future. The mind is therefore very essential in man’s daily life. It is the source of all strength. Man today is indifferent to the importance and the powers of the mind.

Man is seeking happiness from birth to death. The search starts with education. But education does not confer happiness. He desires a job, but that does not make him happy. He then seeks marriage as the means to happiness. Happiness eludes him because the wife claims equal rights. Then he declares; “my life is a total darkness.” What is the reason for this feeling? It is the ego that is the cause. As a man grows, his

egoism also grows. One after another, desires go on increasing. Their fulfilment does not bring him the happiness he seeks.

Where is *ananda* (bliss) to be found? It does not exist in material objects. It is not to be found in physical pleasures. The truth is man is the embodiment of bliss. He is searching for it outside himself. This is the mark of ignorance. When he is the embodiment of bliss, how can he secure bliss outside himself?

~Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 28.

Those who experience this [Baba's] Presence within them can experience a joy that is indescribable, wherever they may be.... People should realize that time is fleeting and one's life span is melting away every moment like a block of ice. Man is nearing his end even before he realizes his primary duty. What is that duty? It is to discover the purpose of life. Man seeks wealth, comforts, position, and happiness. How are these to be got? Moving away from God's grace, man seeks all these kinds of worldly happiness. Of what avail are these transient physical pleasures? Thyagaraja sought to know wherein lay real happiness. Is it in wealth or is it in the service of Lord Rama? If one is blessed with God's grace, what more does he need?

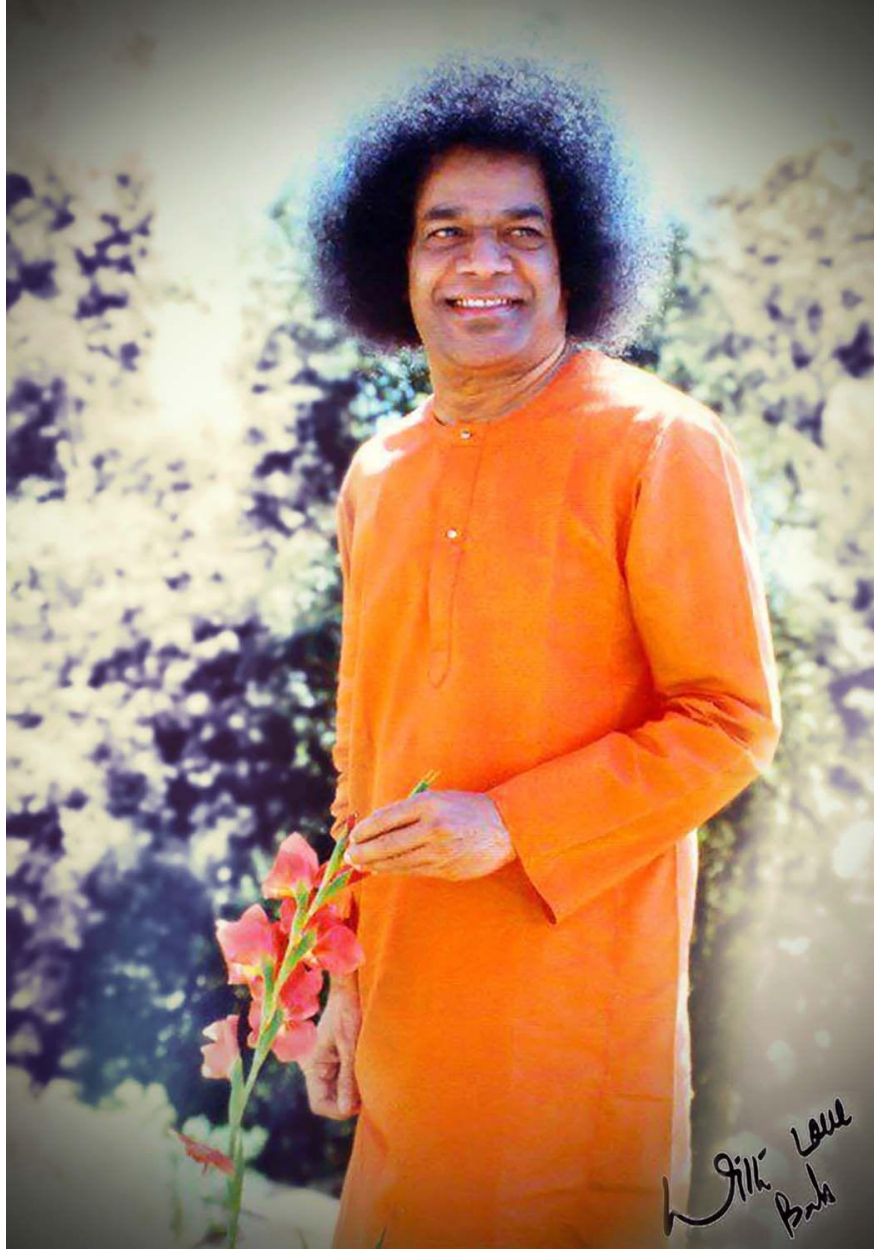
Hence, seek God's grace at the outset. Does real happiness lie in enjoying creature comforts? No. true happiness consist in manifesting all the potentialities in man. When you put into practice all the sacred thoughts that emanate from your mind you will realize true happiness. Most people do not practice the sacred impulses that arise in them with the result that they do not experience the bliss within them.

Embodiments of Love! The most important thing you must recognize is that your heart is a *Ksheerasagaram* (Ocean of milk). But because of the invasion of bad thoughts and feelings, your humanness is vitiated. Humanness consists in harmony of thought, word, and deed.

~Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 28.

The mind is known as the inner sense organ. The mind is always engaged in recapturing, remembering, recalling, and reflection. As a result, it receives, and rejects wishes. You may be alone and silent, but the mind is on a spree—wishing, desiring, planning to do or not to do. And it keeps the tongue busy until sleep silences it. There are no standards that are kept in mind while looking for things, talking about people, and engaging in acts. Since these are done as soon as the thought arises. One must hold the thought for a while to examine and judge. Develop the quality of fortitude and the strength not to yield to the opinions of others unless you find them to be right, the courage to bear criticism and face slander.

~Baba the Breath of Sai



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