

Devotion and Self-Sacrifice

*The world has had many great souls who sacrificed their lives for Truth.
Even now there are many who have given their lives for the good of others.
There are many who have not desired worldly pleasures even in their dreams.
But there are few who seek to know why this body has been given.
It has been given so that man may realize his true Self.
Heaven does not exist in some realm of the gods. It is in the world of humans.
With good qualities if one conducts himself righteously
Why seek heaven? This itself will be Heaven.*

Embodiments of Divine Love! Men make various attempts to understand everything in the world. But no one makes any effort to understand himself. An enormous amount of time is spent on understanding other things, but man cannot find the time to know himself. Whatever one's scholarship, intelligence, or position, he cannot have peace of mind and happiness if he does not know his real Self.

Narada, who had mastered the 64 sciences and arts, could not secure the supreme bliss that comes from peace of mind. Troubled by this *ashanti* (lack of peace), Narada approached the Sage Sanatkumara and asked him what the cause of his condition was. Sanatkumara asked Narada what his accomplishments were. Narada told the sage that he was proficient in all the *Vedas* and *Vedantas* and had mastered the 64 different sciences, including the training of elephants and the rearing of cows. Laughing within himself, Sanatkumara asked: "Are these your only accomplishments? Oh Narada, without knowing who you are, what is the use of knowing all other things?"

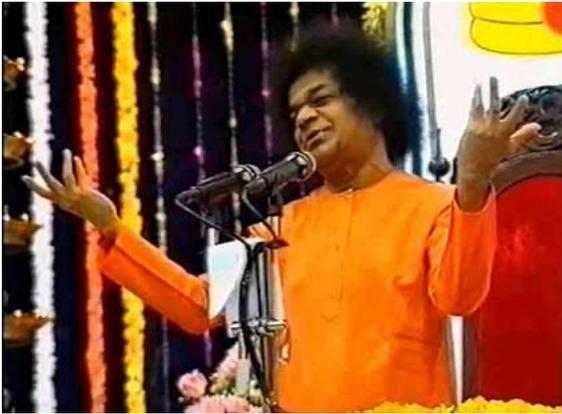
Narada, Brahma's mind-born son

Narada was no ordinary person. In His incarnation as Vamana, the dwarfish young Brahmin lad, Vishnu came to Emperor Bali and asked him the gift of three feet of land as measured by His feet. Bali agreed to make the gift. Vishnu (assuming His cosmic form) covered the whole earth by one step and the entire sky by another step. When Brahma recognized the sacred and puissant form assumed by Lord Vishnu, he wished to wash the feet of the Lord. To wash the foot of the Lord that was high up in the sky, a great amount of water was needed. To get that water, Brahma resolved in his mind how to go about it. At that very moment an individual appeared on the earth. Because he was the result of a thought in Brahma's mind, he is known as "*Brahma-maanasa putra*" (Brahma's mind-born son). He had come to provide

water. Because he brought water, he got the name "Narada" (the one who provided water). Narada was thus born during the time of Emperor Bali. Even though he was the mind-born son of Brahma Himself, he had no peace of mind.

The reason for mankind's loss of peace

What was the cause of Narada's loss of peace? Narada used to ceaselessly chant Vishnu's name. He had no worldly desires of any kind. Brahma, who had created Narada for the purpose of propagation of devotion in the world and promoting good qualities among mankind, urged Narada to get married. Narada asked: "I am perpetually in a state of bliss chanting the name of Hari. What need is there for me to get into this bondage? Revered father! I am ready to carry out any of your injunctions, but I cannot agree to get involved in the bondage of family life." How is it possible for Brahma to attain the status of *Pitaamaha* (grandfather) if the son refused to obey the father's command and agree to marriage?



The human predicament is like this situation. Men claim that God is everything for them, but they are not ready to abide by God's injunctions. And that accounts for their lack of peace. For a man who is immersed in worldly life, the chanting of God's name is undoubtedly a good medicine. But along with the medicine he must adhere to *pathyam* (the prescribed diet regulations). God's injunctions are the diet rules. Today's man, if he takes the medicine, he ignores the diet regulations. If he adheres to the prescribed diet, he ignores the medicine. And that is why man is afflicted with the disease of peacelessness. In this context, God is the medicine and God's command is the prescribed diet. Devotion to God without observing the Divine injunctions destroys peace of mind.

If Narada, despite his chanting of the Lord's name, suffered from lack of peace, it was because of a curse pronounced by Brahma. Brahma declared: "As you are not obeying my command, I declare that henceforth you shall have no peace." Sanatkumara, therefore, advised Narada: "As long as you have not known who you really are, you cannot get real peace, despite all your scholarship and all your pious actions."

"Know your true Self"

Man embarks on various kinds of *sadhanas* to achieve *mukti* (liberation). Seeking liberation, even if man worships three crores of gods he will not get it as long as he does not know who he is. When man destroys his ego and sense of I-ness, what need is there for liberation?

He becomes liberation itself

Sanatkumara told Narada: "All the scriptures you study will enable you to earn a livelihood but will not confer peace or liberation. They may secure for you name and fame, power and pelf, but not *mukti* (liberation)."

The scriptures are like a dense jungle of words. These words are capable of different interpretations. It is not easy to determine definitely which are the correct meanings. A man who has lost his way in a forest cannot easily reach his destination. Merely by conning the scriptures the heart cannot be purified. (In this connection, Bhagavan sang the opening stanza of "Bhaja Govindam.") Worship of Govinda is the only way to save oneself at the time of death, when verbal scholarship will be of no avail.

Develop *tripti* and spirit of *tyaga*

In ancient times, people used to revere elders, purify their hearts by getting rid of selfishness, seek the guidance and blessings of saintly teachers and put into practice their teachings. With the passage of time over the centuries men tended to grow increasingly selfish and self-centered. Men steeped in selfish pursuits could find no time or occasion for revering elders. Even if by chance they happened to meet some wise elders, they paid no heed to the advice of the elders. The result is that men today have lost mental peace, though they have progressed in many fields. How can there be any happiness without peace?

Today there is no limit to human desires. For the disease of insatiable desires, the remedy is *tripti* (contentment). Without contentment man can have no happiness. Along with contentment the spirit of *tyaga* (sacrifice) has to be developed. What we are witnessing today is a limitless growth of wants without any concern for reducing them.

This growth of desires was described by Adi Sankara as "*trishna*" (thirst). Drinking water quenches thirst for a time, but the thirst arises again. Likewise, as long as life lasts, the thirst (for material pleasures) lasts, though it may be quenched from time to time. This thirst is a strong kind of fetters. Its strength does not diminish but grows from day to day. Iron chains will rust in course of time, but the chains of desire grow stronger every day. Therefore, Shankara declared: "The desire for more and more wealth is dangerous. Cultivate the good sense to give up your desires. Wealth is the result of past deeds. Therefore, be content with what you have." (Swami recited a Telugu poem). The *Vedas* have taught that immortality can be attained only through sacrifice and not through rituals, progeny, or wealth. Great men who have made supreme sacrifices and taught to mankind *tyaga* (sacrifice) itself as *yoga* have been born in Bharat time and again over many *yugas* (eons).

Emperor Bali and Shukracharya

Although his preceptor Shukracharya appealed to Bali repeatedly not to make the promised gift of land to Vamana, the Emperor declared he was determined to make the gift. Shukracharya upbraided Bali: "The young Brahmin is no ordinary person.

He is Lord Narayana Himself. You have ventured to offer a gift to him. What an ignoramus you are! How foolish of you!"

Rejoicing at the *guru's* rebuke, Emperor Bali said: "*Guruji!* The seeker of the gift is Lord Narayana. When the hand that blesses the universe, the hand that holds out the promise of freedom from fear to everyone, the hand that bears the Sri Chakra in its palm, is stretched out toward me with the *dehi* (appeal) for a gift, what greater good fortune can I have? The hand that seeks is underneath and my hand, that of the giver, is above it. How fortunate I am! When I am blessed in this fashion, you are coming in my way by your plea. I am not prepared to obey you." Saying this, Emperor Bali went ahead with the gift.

Which man can have such a sacred and precious opportunity? There are indeed several kinds of gifts that are commended: gift of land, of gold, of food, of houses, clothes, and so on. It is not any of these that Bali offered as gift. He offered himself as gift. He did not give any material gifts. He gave himself completely. This is true *arpitham* (offering to the Divine). By this offering, Vishnu and Emperor Bali became one.

Sacrifice—true and false

Samartha Ramdas and Saint Tulsidas have declared that whoever comes in the way, whether he is the preceptor, father, mother, or anybody else, when a sacred offering is to be made to God, he should not be obeyed come what may. While making the offering, Emperor Bali said: "Oh Lord! I am offering to you the heart that you gave to me. I offer to you all my wealth, my kith and kin, and everything else. Protect me, who has surrendered to you.

It is because such supremely self-sacrificing great men have existed in Bharat from times immemorial that Bharat has shone as a *Tyaga Bhoomi* (the land of Sacrifice), *Yoga Bhoomi* (the land of Yoga), and *Karma Bhoomi* (the land of sacred deeds). Today sacrifice and charity have become a fashionable pastime. It has also been turned into a business. If a trivial donation is made, it must be blazoned in the press! In the old days, the great souls and rulers who gave away kingdoms and all their possessions indulged in no fanfare, but experienced the bliss of giving in their hearts. Those great souls totally ignored those who came in the way of their acts of sacrifice.

Examples of Meera and Karna

After her marriage with Rana Kumarabhoja, Meera was given many facilities by the Rana for her worship of Krishna. Unfortunately, the Rana was killed in battle when Babar invaded his kingdom. Meera was left helpless. Her brother-in-law, Rathnasimha, ascended the throne. He harassed Meera in many ways. He hid snakes in the clothes sent to her. He mixed poison in the milk or water given to her. The people, incensed at the cruelties inflicted on Meera, rose against Rathnasimha and killed him. His younger brother, Vikramsimha, succeeded to the throne. He placed

every conceivable obstacle in the way of Meera visiting her Krishna *mandir* [temple]. She was denied all help.

In this situation, Meera sent a long letter to Tulsidas. She asked: "What is my duty? In my present plight, should I leave my home? Should I safeguard the reputation of my family, or merge in my Lord who is the breath of my life?" Tulsidas sent her the following reply: "Meera! Whoever comes between the devotee and God—whether he is the father, the mother, friend, husband or wife, or *guru*—should be given up. God is the eternal protector before birth and after death. To realize the eternal and ever-present Lord, one should be prepared to ignore the objections of transient persons." Thereupon, Meera decided to give up everything and went forth, singing *bhajans* all the way to Dwaraka (the abode of the Lord). Many heroic men and women have been born in Bharat in the past who have been prepared, for the sake of God, to give up father, mother, husband, wife, or all their possessions. Take the example of Karna. He was one who had been blessed by the Sun-God. Even as Bali went ahead with his gift to Vamana despite the strong plea of his preceptor, Shukracharya, Karna discarded the warnings of the Sun-God and parted with his ear ornaments and his armor (to Indra).

Even ordinary people in *Bharat* are filled with the spirit of sacrifice. Here is the example of Tanaji. All was set for his wedding. He was seated on the ceremonial seat. News came that invaders had entered the country. He got up in his sacred yellow wedding dress. He went straight to the battlefield, vanquished the enemy and lost his life in the battle.

It is only when the life of Bali is seen from the perspective of sacrifice for the Lord that its full meaning will be apparent. It should not be regarded simply as an instance of a gift being made to Vishnu when He came in the form of *Vamana*.

Welcome tests as aids to advancement

Hiranyakashipu was the avowed enemy of Hari. His son Prahlada was a devotee of Hari. Prahlada's son Virochana was a wicked person. Bali was the son of Virochana. Bali was the very reverse of his father. Prahlada and Bali were great devotees of the Lord. It is such devotees who must face severe ordeals. Those who are not devotees do not go through such tests. You may think that this is a welcome prospect. But it is only the one who is tested that secures promotion. The sooner a boy completes various examinations, the sooner he goes up in studies. The boy who does not sit for any examination stays put in the same class. It is those who get through tests, who rise to great heights. Hence, you must welcome tests as aids to advancement.

Emperor Bali was prepared to make any sacrifice to attain God. He was a lover of his subjects. During his reign, the people experienced no hardships. Bali considered the welfare of his subjects as his own realm. Kerala was a land of prosperity, flowing with milk and honey. Even today Kerala is endowed with Nature's bounty. But unfortunately, forgetting the legacy of the ancient sages and rulers, people have gone astray in later times.

The remarkable devotion of Keralites

When Bali was about to leave the earth, he gave a pledge to the people, who were in deep distress, that once a year he would appear before them and bless them. This day of Bali's appearance is celebrated as *Onam*. This sacred day is observed as a festive occasion on which the people wear new clothes, prepare feasts and after offering the food to God, partake of it, remembering the great sacrifice of Emperor Bali.

Onam means that which is new. It may refer to new clothes, new thoughts, or new actions. Old clothes and old ideas have to be cast off. Good thoughts must be developed. This is the sacred festival observed every year by the people of Kerala. It is a supremely sacred day for them. When thousands of Keralites celebrate this festival here, far away from their hearths and homes, it should be noted that they are the only people from any region who are celebrating their traditional festival here in this manner. People from no other state in India do such a thing. It is their great good fortune that they observe this sacred day here in this manner. It is a fine example of devotion. What a supreme mark of devotion is this when they celebrate their festival here away from homes! If they had stayed in their homes, they would be preparing a variety of sweet dishes and varied eatables using coconuts and bananas. The fact that they have denied themselves all these and gladly subjected themselves to various inconveniences here, living in sheds, bears testimony to their deep devotion to Swami.

Hoping that the people of Kerala will ceaselessly develop their devotion and sanctify the entire State of Kerala by their exemplary life, I bless all of them and bring my discourse to a close.

Divine discourse on the Onam festival, 3-9-1990

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 23

You cannot sit back and expect the Incarnation to bring peace and joy into you. The incarnation comes to warn, to guide, to awaken, to lay down the path, and shed the light of Love on it. But man must listen, learn and obey with hope and faith.

~Baba

POETRY



He is Ours

"Is he real?" I wondered.
"Or is he a farce?"
"Is he another—trying to
usurp the place of Jesus
In men's hearts?"

"Shall I go, God?
Shall I go?"
I prayed.

"I hope he's for real
but I'm afraid!"

The years passed—
and then, one day, it came.
"Go".
Even then, I really did not know!

The day I was to see him—
No sense of delight.
I went
But wasn't prepared
for his sight,

A flood inside broke
and tears gushed—
"He Is the CHRIST!"
To Him my heart rushed.

He is ours—and, we are His.
Thank God—that is who SAI
BABA IS!

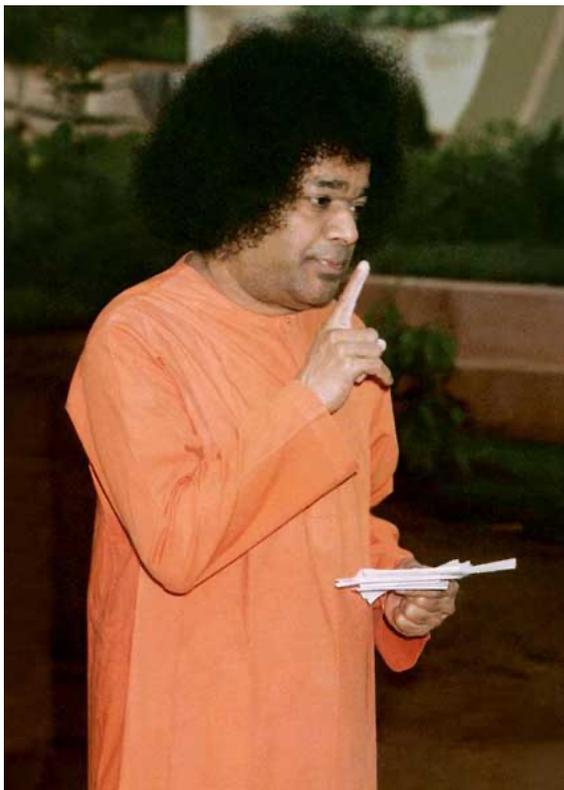
~June Schuyler

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1970

On the Day Sri Ramana Maharshi Attained *Samadhi*

On April 14, 1950, an extraordinary event took place at Puttaparthi.

Sri Varadu, a devotee, reports:



'The night Sri Ramana Maharshi passed away in Thiruvannamalai, Baba went into a trance at around 9 pm. He went into a trance quite suddenly and threatened to fall. We, another devotee Sri Krishna and I, held out our hands to support Him. Baba lay prostrate on our hands when suddenly His body rose up in air from our arms. He was as stiff as a board, and He was murmuring "*Maharshi has reached Me.*" Later, the sole of His right foot split open and nearly two kilograms of sweet smelling Vibhuti gushed forth. While we collected the Vibhuti, Baba was still levitating. After a while He descended and returned to His normal self. He then informed us that Sri Ramana Maharshi had merged in Him. The news of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Samadhi appeared in the newspapers the next day. The time mentioned was the same as that of Baba's trance.'

Source: *Sri Sathya Sai Digvijiyam*, Part 1

Someone came to Ramana Maharshi and asked him thus, "Swami! I have been doing intense Dhyana for the last 18 years; but I have failed to realise the Ideal on which my *Dhyana* is concentrated. How many more years should I continue thus?" Ramana answered, "It is not a question of a certain number of years. You have to continue *Dhyana* until the awareness that you are doing *Dhyana* disappears. Forget the ego; let it melt and merge, with all its layers of consciousness".

Source: "Follow His Footprints", *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Volume 05
January 29, 1965, Prasanthi Nilayam

Origin, Purpose, and Meaning

Baba often refers to the apparent mystery of the Divine Being. No logical process can ever reveal this mystery even partially. Intuition and grace are most essential. During His own mission as an *avatar* Baba has demonstrated on innumerable occasions this mystery of the Godhead. He works in a mysterious way “His wonders to perform”.

His Grace comes to us only when we ardently pine for it, often in a most unexpected way. How and in what manner this grace descends on us is difficult to describe. But there it is when we most need it, unmistakably and clearly. It comes as an anodyne to the bleeding heart to soothe and tranquillize, as a flash of understanding to one who has lost His way in the dreary desert-sand of frustration or ignorance, as a bright ray of hope to one who is filled with despair and broken in spirit, as a rush of the cool waters of *ananda* [joy] flooding and revivifying the wasteland of sorrow.



This is the central mystery of the Supreme Being. Yet Baba assures us that this mystery need not worry us. Once He said: “Why do you worry about God’s mystery? Your business is to try to bring Him close to your heart and install Him there. But remember to keep this abode of God, your heart and mind, clean and pure.” To the pure in heart, the gate of Heaven is always open. God is unattainable only to those who have no faith. But to those who deserve His Grace, he is so close, so intimate, so accessible.

Mere effort without inner purity is of no use. It is more important to have inner faith than to toil endlessly in outward ritual and worship. Yet *sadhana* [spiritual discipline] is necessary. Meditation (*dhyana*) and *namasmarana* [repeating the name of the Lord] help us to focus the mind on God. They serve as an inner discipline, a means

to strengthen the spirit. But to get lost in these outward rituals and do nothing to serve the world and our fellow creatures is only colossal self-deception. This is the real *maya*, according to Baba.

To liberate ourselves from this is to undergo a radical transformation. That which is the core of our being—our real self—is more important than the outward “show” we put on. We are constantly in need of this inner realization so as to become “whole” men and women, rather than live as “divided” beings. A person who is fully integrated, whose thoughts, words and deeds are fully in harmony, is a happy

person. He suffers from no doubt or hesitation. Right action becomes natural to Him. The Lord's exhortation to Arjuna in the *Gita* was a call to this inner harmony or integrity. The essence of the *Gita* really consists in propounding the technique of this inner "wholeness". *Moha* [attachment] is *maya* [illusion]. Arjuna's redemption was really redemption from this "*moha*" that broke up and shattered His inner being reducing Him to a creature frightened at His own self.

Baba is often impatient with those who blame God for their difficulties and sorrows. How often has Baba declared that the Supreme Being is a being of love and compassion! Sorrows and failures arise, not because of God's anger, but because of our own actions. Man is free in nothing more than in the field of action. In one of the most thrilling discourses delivered by Baba during the recent Dasara festivities, He said: "*Do not blame God for your ills. Thank Him that He still responds to your prayer in mercy and compassion. Otherwise, the burden and pain you must bear will be unendurable. You are the architects of your own lives in a true sense. You are no doubt baffled at the apparent injustice of things. But God knows more than you do. His vision ranges over the unlimited expanse of eternity—past, present, future. He can mitigate and often destroy the evil that one has accumulated through one's recurring births. His grace can tear off the web of karma [action] into shreds. Man's greatest duty is to earn this grace by true bhakti [devotion] and service to one's fellow creatures.*"

In other words, it is only through real *bhakti* that the *karmic* bondage can be torn asunder. It is not God that fails man, but we who disown Him in our pride. When we are pure in heart, God accepts us. The key to *mukti* [liberation] is with us. For man is a self-directed being capable of infinite self-development. He can attain self-realization. Only man can create values and attain inner transformation. This is the true meaning of life that it gives us endless scope for God attainment.

~H. S. R

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, July 1965

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The Supreme Benediction

POETRY



We waited, hushed and expectant,
Our eyes rivetted on the portico beyond the gates.
The trees spread shade
On a thousand yearning hearts.
We knew our Lord was here,
Within those walls, so near
And yet so far.

Suddenly Baba is before us
Time stands still; He comes nearer.
Infinite compassion rains from His eyes
Infinite love pours from His smile...
We drown blissfully in this flood of Grace.
Breathless we gaze, adore
And quench our thirst
For the Supreme Benediction
Of Baba's *darshan*.

Fellow-pilgrim! Even as you gaze at Him
And His timeless face, under the mop of hair
With its awesome majesty of a thundercloud.....
Realize that you are face-to-face
With the Formless One, the Eternal One,
The One without Attributes, who has now taken
A Form and a Name, to re-establish *dharma*
And dissolve the giant agony of man.

Realize again when you touch His Feet
That your fingers hold for a fleeting second
The Ultimate Sanctuary sought by sages and saints
The Abode of all *atmas* [soul], the Seat of *mukti*
And the manifest Portals of *moksha* [liberation].
Recognize, therefore, in your yearning for His Feet
Your soul's homesickness.

Darshan is over; we begin to disperse.
The trees spread shade now
On a thousand brimming hearts.
A hum of talk rises with the dust.
Hush! Let us ponder over this Vision of Glory.....
Do we deserve so much?
O Bhagavan! O Sri Parthi Nilaya! O Sai Guru!
Help us become worthy of your Grace.

~D. Narender

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Sept.1965

“Swami, please speak to me...”

Dr. Sunder Iyer, a Doctoral Research Scholar & Former Faculty, Department of Commerce, at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus shares one of his beautiful experiences with Bhagavan.

*“GOD is more truly imagined than expressed, and
He exists more truly than is imagined.”*

- Anonymous

Sometimes, when I begin to write about someone whom I love, great and beautiful feelings arise in my heart. However, when it comes to confining these emotions to a limited set of alphabets and words, found in a few pages of dictionaries... that becomes an impossible task. Hence on occasions when I speak or write about our Lord, I always resort to an easier means. In other words, one's feelings and one's relationship with his God has always been personal, and such experiences can never be revealed. But then there are always the Divine manifestations of the Lord that are perhaps the fruits of such intimate relations that can be shared. When the Lord lets the devotees experience His majestic omniscience and omnipotence, then it becomes a *Leela* [Divine play]. And it is these *Leelas* that have been a perennial source of faith and inspiration to all those who have sought shelter at His Lotus Feet.

I open the worn-out pages of my old dairies, and I dig into them to find out which of these experiences I can share with you. I cannot help but feel...

*What intimate hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still.
But they have left an aching void,
That world can never fill.*

February 21st, 1981... and my hand stops. As I go through this page, my mind races back through the corridors of time, and I find myself seated in the first line in the evening time, and Swami finishing His usual *darshan* has just taken some devotees for an interview.

It so happened that during those times I had just ventured into the *Yoga* path and the initial enthusiasm was in its full swing. *Yogasanas*, breathing exercises, postures, various practices and all such matters occupied the place of prime importance among my thoughts. Often I would indulge in fantasy... roaming in the Himalayas clad in a loin cloth perhaps... or lying next to a snow leopard... performing austerities. But as it happens to most of us, these ideas remained and vaporized within the realm of fantasy, for I soon found that somehow the monthly special lunch bell had the power to penetrate through the deepest of my *Samadhis* and I would invariably be the first in the line, waiting at the dining hall.

But, nevertheless, in the years that followed I have kept on, and despite all my shortcomings, Sai has always seen me through these. The experience I am going to relate is of my one such occasion, when He let out His hand for me to grasp, as if saying, *“Come on, you have a long way to go.”*

*And I am a seasoned seed
From Your own stores
My growing up, therefore,
Is Your responsibility.*

Swami had come a few days earlier to our hostel and pleased us with His Divine discourse. One of the points that caught my attention was that of the chanting of ‘*Soham*’ Mantra. Swami explained and demonstrated how this sacred Mantra can be chanted through regulation of breath. Immediately, resolutions were passed in mind (which is not a very uncommon feature for those of my category) and I decided to practice it for the rest of my life.



Three days had passed and I diligently practiced this mantra [formula] as and when possible. As each day had passed and as evening drew near, my heart would bloom with expectancy, perhaps Swami would acknowledge my ‘sincere’ practice, speak a word to me, or give me a *Namaskar*. The first day passed without even as so much of a glance, but I was not deterred. I went on more firmly. But, somehow, when on the second day Swami passed by me without as so much of a glance, my spirits were down in the dumps. Nevertheless, a ray of hope still hung in the frail cobwebs of mind, for the next day our class was going first in the line.

So, the evening of this third day found me sitting in the first line in the portico. The sun was just setting for his nightly intermission, and even as his golden rays bathed all of us not merely in light, but also in quite uncomfortable warmth, my mind was going on *“Soham... Soham...”*

Finally, the door opened and the usual hush passed over the atmosphere. All attention was on the door, expectancy accompanied by eager eyes and prayerful hands. My already upright position became more upright as He came closer. *“Swami”*, my mind uttered softly but in all vanity. *“Swami, here I am looking at You... speak to me.”* Swami passed by me, spoke to a boy next to me, smiled, patted him, and went on.

He finished His usual round of *darshan* and came back. By then, the portico was full of devotees who had been chosen for interview. I knew now that the probability was nil. As He passed by me once again, the soft uttering of my mind now gave way to ferocious yelling (fortunately all this was within). "Swami," I screamed within my mind, "I have done what You advised, for three days now, and there has been no response from You." But He heard me not and the few more seconds that passed were filled with an unforgettable war between prayer and despair.

As leisurely as ever, Swami motioned the devotees inside, and with a last look that went above my head, a smile to my partner. He closed the door and the floodgates holding my tears opened. My upright position now became low, and I was busy fighting my tears lest somebody should see.

*Most of the shadows of life are
caused by standing in one's own sunshine.*

All my hopes were shattered; the fruit that my ego so eagerly sought was now beyond my reach. Even the innermost hidden desire to tell my friends how Swami had responded to my spiritual *sadhana* lay bare. I was thus vainly trying to hide the nakedness of my spirit in a few drops of tears, perhaps those of anguish, humility, and repentance.

It is not a matter of respect or otherwise that He is called the God of Love. It is an experience of everybody who knows Him, who has been with Him, and who has tasted His nectarine Love. Hardly a few minutes had passed, when Swami opened the interview room door and came out. He was standing right in front, with His back toward me, watching the ladies go in. My mind was calm by then, and drying up my tears, I let out my hand to touch His Lotus Feet. And then it happened.

When He was about to go, Swami turned toward me, He had probably materialized some *Vibhuti* [sacred ash] inside, so His fingertips were still full of them. Within a flash of a second, He took a step, and as I looked up at Him, His beautiful face broke into a smile. Eyes pouring out Love, He looked into me, and saying, "Pichi (mad)?" He let His thumb press my forehead (the place between the eyebrows) and rubbed in the *Vibhuti* that was still there.

*No soul can forever be banned,
Eternally bereft,
Whosoever falls from God's right hand,
Is caught into the left.*

The page in the diary ends here, and as I slowly close it, I make up my mind.

~Dr. Sunder Iyer

Source: *Sai Nandana* 1985 (60th Birthday Issue)

Thought of the MONTH

Society Is the Reflection of the God You Adore

Wherever men gather with a purpose into a society, there you perceive the Divine, the *sat, chit, and ananda* (being, awareness, and bliss)! A personality has arisen; a clearer flash of reason is evident; a deeper joy fills the hearts. Immerse yourselves in them. This is real spiritual endeavor; not pining in solitude or reveling in the breaking of bonds with others of your kind, priding on your independence! Be with others, in others, for others. Be with all, for all, and in all.

But, nevertheless, be unattached, be the unfailing source of Love. Therein lies success in spiritual endeavor, the triumph of spiritual discipline. Thus is the Sai in you manifested; thus is the world fostered; Sai within; thus is the heart purified enough to install. There are questions raised: Of what relation is society and social ties with spirit and its glory? Of what relation is the spirit and its glory with society and its tangles and trickeries? Such questions arise from erring minds.

Spiritual endeavor must aim at individual illumination, social betterment and the divinization of the human community. This is extremely urgent and essential. While in society, the divinity inherent in man can blossom more quickly, more widely, more fragrantly. You recognize the world, but not God who is immanent in it! So, too, you see the individual but not the corpus that is immanent in society.

All beings form the Universal Body of One God. Of course, society is not another concrete composite collective body! It is the expansion and expression of the Divine in each of its components, denotable, and enjoyable as One. Society is the awareness of this cognizable Divinity. So, the one should not flee from the many; the individual is not harmed by society. The one should rather see the many in a new light—the light that reveals that society is but God, who activates and prompts the composite whole. The one is rendered fuller by association with the many: he gains by losing himself in the many!

All men are kith and kin, one family, one aspiration, one attempt at one acquisition. They are all equally Divine, all form the Universal Body of the One God. All are heirs to the *ananda* that this awareness can give. Of course, society does not happen when people gather by chance or get together with no common goal of good. The many-faceted skills and intelligence that are contributed by the many must flow pure and clear, untarnished by egoistic desires, along the channel of the spirit; then they will feed the roots of truth and goodness; they will ensure peace, for, all ideas of high and low will disappear. This is the criterion for a stable, strong, sweet society, not mere numbers. Be conscious of the God in each and in all; then inner equality will impress

each so indelibly that the awareness will stay undisturbed. *Shanti* (Peace) will reign in each and all.

Understand the *atma* or God that is your core; that will establish *shanti* in you, and you can share that *shanti* with others. What can you give others if your hearts are empty?

Feel that you are a true limb of society. Do you intend to be in society? Do you crave to serve it and be served by it? Then seek the God in all; see the same in all. Yearn to worship that God by selfless service. That alone makes you a true limb of society.

If you feel separate, distinct, outside and beyond society, you will run after name and fame, you will be enslaved by hate and partiality and ruined in the end. So, ease out those evil attitudes; feel that you are giving society what is its due, offering God His own gift of skill and intelligence. Vow to serve, to dedicate. Cultivate Love; society is the reflection of the God you adore, the God whose nature is *ananda*. Transform yourself into Love and become *ananda*. Adore society as the Divine Body; that is the truth, the eternal vision.

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

Those who wish to serve society in the true spirit and experience the joy therefrom should go into society with dedication. They must undertake service activities according to their capacity and competence and should not overstretch themselves. They should not get involved in fundraising. Money is the cause of many differences and conflicts. Concentrate on service. There will be no lack of funds for any good cause. There are enough people in the Sai organization with resources. There is none poorer than the person who will not use his money for good purposes. Such men are a pitiable lot.

~ *Sri Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol 20 (1987)

