

Saranagathi

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in His Shivaratri discourse in 1955 spoke about conquering the ego, constantly dwelling on the name of the Lord, and detachment. This year Mahashivaratri is on March 8.

I do not give 'speeches'; My talks are more of the conversation type; I want that you should follow every word of what I say with reverent attention, for your *anandam* is My *aharam*—your joy is My food. You can get *anandam* only by following the advice I give you. and this is why I am particular that you should listen carefully and take to heart all that I say. This is not a mere lecture wherefrom you do not seek new lessons for life.

The Lord is a mountain of *prema* (love); any number of ants carrying away particles of sweetness cannot exhaust His plenty. He is an ocean of mercy without a limiting shore. *Bhakti* (devotion) is the easiest way to win His grace, and also to realize that He pervades everything; in fact, is everything!

Saranagathi (total surrender), leaving everything to His Will, is the highest form of *Bhakti* (devotion). Once a *Brahmin* was crossing a riverbed near which some men were washing clothes. Finding a nice new silk shawl on his shoulder, they fell upon him in a group, shouting that it belonged to the palace and had been given to them to be washed, but had been stolen and not been traced. The poor *Brahmin* yelled, "Narayana, Narayana" when the blows rained on him, and so *Narayana* rose from His seat in *Vaikuntha* [heaven] and proceeded forward. But in a moment He walked back and resumed His seat much to the surprise of His consort. who asked Him the reason for the strange behavior. *Narayana* said, "I wanted to help that poor *Brahmin* who has fallen into a den of scoundrels, but he has started beating them, blow for blow. My help is no longer needed."

Conquest of ego needed

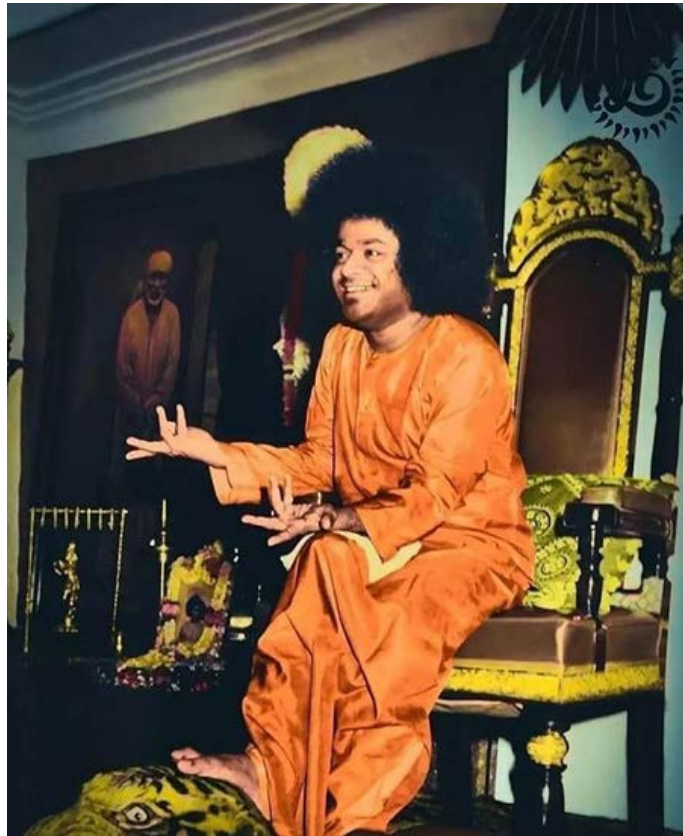
When *bhakti* is just emerging as a sapling, a fence is needed to protect the tender, plant. That fence is *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Religion) and its rules, regulations and restrictions, directions and commands. When the fruit is green, it will not fall even when the gale is furious; but when it is fully ripe, it drops to the ground even in the silence of the night. A small fire will go out in smoke even if a little green is placed on it, but the forest fire will reduce to ashes even the greenest tree that impedes its fierce march! What is needed is the conquest of the ego.

The bullock shouts 'ham hai' 'ham hai' (I am, I am) in its egoistic pride. And so, when it is just a few days old you tie it to a post apart from its mother; you work it to skin and bones; yet the animal does not learn the lesson of humility. Even its skin when drawn tightly across a drum resounds egoistically, *Ham Ham Ham*. And so, the skin must be cut into slender rings and then when the strings are pulled, the bullock reveals that it has benefitted by all the punishment it has undergone; it murmurs *tum tum tum, (you you you)*, and its ego is gone.

The *haridasa* (mendicant) goes along the streets singing the glories of the Lord. He has the sounding cymbals, two of them, the eternal duet of good-bad, joy-grief, pain-pleasure in his right hand and he twangs the *tambura* (stringed musical instrument), *Samsara*, with his left. *Samsara* (worldly life) is the tune to which his songs have to be adjusted, it is the *shruti* (musical note). But both the *shruti* and *tala* (marking of time) are for the purpose of heightening the effect of the song that issues from his mouth, the song of the glory of God.

Three types of devotion

I remember telling a questioner in Maharashtra while in the previous Body, that there are three types of devotion: The *vihanga* method is where like a bird swooping down upon the ripe fruit on the tree, the devotee is too impatient, and by the very impatience he exhibits he loses the fruit, which falls from his hold. The *markata* method is where like a monkey that pulls toward it one fruit after another and by sheer unsteadiness is not able to decide which fruit it wants, the *bhakta*, too, hesitates and changes his aim too often and thus loses all chances of success. And the *pipeelika* method, where like the ant that slowly but steadily proceeds



toward the sweetness, the devotee also moves directly with undivided attention toward the Lord and wins His grace!

Bhakti and *sraddha* (devotion and faith) are the two oars with which you can take the boat across the sea of *Samsara*. A child told its mother when it went to bed at night, "Mother! Wake me up when I get hungry." The mother answered, "There is no

need, your hunger will itself wake you." So, too, when the hunger for God comes, it will itself activate you and make you seek the food you need. God has endowed you with hunger and He supplies the food. He has endowed you with illness and He gives the specifics you need. Your duty is to see that you get the proper hunger and the right illness and use the appropriate food or drug!

Man must be yoked to *Samsara* and broken; that is the training that will teach him that the world is unreal. No amount of lectures will make you believe it is a snake unless you actually experience it. Touch fire and get the sensation of burning; there is nothing like it to teach you that fire is to be avoided. Unless you touch it, you will be aware only of its light. It is light and heat both; just as this world is both true and false, that is to say, unreal.

Habit of judging others as atheists or theists

There is a widely prevalent habit now of judging others and labelling them as theists or atheists. What do you know, what can you know of the inner working of another's mind? There was once a queen who was a great devotee of Rama. She felt so sad that her husband, the Raja, never even uttered the name of Rama and had no *bhakti*. She had vowed that the first occasion on which she got evidence of his *bhakti* or at least respect for *Ramanama* (*Name of Rama*), she would conduct *puja* (ritualistic worship) in all the temples and feed the poor on a lavish scale. Then one night while fast asleep the Raja uttered the name of Rama thrice plaintively and prayerfully. She heard the *Namasmarana* and was happy at the discovery of her husband's devotion to Rama. She ordered general rejoicing throughout the kingdom and the feeding of the poor. The Raja did not know the reason for the celebration for he was only told that it was an order of the Rani, which the officers carried out. Similarly, a husband may not be aware of the excellence of a wife's spiritual attainments.

There is the case of a couple who were proceeding through a thick jungle on pilgrimage to an inaccessible shrine. The husband saw on the footpath a precious stone shining brilliantly when the sun's rays fell upon it from between the leaves. He hastily threw some sand over it with a movement of his foot so that his wife may not be tempted to pick it up and become a slave to the tinsel. The wife saw the gesture and chided the husband for still retaining in his mind a distinction between sand and diamond. For her, both were the same.

Keep the Name as constant as breathing

The Raja who spoke in his sleep the sacred name of Rama felt very sorry, according to the story, that he let *Ramanama* out of his mouth, for he believed that no one should know of his 'love' for Rama. There are many who will not shout about their *Guru* or their favorite Name and Form, but whether you declare them to others or not, keep them ever in your consciousness. *Ramanama* or any other name must be as constant as breathing. For this, practice is essential.

A person once told Dr. Johnson, the famous English thinker, that he could seldom get time to recite the name of God, what with the hundreds of things he had to do from morning till nightfall and even far into the night. Dr. Johnson replied with another question. He asked how millions of people found space to live upon the face of the earth, which is two-thirds water, and the rest is too full of mountains, deserts, forests, icy regions, river beds, marshes, and similar impossible areas. The questioner said that man somehow struggled to find living space. So, too, said Dr. Johnson, man must somehow find a few minutes a day for prayer to the Lord.

Example of the highest type of detachment

Bhakti and the attitude of surrender that is its final fruit will give you great courage to meet any emergency. Such courage is what is called renunciation. The story of Mohajith is a good example of this highest type of detachment.

Mohajith, the Prince, went to a sage in the forest and sought guidance in the spiritual path. The sage asked him whether he had conquered attachment as his name indicated. The Prince said that not only he, but everyone in his kingdom had! So the sage started to test the truth of this claim.

The sage took the Prince's robes, soaked them in blood and hastened to the Palace gate with the gruesome story of the murder of the Prince by some ruffians in the jungle. The maid whom he met refused to hurry with the news to the Royal apartments because, she said, "He was born, he died; what is the special urgency of this news that I should interrupt my regular routine and run to the King and Queen?"

When at last he got an audience and was able to communicate the sad news to the father, the latter sat unruffled, whispering to himself, "The bird flew off the tree on which it had alighted to take rest." The Rani, too, was unmoved. She told the sage that this earth is a caravanserai, where men come and stay for the night, and when dawn breaks one by one they tramp their different ways. Kith and kin are the words we use for the attachment to the travelers cultivated in the caravanserai during the short term of acquaintance.

The wife of the "dead" Prince was also unaffected. she said, "Husband and wife are like two pieces of wood drifting down a flooded river; they float near each other for some time and when some current comes between, they are parted; each must move on to the sea at its own rate and in its own time. There is no need to grieve over the parting of the two; it is in the very nature of Nature that it should be so."

Grow with self-respect and dignity

The sage was overjoyed to see this steady and sincere *vairagya* (dispassion) in the rulers and the ruled. He came back to the forest and told the Prince that while he was away, a hostile army had invaded his Kingdom and slain the entire royal family and captured his Kingdom and enslaved his subjects. He took the news calmly and

said, "All this is bubble, impermanent, flimsy. Let it go the way of the bubble. Guide me to reach the Infinite, the imperishable."

Such *Vairagya* comes out of the grace of the Lord; it needs generations of learning and struggle. Meanwhile, you must start with the first step, the cleansing of the mind and the cultivation of virtue. Even if you do not start with that step, at least do not laugh at those who do and discourage them. Do at least this much! Then, do not depend upon others for doing your work, like attending to your personal wants. Do them yourself; that is real freedom. Again, never accept anything 'free' from others, pay it back, in service or work.

That will make you self-respecting individuals. Receiving a favor means getting bound to the giver. Grow with self-respect and dignity. That is the best service you can do to yourself.

There is no seniority or juniority among devotees

'Uncle' Moon is 'uncle' to all the children of the world. So also, the Lord is everyone's father, in whose property everyone can claim a share. But in order to get it, you must reach a certain age, a certain standard of intelligence, and discrimination. The infirm and the idiotic, He will not consider fit to receive property. His property is grace, *prema*. But if you have discrimination and renunciation, you can claim your share as of right.

Bring '*bhakti*' and lay it here and take from here spiritual strength! The more such business is done, the more pleased am I. Bring what you have, namely, your sorrows and griefs, worries and anxieties, and take from Me joy and peace, courage and confidence. In My view, there is no seniority or juniority among devotees. The mother spends more time tending the sickly child; she just asks the older children to look after themselves; she feeds with her own hand the infant. That does not mean that she has no love toward the grown-ups. So, too, do not think that because I do not ostensibly pay more attention to one person, he is beyond the ken of my *prema*.

Note this also: In this *Avatar* (Divine Incarnation), the wicked will not be destroyed; they will be corrected and reformed and educated and led back to the path from which they have strayed. The white-ant infested tree will not be cut; it will be saved. Again, this *Avatar* will not select some place other than the place where the Nativity took place for the center of Its *leelas*, *mahimas*, and *upadesha* (divine sport, miracle power, and Divine instruction). This tree shall not be transplanted; it will grow where it first rose from the earth. Another specialty is this: the *Avatar* has no affinity or attachment in Its career to members of the family wherein it appeared. Unlike the appearances as Rama, Krishna, etc., where the life was played out mostly among and for the family members, this *Avatar* is for the *bhaktas*, the *sadhus*, and the *sadhakas* (devotees, noble souls, and aspirants) only. It has no *japa* (recitation of holy name), *dhyana* (meditation), or *yoga* (practicing union with God). It knows no worship; It

will not pray to anything, for It is the highest. It only teaches you to worship and pray.

To a worldly man, a God-intoxicated person will appear mad and he will laugh at him for it. But to the God-intoxicated man, the worldly appear insane, foolish, misled, blind. Of all the insanities that harass man, God-madness is the least harmful, the most beneficial. The world has suffered untold damage due to its "mad" rulers and "mad" guides; but nothing but harmony, peace, brotherliness, and love have come out of the 'God-madness' of man!

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 1

With Love and Gratitude

Anush Mohan was a student from 2004-2009 in the Department of Management & Commerce at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Currently he is a Manager at Larsen & Toubro.

Excitement ran high amongst the *vanara* [monkeys] ranks. The Lord's work was at hand. The bridge to Lanka had to be built as soon as possible and they could not afford to waste any time. They threw into the sea whatever they could lay their hands on—tree trunks, rocks, boulders; even hills were uprooted for the purpose. On the shore a tiny squirrel was keenly watching all the action. All of a sudden, this little creature, too, felt a sudden urge to participate in the Lord's mission. He was aware that he was too small to be of any use. "I am too little," he thought to himself. "What will I be capable of doing amongst these gigantic monkeys?" Then, somewhere in his tiny little mind, an idea flashed. He rolled about in the sand, ran down to the bridge, shook off a few grains of sand, ran back to the shore, collected some more sand and deposited it on the bridge. The tiny squirrel repeated this ceaselessly, without any break. Some distance away, Lord Rama was seated in His tent watching the antics of this little squirrel.

Amplly pleased by its service, Lord Rama picked it up and lovingly caressed it. As a mark of Lord Rama's appreciation of this little squirrel, three golden streaks appeared along the squirrel's spine where the Lord's fingers had touched it. Even today squirrels bear the sign of God's appreciation on them in the form of the three stripes running across their back. When God Himself has shown so much of appreciation for a task that is so insignificant, how much of gratitude must we show the Lord for all that He has done for us? He has given us everything bountifully and made our lives peaceful and happy in His presence.

This is true of Swami's own students—whom He considers as His own property. To enumerate all that He Has done for us would be an impossible task. He has given us education of the highest standards free of cost, a spiritual foundation too strong to be shaken, and above all this, His physical proximity, which is the envy of gods, and His limitless love, which is unmatched in any way. To be with Him is what the *devas* and the *gandharvas* yearn for. We enjoy His presence day and night and drink the nectar of His love. Sages perform penance for thousands of years to earn His grace, and here He is showering it on us in abundance. What more can we ask for?



Bhagavan is like a potter who has shaped us with His own hands into beautiful pots from mere lumps of clay. It is time we offered our heartfelt gratitude to *Bhagavan* for having given us everything in life. What does our great Lord ask from us in return? The lines of a song drift into my mind—"All I want is your Love, my child, all I want is your faith. All I want is your Love in God, no matter what your faith. So says Baba, Sathya Sai Baba, Sathya Sai Baba, my Lord."

Love is all that He seeks. Is it too much to ask for? The word 'Love' reminds me of a touching incident, which according to me is the best example of gratitude. When preparations were being made to commence the construction of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences in Prasanthi Nilayam, *Bhagavan* was looking into every detail connected with the construction. During one *darshan* session, while

moving amongst the students He accepted a letter from a little boy. Clutching the letter in His hand, he went inside the interview room accompanied by some doctors.

He suddenly came out and beckoned that small boy. He asked him, "Should I read out aloud what you have written to me in this letter so that everyone can hear?" The little boy was hesitant for a while and then he replied, "Whatever You wish Bhagavan." Bhagavan then read out this boy's letter for everyone present to hear. The boy recounted in the letter how Bhagavan was providing free education to all His students and was now constructing a big hospital that would provide the most modern health care facilities to every section of the society totally free of cost. This little schoolboy prayed that he, too, wanted to be a part of Bhagavan's glorious mission. Yet, being a small boy from a middle-class family, he did not know how he could contribute to Bhagavan's work.

He mentioned in the letter that for the last three months he had been trying to save from the meagre amount his parents sent him every month. In order to do this, he had avoided giving any clothes to the washerman and had been washing his clothes himself every day. He had also resisted the temptation of chocolates and other delicacies so as to save some money. In all his innocence, this boy now wanted to offer a hundred rupees to Bhagavan. While he was ashamed that he could offer only such a small amount for this gigantic task, he prayed to Bhagavan to accept this offering saying that he would be the happiest child in the world if this money could be used to buy a small brick for the new hospital. So saying, he had enclosed a hundred rupee note with his letter.

There was a twinkle in Bhagavan's eyes when this letter was read out. Like a proud mother Bhagavan held the 100 rupee note in His hand and told the little boy, "My dear son, this is not a 100 rupee note for me. This note is worth much, much more than crores for me." It was not the amount that Bhagavan saw, but the feeling of love and gratitude that had poured forth from the innocent boy's heart. The Lord is '*bhaava priya*' and not '*baahya priya*'— [He] loves intent and not fear.

We must also make an effort to repay our debt to Bhagavan. The onus is upon us to participate in Bhagavan's mission and contribute our bit to it. Let our contribution be at least a few grains of sand like that of the small squirrel. Let us begin by pledging that we shall follow every word of Bhagavan and thereby offer our sincere love and gratitude to Him.

Source: *Sai Sparshan* (2005)

Let me Soar to Thee!

Thou art the essence of Love, O Lord;
I felt Thy Touch of Love; and the desert of my heart
Is now a lake of lotus blooms for Thee.

I felt the fragrant breath of Love in my soul
And, my blinded eyes turned within.
I saw a world of joy and love
A world made wise by Thy wisdom, a world of the Real.

Then, did I know what Love hath made of me,
Hath willed that I should be.
O Bestower of Love, Thou art in my heart
But, unknown till now,
Till by a touch of pain and misery
I struggled; and my hand brushed
Against Thy orange robe, Thy lotus Feet;
Thrilled and amazed, I looked into Thine eyes
And knew that Thou art, hast been,
Ever must be
In my heart, as Love. I know
Thy Love is ever flowing into me,
My hand ever receiving Thy Grace.

Let me have it, O Lord, forever,
Quaff of its nectar, till I burst with joy
And my life is molten gold.
Mounted on Love's white wings let me rise
And soar to Thee. O' Clothe me in Thy Truth, sublime!
Let me abide in its shade, till the end of Time

~V. Sathasivam, Colombo

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, March 1968

Continuing the Journey from Me to Myself

An IPS (Indian Police Service) officer of the 1996 batch, Ms. Charu Sinha served in different capacities in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Later, she also went on deputation to the U.N. Peace Keeping Mission in Kosovo for a year. After working as DIG (Deputy Inspector General of Police), Anantapur Range, for almost three years, she was posted as the Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission in Hyderabad (at the time of publishing of this article). In September 2020, she created history becoming the first woman IPS officer to take over as the Inspector General (IG) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for the Srinagar sector in Jammu and Kashmir, a highly critical position.

She came into the Sai fold in 1989 and since then it has been a story of the transformation Swami brings in each one of us, removing all that is less than divine in us. This is her second article on Radio Sai website. It is appropriately titled, "Continuing the Journey from Me to Myself", as the first article was called, "The Journey from Me to Myself", published in April 2006.

The dream DIG job

In April 2010 came the day I had been waiting for all my life. I was promoted and posted as DIG (Deputy Inspector General of Police), Anantapur Range! The next day I was asked not to join, as I was politically unacceptable! I prayed to Swami.

A few days later, one night at 10 I was told to join by 9 AM the next morning. I rushed and travelled by road the whole night and joined on April 28 at the appointed hour, and immediately after taking office, went in the evening to Puttaparthi for Swami's blessings. He took the flowers I offered and blessed me with *padanamaskar* saying, "Very happy, very happy". My dream of being posted in Anantapur had finally come true, but little



did I know that I had been called to witness one of the most important periods in spiritual history.

Then started a series of beautiful interactions and experiences with Swami. Every weekend after work and on every holiday I would go to Puttaparthi from Anantapur. I would wait outside His residence with my heart beating eagerly. And then the door would open and He would come out with a smile. Several times I would tell Him something or ask a particular thing or at other times just be in His presence.

Many days I would just watch Him interact with other Godselves (read 'people') and derive vicarious pleasure out of the opportunities with Him. I would look at every expression on His face, the way He would smile, acknowledge the devotees, talk to them softly, listen with full attention, the way like little children they would run up to Him when called, or wait for Him literally holding their breath, their reactions, their joy, their overwhelming tears, as if this was the day they had been waiting for all their lives. Each interaction would become a lifetime memory, which the Lord had gifted to them.

As days progressed, my spiritual learning, too, progressed through Swami and some of His old devotees. What is the mind, how does it control us, what are the games it plays, how does it create doubt and fear, how does it create lifetime after lifetime, what is the ego, what is the personality that I am, how the mind-body-personality-ego complex does not allow us to be our divine selves and what is the way out?—these questions were addressed by Swami.

The learning was beautiful, in perfect response to my yearning for the truth. But was I willing to practice this truth every day? Swami kept testing that again and again. And slowly I learnt the most beautiful truth that I am Swami and He is me; there is no separation. I was thrilled the day I learnt this. I was at the ashram and when I went for *darshan* I waited for Swami thinking, "Thank you Swami for giving me the most beautiful truth my soul has ever known", and then He came out for *darshan* and looking straight at me, nodded His head in acknowledgement and said 'YES!' Only He and I knew the secret of what was going on in my mind. It was our secret!

Swami always said that if we don't finish every interaction in love, we have to come back again lifetime after lifetime till we learn to finish in love. And the only thing that matters is—how much love we have shared with the whole of creation and not what and how much we have achieved and acquired in life. As a part of wrapping up all my relationships so that I don't have to come back again and again to finish them with the same people, I was trying to finish every relationship in love, mentally forgiving myself and others.

Once when Swami came out of His residence, I asked Him to help me finish an extremely difficult professional relationship, in love. And then since I asked for it, I had it! What followed was like a virtual bomb blast. The whole thing just ruptured.

It was probably the most difficult lesson I had to learn. But I did hold onto my lesson and practiced it fervently. Whether I got through or not, only He knows; but then, hasn't the Lord promised that we only need to make the effort and that He will take care of the results?

Several times He asked me about my parents. One other time He told me to come for *darshan* on a particular day. Once He even discussed the family problems of a home guard at home, a young widow, and gave *Vibhuti* [sacred ash] for her!

Whenever I went to Him with an issue about family or friends, before I even finished talking He would have the exact number of *Vibhuti* packets in His hands for the number of persons I spoke to Him about. Like a child, I wanted to and several times did discuss every issue that came up in my life and the people around me with my Swami. What a treat to have an issue and go run to the Lord to discuss it! Just being able to talk to the Lord about it was enough. Who was bothered about what ultimately happened! Everything I ever wanted to talk to Him about, share with Him or just tell Him, I was able to do in this period. I had the habit of getting angry very soon whenever I saw somebody indulge in wrongdoing, and in His own way Swami alerted me. Again, what a treat to have a personality quirk and have it corrected by the Lord!

The police wish Baba 'Happy Birthday'

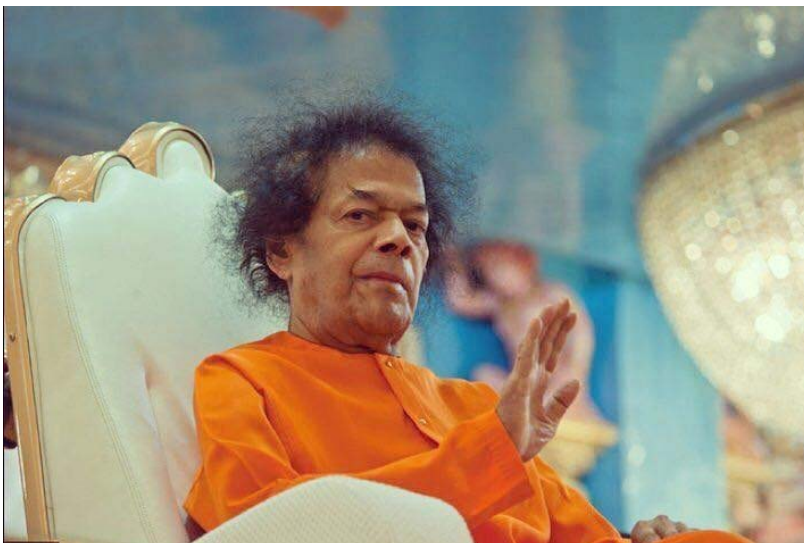


November 23, 2010, Swami's 85th birthday, was one of the grandest ever celebrated. Lakhs of people turned up. In the morning, with a few police officers I waited outside His residence. Swami came out and we were the first to wish Him a happy birthday. Along with several others, I was in front of His chariot leading the procession into the stadium. As soon as the crowd saw Swami, a huge cry rose and people started crying. They were in bliss just to be able to have His *darshan*. The celebrations went on for almost half a day. At the end, we ran back and reached His residence again, this time with a cake. He was gracious enough to cut it with a knife and we sang 'Happy Birthday' for Him!

The celebrations went on in the evening, too, with His schools, colleges, and university staff bringing cakes and the students' band playing. It was a feast for the heart and eyes too. After that every time He saw me, He would say softly, "Police?" In the evening while distributing sarees, He called me and gave me a beautiful saree and the next day another one for my mother, knowing she had been waiting for one too!

On March 19, 2011, on Holi [festival of colors] when I stood outside Swami's residence, it was with pink *gulaal* (powder). I had yearned to play Holi with my Swami, my Krishna. When He came out and I wished Him 'Happy Holi', He took the *gulaal* and put it on my forehead! He fulfilled even this little wish! That was my last physical *darshan* of my Lord. I was unaware of the events to follow that changed all our lives.

The cataclysmic period for every Sai devotee — March 27 to April 27, 2011, and the role of the police during this month



Then on March 27 He became unwell. The next day He was hospitalized in His super-specialty hospital. On April 2 we rushed to Puttaparthi on hearing that He was critical. Crowds had started gathering and were extremely agitated as they felt that no information was forthcoming from the *ashram* or the

hospital about His condition. The hospital was then requested by the district authorities to issue a bulletin on His condition every morning and evening. A team of doctors was sent by the government to review and monitor His condition and brief the press every day to quell all rumors and the panic welling up in the hearts of the

people who could not see their beloved Lord and did not know what was happening.

The role of the media during this entire drama was a classic example of the present trend in the country of how to suspect, cast aspersions, disrespect, pull down, and tear apart every model institution built by anyone. After a few days, the pot-shots began. Rumors were spread about those close to His physical form, who took care of His organization and Him—ranging from stealing, cheating, misappropriation, attempt to murder, to gold smuggling. The motives, sincerity, commitment, surrender, and love for Swami of the devotees in close proximity to Him were questioned. Character assassination became the order of the day. Any independent, clean, objective, and positive news reporting disappeared. All reporting ethics were thrown to the wind. Media unaccountability was at its peak. And the ones feeding the press were unfortunately devotees who did so for their own reasons, adding fuel to the raging fire.

The crowd, the chaos, and the unkind media

The media enjoyed ripping apart individuals and all the institutions established by Swami. Rumors were created out of nothing to keep an issue alive and to create doubts about the functioning of the institutions. And in doing so, each channel tried to beat the other, claiming to have found the real truth behind Swami's legacy. The whole world was watching the sickening drama.

Devotees were hurt at what was being portrayed, many withdrew, the fence sitters distanced themselves and the non-believers or critics simply said – “I told you so”. One particular news channel was being fed by a prominent devotee targeting another devotee, all in the name of a desire to bring out the truth, little realizing the enormous damage done. Swami used to say He was keeping the snakes under His feet, and now they had been unleashed onto the world!

One could see devotees in the grip of tremendous fear, shock, and insecurity, and the question that loomed large was—what would they do if He left? They felt lost, as if they had lost their anchor and did not know what to say or do. Many were depressed and all round there was sheer sadness, madness, and chaos. A huge pall of gloom had descended over the town and everywhere people were praying He would heal Himself and come back. We all wish that the Lord even in His physical body should be immortal and be around us, with us, all our lives, to take care of us! Oh selfish man!

Crowds kept swelling and we had to move in police forces from five districts of Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh, not knowing what to expect but desirous of being well prepared for any eventuality. Almost 5000 personnel were deployed to handle the crowds in a place with poor infrastructural facilities, with every likelihood of the crowds running out of patience, getting undisciplined, and unruly. The police were in a dilemma. Making arrangements for any kind of crowd management or

barricading was fueling rumors in the media about Swami's passing away and was likely to create unnecessary panic amongst the public, which was avoidable. And not making arrangements was making it difficult for us to handle the crowds. We had to be firm and strict yet kind.

One devotee in the hospital who brought flowers to offer to the deity at the hospital entrance, triggered rumors in the media that flowers had been ordered to lay at Swami's body and He had passed away. Every rumor would bring in more frantic crowds alleging that the hospital was hiding the truth. And on the administration lay the onerous task of dispelling all rumors, which they did as much as they possibly could, through regular press conferences. Every day was like baptism through fire and it brought a new challenge to deal with.

Meanwhile, the media kept whipping up passions against the *ashram* authorities whenever they got the chance, clearly playing certain people against each other. And the ones at the receiving end, keeping in mind Swami's teaching never to react to what others say, bravely practiced it, despite being under heavy fire and severe character assassination.

The Divine transition on that fateful day

In between all this were my visits to the ICU to see Swami, lying quietly amidst the chaos and the madness, even though He is omniscient and omnipresent. His condition, with all parameters relevant to the human body, was being monitored every second by the best team of doctors in the world. They were at the receiving end of allegations from the media and other devotees too—that they had not taken care of their beloved Swami, they had not done what they should have, that they were responsible for His condition, that they allowed things to get worse, that they did not force Swami to listen to them, etc. In spite of all the hurtful things said, impervious to all going on in the outside world, they went about doing their work with Swami in their hearts and mind, and His name on their lips. No wonder Swami had chosen them as a part of His mission. Their level of surrender, sincerity, commitment, and love for Swami is unparalleled.

Amidst all the drama, balance and control had to be maintained by the police and forces had to be gathered, deployed and commanded to handle the crowds correctly. We did what we had to do, quietly yet determinedly, in spite of resentment from the *ashram* authorities, who felt embarrassed and angry because of our presence in and around the *ashram*, which had hitherto never been allowed, little realizing that when the law takes its course, it spares no one and whatever was being done was in the interest of transparency and for the good of the *ashram*, which was the need of the hour.

Then on April 24 at 6.30 AM, I was informed that He was critical. Everyone knew what to expect. I rushed to the hospital immediately and saw a team of doctors around His bed, holding His hands and feet, chanting the *Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra*.

I joined in the chanting, standing at Swami's feet, bidding farewell to my Lord in my heart, thanking Him for giving me much more than I could have ever asked for and making me what I was. We did so till 7.40 AM. The monitor was showing Swami's heartbeats and blood pressure. From 80-120 the BP started dropping and at 7.40 AM at 15-15, the monitor went blank. Swami had actually left His physical body. The *Avatar* had left the earthly plane. The doctors who had been attending onto Him day and night just sat down, shocked, tired, shattered, and battered. There was complete silence in the ICU. After a few minutes a few people broke down, sobbing silently.

Now the news had to be released to the whole world. We had already alerted our forces and they were in place since morning. All barricading had been erected at jet speed within a couple of hours and all-important points like railway stations and bus stands at Puttaparthi and Dharmavaram and all roads were covered by the police, making all traffic and crowd management arrangements. No one knew what to expect. We only had to be prepared for every possible eventuality now. Logistical arrangements for the police personnel were worked out with the help of the *ashram* authorities. The press release was given an hour later. The news spread like wildfire.

It had been decided to have the *Samadhi* built at the place from where Swami would give *darshan* every day. The last rites were to be performed three days later, so that devotees had time to come and pay their last respects to Him.

For the embalming of the body that was done a few hours later, the police had to give permission. The local Deputy Superintendent of Police and Circle Inspector broke down crying while giving the permission, not having imagined in their wildest dreams that one day they will be giving permission for this. The Body had to be taken from the hospital first to the residence of Swami, through the crowds, before being taken to Sai Kulwant Hall. And this time I led the ambulance with Swami's body. What an irony, what a contrast! From leading Him in the chariot on His birthday a few months earlier to leading the ambulance with His body just five months later.

Devotees were shattered. They were not allowed near the hospital or on the roads but asked to go to the Sai Kulwant Hall in the *ashram* to pay their last respects to Him.

In the next three days, almost three lakh people came, pouring in from all over the country and the world, the young and the old alike. Some could not even walk but trudged with a walking stick all the way from almost five km away, where their vehicles were parked due to lack of parking spaces near the *ashram*. Local devotees had set up free food facilities for them. There was no place in Puttaparthi for people to even stay. So they would just come, have a glimpse of the Lord and leave immediately.

Everything I had learned professionally was put to test in this period. There was pressure from all sides. The media as usual preferred police bashing rather than appreciating the enormous task, creating false rumors every day that we were ruthless and had done *lathi charge*, etc. We still had to maintain our cool in spite of the unfair lashing we were being meted out. The subordinates had to be commanded, disciplined, controlled, and guided so as not to lose patience with the media and the grief-stricken crowds. Innumerable stampedes were avoided in these three days very quietly by the police, but it went totally unrecognized and unappreciated. Not a single policeman had time to rest; they were stretched mentally, emotionally, and physically to the utmost.

In one area where a stampede was avoided by the police very tactfully, after pushing and pulling the crowd and rescuing children and the elderly from getting suffocated, we were thoroughly tired. Then we heard the sweet voices of four little children chanting '*Sairam Sairam* ', having come to distribute water to the thirsty devotees! That sight was a feast to the eyes and brought a smile even on the faces of the tired and impatient devotees, waiting for their turn to rush inside the Sai Kulwant Hall. Apart from the devotees, every known VIP came to pay his/her last respects to Swami.

On April 27, 2011, after a grand performance of the last rites, Swami's body, which had been wrapped in the Indian National Flag as part of the state honors accorded to Him, was lowered into the *Samadhi*.



Feeling Him yet missing Him

Then began the struggle of moving from the form to the formless for every devotee—the journey within. Each devotee in his/her own way had to get used to the absence of His physical presence from all activities in the *ashram*, which had hitherto revolved only around Him. The habit of running to Him for everything, the dependence, the attachment had to stop. We all had to learn to go within, to hear Him and depend on the Him inside us.

Since childhood, I was always afraid of facing the day when I would lose my parents in their physical form to the phenomenon called death. But with Swami in the hospital for a whole month, watching as an observer the divine drama and the entire madness He had created and directed, remembering His words that all this is just an illusion, from somewhere deep inside I was very calm and unruffled, just watching silently the role everyone was playing, understanding that this was all just a drama, and my fear melted away. And when He left His physical form, I thought that when I could see my beloved Swami leave I could face anything in the world. This drama had put to test all that He had taught me spiritually, giving me strength beyond my own imagination. And this time I am sure I passed this test with flying colors.

When I started from Puttaparthi on the evening of April 27, to head back to my headquarters in Anantapur, someone mentioned that the children in the hostel were crying asking before whom they would stage their Sports Day the next year! Listening to that innocent cry, after 25 physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually grueling days, I broke down and cried because in spite of knowing the spiritual truth that He is in me, I knew I would still miss His physical presence, His smile, His hands, His feet; I would miss running to Him every time I wanted to have *darshan*, *sparshan* [touch], or *sambhashan* [speech], or every time I wanted to share something with Him; I knew I would miss His reactions, His expressions of love, and the sheer bliss of just being in His presence. I LOVE YOU SWAMI.

Source: Heart 2 Heart, Radio Sai
September 2013

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

Why Fear when I Am Here

Sai: Mr. 'X' is a great scholar with various degrees and a lifetime of *sadhana* in the Himalayas and elsewhere.

Hislop: I suppose degrees are O.K., but the only scholarship of interest to this individual is scholarship in Swami's teachings. It is like locating the greatest deposit of gold in the world. Why work at anything else?

Sai: The mention of gold is important. Deposits of gold are not limited to one place in the world, but gold is found only by certain individuals. God is not limited to one place only. He is everywhere and He may be found at any place by those who are pure of heart. And by that, I mean where there is love in the heart.

Hislop: No doubt gold is in every place, but great treasures of gold are seldom found. It is the same with great springs of water. In Baba, one finds the spring of divine sweetness.

Sai: Waters from springs are often impure. Pure water may be found by digging for it. One person may dig 100 feet and another person may find pure water at 40 feet or at 10 feet. It is the same in the spiritual life. The amount of work needed to find the divine sweetness depends on purity of heart.

Hislop: Is it only by the strength of one's love for God that he comes to union with God? Or are there other essential factors?

Sai: The most beneficial thing that can happen to a person is that he should draw God's love to himself. His love for God is of less importance because it is an imperfect mixture of divine and worldly love. The most important action whereby to gain God's love is righteousness, *dharma*. Spread out on a flat surface there may be gold, silver, copper, iron filings, diamonds, rubies, silks, and other things of value. But a magnet pays no attention to all the riches, it selects only the iron filings. It is the same with devotees. God does not select on the basis of wealth. He looks to the purity of heart.

Hislop: Swami speaks of 'facing' God. Please explain.

Sai: When two people face each other, each enters the eye of the other, and they are different only in name and form. Otherwise, they are the same. So, it is important to face God directly and be one with Him. That is why one naturally closes the eyes in a temple, so as to use the eye of wisdom instead of the physical eyes.

A Visitor: The word, '*sadhana*' is used in so many different places.

Sai: *Sadhana* is just replacement of the bad tendencies of the mind by the divine attributes of the *atma*. Mind has two principal bad characteristics: its tendency not to go straight, but to move obliquely; and its tendency to desire and grasp all objects that it sees. It is compared to the snake, which moves by twisting and bites all it sees. The mind must go straight to God by facing Him directly.

Hislop: Baba says, 'Why fear when I am here'. That must have a wide and deep meaning. Will Baba speak of it?

Sai: 'I am,' refers to the *atma*, who is always everywhere. The *atma* is like the lion, without fear. 'Fear' refers to the body, which is subject to worry, depression, trembling, fear. Body is like a sheep, wavering this way and that way. Body is always looking for information, gathering information, questioning. Whereas *atma*, like the lion, is full of courage and without fear. '*Atma*' is God. You are God. God is omnipresent. This 'I' is you. That 'I' is you. You are all.

A Visitor: What is '*Jnana*'?

Sai: *Jnana* is ordinary knowledge, knowledge about living in the world. Special knowledge is wisdom. Love is giving and forgiving. Selfishness is getting and forgetting. Love is expansion, and selfishness is contraction.

Thought of the MONTH

Two Types of Knowledge

Man is as a seed. The seed sprouts, becomes a sapling, grows into a tree, and fulfils its destiny, offering flowers and fruits to the world. So, too, man rises from childhood through adolescence into youth and middle age, and when fully grown up he has to justify himself by offering to the world the flowers and fruits of good thoughts and deeds, himself acquiring the fullness of wisdom. A bird has need of two wings; a cart must have two wheels. Without these, they are mortally handicapped. Man, too, must have two types of knowledge—to live on and to live for. The one helps him to eke out his livelihood and the other rewards him for having lived at all.

The one is called *jeevanopadhi* (the means of living), and the other, *jeevanaparamavadhi* (the goal of living). The one enables to us to garner the material riches which make our lives comfortable and safe; the other answers the questions that haunt us and pressurize us while we live—where have we come, to where are we proceeding, how did the

Universe originate, etc. No religion concerns itself with the first type of knowledge, they all are interested in stressing the second type only. Each of you have to pay attention to this second type even more than to the first, for it has beneficial impact on the first also.

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 13 (1975 – 77)

The scriptures also say that the *atman*, the Real Core of the individual, is *ananda swarupa* (the very embodiment of bliss). But man being blind to this truth, invites sorrow and anxiety to hold mastery over him and discards the joy that awaits him. Every man is a messenger to fellowmen, entrusted with the task of spreading knowledge of the joy that is being missed. If he misuses this mission and fritters away his years in gratifying his senses, he only loses the chance and reduces himself to the level of beasts. He who announced Himself as the Messenger of God, developed, through the blossoming of Divinity and the expansion of compassion and service in Him, to a stage when he declared Himself as the Son of God. And then, finally, He rose to the status of ‘I and my Father are One.’ When Jesus declares that He is the Son of God, He becomes entitled to the paternal Majesty and Power. These He can claim only when He grows in the qualities that His Father has. As a result he attains *sayujya* (mergence), which leads Him to assert, ‘I and my Father are one.’ The scriptures say, *Brahmavith Brahmaiva Bhavathi*—He who knows Brahman, becomes Brahman.

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 13 (1975 – 77)

Jesus passed through the entire process and inspired all mankind by His example and teachings, to be generous and kind, detached and discriminating, and to bring Light and Love to all. He attracted people by His miracles and transformed them into apostles and exemplary servants of man. You must realize that the Divine current that flows and functions in every living being is the One Universal Entity. When you desire to enter the Mansion of God, you are confronted by two closed doors—the desire to praise yourself and the desire to defame others. The doors are bolted by envy, and there is also the huge lock of egoism preventing entry. So if you are earnest, you have to resort to the key of *prema* (love) and open the lock; then remove the bolt and throw the doors wide open. The education must train you in the difficult operation.

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 13 (1975 – 77)

The sublime significance of higher learning (*vidya*) can be grasped by one or communicated to another only when the pure mind sheds its revealing light. Inside a room kept scrupulously clean, no snake, no scorpion, no poison-bearing insect can enter. They will be at home only in dark, dirty places. For the same reason, the sacred wisdom cannot enter dark and dirty hearts. Instead, poisonous breeds like anger will find those hearts to be congenial resorts.

Washing a lump of coal with soap and water won’t rid the coal of its color. Nor will washing it in milk help. The only way is to put it in a fire. That will turn it into a heap of white ash. Similarly, only gaining awareness of the *atma* (*atmajnana*)—in other words,

knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-vidya*)—will destroy the darkness of ignorance and the dirt of desire.

Darkness can be ended only with the help of light. Darkness cannot be overwhelmed by attacking it with more darkness. Spiritual knowledge (*vidya*) is the light that one needs to destroy the inner darkness. Spiritual learning provides the inner illumination. Spiritual wisdom is the authentic yoga of the Supreme Person (*Purushothama Yoga*) defined in the *Gita*; it is the knowledge of the Supreme, the higher learning (*vidya*). This yoga cannot be bought for money or acquired from friends or ordered from concerns or companies. It has to be assimilated and won by each one for oneself, through steady faith and ardent devotion.

Vidya Vahini

