

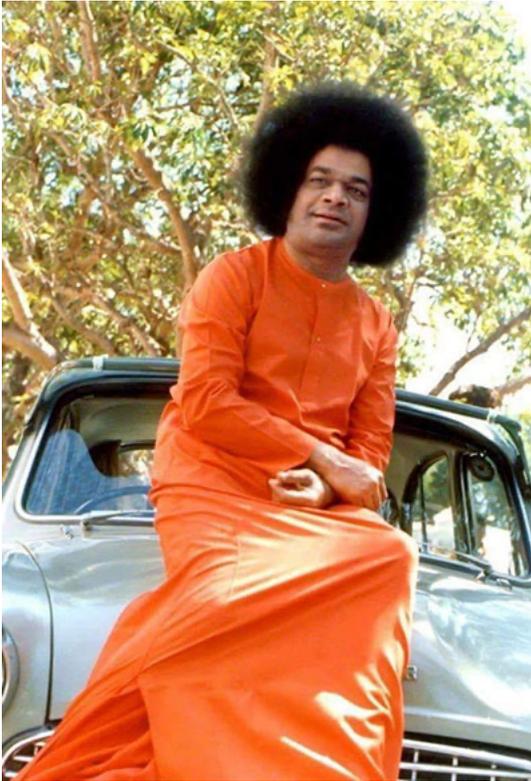
"The Most Precious Period"

"Dedicate yourselves to the cultivation of good qualities, righteous action, and develop that pure devotion that will redeem your life," observed Bhagavan Baba in an exhortation to students on Sankranti day (January 13, 1984) at the Poornachandra Auditorium. As the day marked the conclusion of the Sports Festival in the Sathya Sai Institute, Bhagavan called upon the students to look upon life itself as a battle between the forces of good and evil and to regard the years between 16 and 30 as the best period for utilizing all their faculties and powers to cultivate virtues and lead exemplary lives.

In one's life, the years 16 to 30 are the most precious. This is the period when all of one's faculties and energies are at their peak. Hence, one should strive to make the best use of this period. Noble qualities like self-confidence, sacrifice, aspiration, and courage must be acquired then. If this time of one's life is wasted, there will only be failures in later years. Bad thoughts, bad practices, and backbiting should be eschewed altogether. During this crucial period, one should try to understand the purpose of life and concentrate one's efforts on achieving one's ideals. No spiritual effort is possible when one has dissipated one's physical and mental abilities. It is a pity that young people misuse these precious years of their lives by falling into bad ways. Swami expects them to develop all their human endowments and lead exemplary lives that will be an object lesson to others.

What we witness today in the world, however, is a great deal of play-acting. All appear as devotees, and all proclaim their spirit of sacrifice. Everyone declares himself or herself as a *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant). Every believer claims that he is seeking God. One must enquire whether it is the so-called devotee who is seeking God or whether it is God who is searching for a true devotee. Is the *sadhaka* serving God or is God serving the *sadhaka*?—that is the question. The service that the *sadhaka* is doing is trivial.

Offering to God what God has provided is like offering to the Ganga water from the Ganga [River Ganges]. The truth is that it is God who is rendering service to the devotee. All the capacities given by God should be used in the service of the Divine. There is no need to go in quest of God. God is all the time searching for the genuine and steadfast devotee. The *sadhaka* is approaching God for the fulfillment of his desires. He is after petty and transient benefits. He does not seek to understand the nature of true love or the Divinity that underlies everything. Today's *sadhaka* proves himself to be a self-deluded being with no moral commitment.



Three most important human values

The real criterion of moral conduct is harmony between one's profession and one's practice. Morality consists in acting up to the rules of fight conduct prescribed by society at a particular time and place for an individual or group. If there is no connection between what one professes in words and his actions, morality cannot exist.

Of all human values, three are most important. The foremost is love of God. Where there is love there is sacrifice. There arises purity of heart. There should be a fusion of love, sacrifice, and purity. They are not mere human qualities. They constitute vital organs of a human being. They are as essential for a human being as the head, hands, and legs for the body. Without these attributes, no one is a complete human being.

Just as the Sun can be seen only by its own light, the love of the Divine can be acquired only by Divine Grace and not by trivial spiritual practices. These *sadhanas* (spiritual practices) are invariably motivated by selfish objectives. There is an element of selfishness in every service that man undertakes. All undertakings are tainted by egoism or the acquisitive urge. Only when the *sadhaka's* heart is filled with the Divine will he be able to entertain pure and sacred love.

Time is all-powerful, not subject to anyone

Students must bear in mind that their life is determined by their actions, whether they are good or bad. The other determining factor is time. Time is all-powerful. It is not subject to anyone. All are subject to it. It rolls on without beginning or end. Rama's exile, Ravana's death, Emperor Bali's descent to the nether world, Sibi's supreme sacrifice, the ordeals of the Pandavas are all examples of the power of time over the destinies of men. It is only when one's actions are harmonized with the dictates of time can one enjoy the type of bliss described as *trupti* [satiated, satisfied].

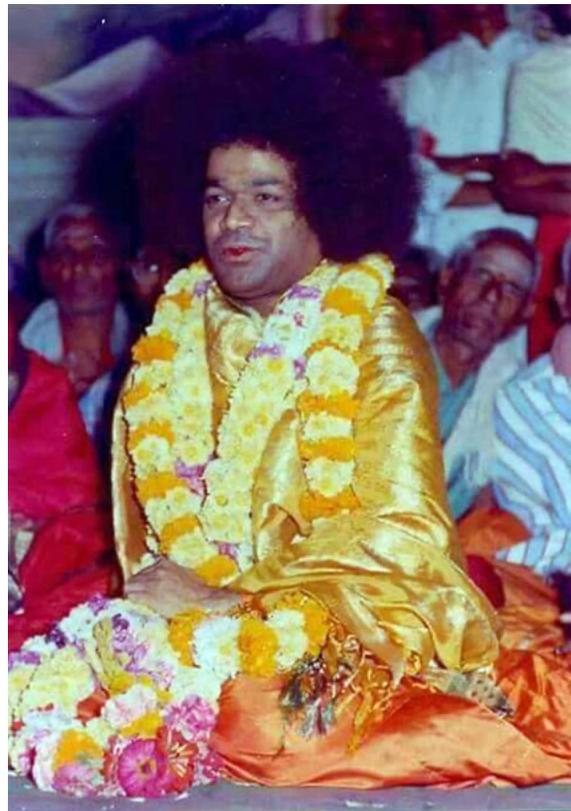
For this the proper control of the mind, which is the cause of both happiness and sorrow, is necessary. This control cannot be achieved by merely reading the scriptures or practicing certain rituals. Mere scholarship or the acquisition of knowledge about the external world will not lead to internal peace. If one is engaged

all the time in the acquisition of information, when is he to undertake the task of transformation?

Mahabharata war is the game of life you play

The games you play may be compared to the *Mahabharata* [war between Pandavas and Kauravas]. On one side were ranged the forces of evil, the Kauravas, and on the other the powers of good, the Pandavas. They played the game of life with the empire as the football. Till the end of the battle, Lord Krishna was the sole chief for the righteous Pandavas. The wicked Kauravas lost their commanders one after the other in the battle. The Pandavas, who had completely surrendered to Krishna, achieved ultimate victory. The contest could be described as one between the evil qualities of desire, hatred, envy, pride, etc. on the one side and good qualities like truth, virtue, tranquility, nonviolence, and love on the other. The body is the battlefield. The captain of one team is the embodiment of good qualities. The captain of the other is the embodiment of mundane desires. There can only be defeat for those who adhere to ever-changing worldly desires. Only those who attach themselves to the unchanging eternal Divine can hope for enduring success in life.

Gandhari, the wife of Dhritarashtra and mother of the Kauravas, and Shakuni, were children of the same mother. Gandhari was like a vessel of nectar. Shakuni was a very clever man, but full of poison. Acting on the advice of Shakuni, the Kauravas lost their kingdom and everything else. No one should feel proud about his cleverness or intelligence or about his ability to win laurels in studies. Good character and right thinking are more valuable than scholastic achievements or intellectual abilities. Utilize your intelligence and thoughts for achieving the bliss that comes from leading a life of righteousness and goodness. Enter on a life dedicated to ideals.



Devotion is the cord that binds God

Today is called *Sankranthi*, the day when the Sun starts on its northward journey by entering the *Makara* sign of the Zodiac. *Samyak Kranthi iti Sankranthi* (change for the good is *Sankranthi*). We must transform ourselves completely. *Sankranthi* reveals not only the beauty of Nature but the resplendent beauty of the Divine. The Divine will not consider your status or position, your pomp and show. It is beyond the reach of knowledge and intelligence. It can be secured only by *Prema* (pure love). The Lord is bound only by the intensity of the *bhakta's* (devotee's) devotion.

Devotion is the cord that binds God. *Bhajans* (group singing of devotional songs) and prayers should not emanate only from the lips. They should flow from the heart. The Ganges of true devotion arises from the devotee's heart. Everything that is associated with Divinity has its origin in the heart. Hence the heart should be emptied of all evil and kept pure and unsullied by right action.

It may not be possible to escape the consequences of one's good and bad actions. But even a mountain of sin can be wiped out by winning the Grace of the Divine. Hence one should strive to earn the love of God, which is all embracing and all powerful. From this *Sankranthi* day, dedicate yourselves to the cultivation of good qualities and righteous action and develop the pure devotion that will redeem your life. This is my message and my benediction for you.

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 17

Education is now sought after more for securing a means of livelihood. The attempt of many parents and their children is to learn some skill that will give them a good job in a factory or business establishment or bank on a decent salary. Of course, man must live, and live comfortably. So, it is necessary that some useful skill is mastered. But man needs things much more satisfying, much more essential, than comfort. He must have faith in himself, so that he may respect himself. This atmavishwasah (trust in the Self) lies at the very root of joy.

~Sri Sathya Sai

“The Ten Commandments”

The following are the Ten Commandments inscribed below the figures of the *Dasavataras* [ten primary *avatars* of Vishnu] at Dharmakshetra, Bombay.

Matsya: Recover the treasure of wisdom from the deluge of doubt.

Kurma: Live unattached as master of here and hereafter.

Varaha: Carry the burden of duty on two tusks: Devotion and Discipline.

Narasimha: Do not allow your ego to hide the glory of God.

Vamana: Offer yourself at His feet and gain the feet of the Lord.

Parashurama: Learn the lesson of surrender or suffer.

Rama: What one meets in life is Destiny;
how one meets life is self-effort.

Krishna: Strive to become an instrument
in my hands.

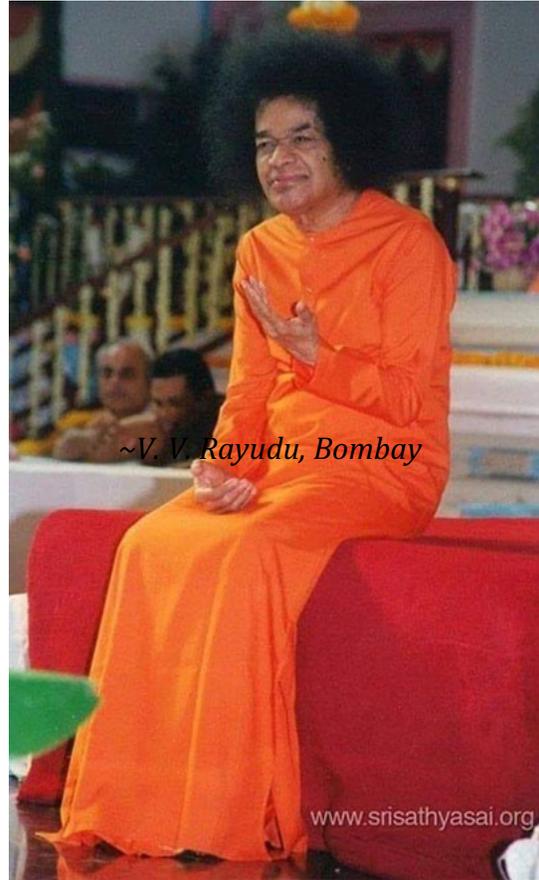
Buddha: Perfect yourself so that you may
aid others to perfect themselves.

Kalki: Build the mansion of Life on Truth,
Morality, Peace, and Love.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Feb 1984

Three disciplines are essential to become aware of Divinity in all and in the Avatar: No activity should be taken up with individual aggrandizement in view; intellect and emotion must be directed to the revelation of the resident in the heart, Atma; every act should be done sincerely, with love, and no yearning for acquiring personal profit, fame, or benefit. Above all, listen to the voice of God within. As soon as one contemplates a wrong act, the voice warns, protests, and advises giving up. It pictures the shame that must be suffered, the punishment that has to be faced, the disgrace that it entails. It would appear as if there are two personalities inside you, the one that prompts and the one that prevents. The warning signal, the timely advice, is given by jangam [parts of the body] in the angam [body]. It reminds you of the absurdity and the danger inherent in the identification of the self with the body, it encourages you to discriminate between right and wrong; it is God, enthroned in every heart as the highest wisdom, the Prajnana, the Eternal Witness, whom you can contact easily in the depths of dhyana [meditation].

~Baba



~V. V. Rayudu, Bombay

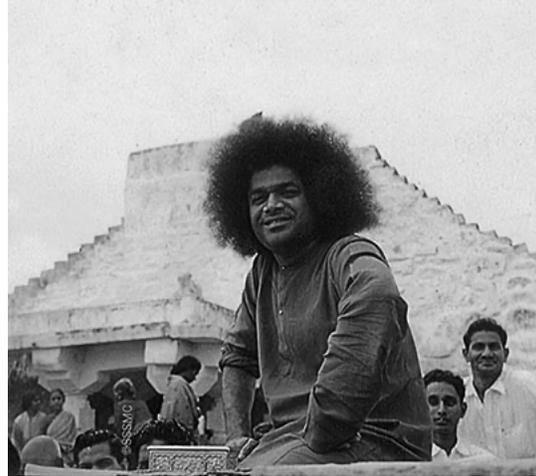
He at the Helm

It was exactly one year ago that the sequence of events became even remotely perceivable. Swami Paramahansa Muktananda of Ganeshpuri was scheduled to arrive in Hawaii on the return portion of his American tour. With the multitude of hotel accommodations available and the innumerable homes that abound the slopes

of Honolulu, it was a little surprising when Baba Muktananda accepted the invitation to stay in the `shell' of our new home, still very much under construction!

The invitation had been extended significantly, seemingly on impulse, partially based on Irene's steadfast devotion to Baba Muktananda as her *Guru* (even though she had never met him) and partly on my reluctance to have anyone, including the illustrious personage of a Holy Man, to intrude into my life and the small flat we were then renting.

All doubts and hesitations associated with meeting a `realized being' for the first time welled up. How should I act? Will he see through me? The expectation of his arrival was fraught with discomfort. But from the instant of his arrival, Swami warmed our hearts. With affectionate smiles and embraces, he melted away the walls of resistance. With his discourses he removed doubts, and with firm mandates he instilled discipline. The *darshans* [sight of a holy man] he held and the *shakti* [power] of his presence permeated the atmosphere with *prema* [love] and *shanti* [peace].



Physically, it has changed the `outcome' of the house itself! Aspects of finish—design were obviated and the building took on an air of simplicity and informality quite unintended initially. More importantly, the visit initiated a change in our lives, which at that moment we could little comprehend.

In quick sequence, other Swamis travelling through Hawaii further graced the home with *bhajans* and discourses. Swami Satchidananda of the Integral Yoga Society accepted an invitation, again seemingly offered on impulse, and added his grace and his lessons to the house. The `net' was closing in on us; but we had yet to understand its basic implications!

Then Indra Devi, beloved *Mataji*, on a brief stop-over from India to Tecate (Mexico), delivered to a small gathering at the "Church of the Cross-Roads" a testament in words and a film of her love for her Bhagavan, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We had decided to attend the lecture simply because the name `Sai Baba' denoted yet another *Guru*. The culmination of that evening left us with a sense of amazement at what we had seen and heard, but with a knowledge that this Baba was something quite different from all that we had previously encountered or read about. This was an *Avatar* [incarnation]; of this we were sure!

The following day *Mataji* arrived at the house quite unexpected, and with more words of reverence for Sai Baba, she related the *leelas* [Divine plays] of Baba and the

supreme love he bore toward his devotees. Books followed *Mataji*; we were inundated with tapes of *bhajans* recorded at Prasanthi Nilayam, and more printed material. The waves of Sai Baba rolled over us and washed us until it was all that we could contain within us the need to travel to India; but this was yet to be.

Numerous attempts were made, all meeting with obstructions. Some seven months later, all conditions jelled—visas, passports, finance—and we journeyed via Australia to India! Though all this took place, it must be said that the impetus of Baba's calling us and all that had transpired during the past year remained vague in our minds...

We arrived in Madras, and after a three-hour lay-over boarded a DC-3 for Bangalore, arriving at 10'00 in the evening. The next morning, a call was placed to our only contact in India, Mr. K. Bhirumal, a devotee of Baba. He recommended that we journey immediately to Whitefield. Another taxi and then the pure delight of watching Baba grace the rows of 'royal poincianas', lined thick with devotees.

Upon reminiscing on our impressions later, we were struck with the feeling of complete familiarity that Baba imparts to even those seeing him for the first time! The figure, replete with silken dress, the gentle smile, and of course, the halo of hair were exactly as we had known it would be. We handed over a letter that *Mataji* had given us, somewhat awkwardly and in full awe. Baba commented, "Mexico! Indra Devi!" and passed on. Word came soon after, that we were to follow Him! Baba had blessed us with an interview; the total time that had elapsed since our arrival in India was 18 hours!

The little Interview Room was crowded, and Baba launched into a general discourse with specific comments directed toward some, but seemingly applicable to all. Then... the Individual Session, in which he quickly cut into the secret depths of one's own being, the problems of health, the previous meetings (!) where he had contacted (!) Irene via a dream, and the specifics of that dream and another (!), the difficulties of individual *sadhana*, the particular desire of each of us and our internal turmoil. *Vibhuti*, sacred ash, was manifested. All this... quickly, naturally, and spontaneously delivered and conferred with a love and understanding that rendered new meaning to those old words.

Here was a *Confidante*, *Guide*, *Doctor*, *Friend*, *Father*, *Mother*, and *GOD* all rolled into *ONE*! Here was the culmination of those past events within this lifetime and all the previous ones, Manifest, All Knowing, before us!

It would be naive to say that either one of us can, even in a small measure, understand the Divine nature of Baba's Calling, much less understand Baba Himself. It is readily perceptible, however, that the culmination of events leading to our arrival in Puttaparthi is in reality a point of conscious embarkation, (in essence, a New Birth), knowing that Baba is at the helm.

Ours, of course, is hardly a unique story. There were no spectacular occurrences; there were no manifest *leelas*. Yet, all this is all His *leela*. Each one called to Prasanthi Nilayam comes on a wave of 'seeming circumstance'. Names, times, places, and events vary from person to person; but the story remains ever the same—the directional moment toward Baba is unmistakable and constant. As has been stated to us, the subtleties of man's ascent toward God pale and wane when compared to the subtleties of God's descent to man. Bhagavan's Call is the subtlest of subtleties; but come we must when call beckons! There are no accidents, no circumstantial happenings. But how it is all integrated, how it is all fits together, is best understood by Baba Himself.

Once touched by Baba, once the bond is established, we can only venerate Him, prostrate before His Loving Grace and tireless generosity, and pray that He will continue to bestow His multitudinous Blessings and unerring control over all aspects of our existence and *sadhana*. By His Grace and His Grace alone we are here. *Jai Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sai Ram Sai Ram Sai Ram.*

~Steve W. G. Au, Honolulu; Hawaii
Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, March 1975

The game of life is worth playing and becomes an interesting tonic only when there are bounds for field and rules and restrictions for the players. Imagine a game of football or cricket where there are no rules or boundaries or umpires. The game will be chaotic; it will soon degenerate into a riot, a free fight. Dharma is what makes the game of life interesting, decent, and desirable.

~Baba

Never Alone

In me, outside me,
around me
through me
the Divine exists
to rule me

I'm never alone
the King is on the throne
to rule me

Life's little moments of
victory and defeat



Leave me with thoughts
of only the feat
as I have succeeded
as I have failed
as I have learned
destiny's tale

The heart murmurs near
the thoughts I hold dear
I'm never alone
You are here
You sharpen my skills
You brighten my mind
You delight my senses
everything is Divine
and I see You in everything I do,
You are the fuel
You are the fire
You are the energy
that drives me much higher
beyond the dawn
of Light

I'm never alone,
You are in me
for eternity
guiding me through
leading me true,
to essence sublime
and my divinity
How could it be
You without me
in this place
in all its waste
Never alone
always with You
senses in bliss
just enjoying this.

—Douglas J. Mahr

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, July 1978

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

From Shirdi to Puttaparthi - Part 1

(The Shirdi Sai Story as narrated by Sri Sathya Sai)

You may not know that Anjali Devi (famous Telugu film actress, who directed the well-known tele-serial entitled 'Shirdi Sai-Parthi Sai: Divya Katha'—The Divine Life Story of Shri Shirdi Sai Baba and Shri Parthi Sai Baba. All references to the 'film' in this Discourse are references to this tele-serial) has acted in 570 films. Finally, she had only one aspiration. She wanted to produce a film depicting the life of Swami. She wanted to enact the role of the mother of Shirdi Sai Baba—Devagiramma, and she also wanted to play the role of Easwaramma (Swami's mother) and find fulfillment in her life. She brought the director, the singers, and all the people to Swami, and I spoke to them and cleared their doubts.

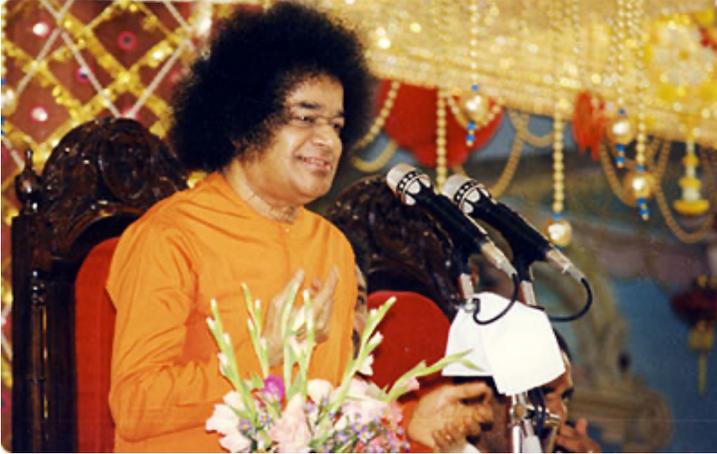
Two Forms—Same Divinity

In the life of Shirdi Baba no one knows when and where He was born, who His parents were, and how He came to Shirdi. He came to Shirdi in the year 1854. At that time, He was only 16 years old. So, he was born in 1838 in the village called Pathri in the district of Ahmednagar in Maharashtra. It was a very small village. In that village, great devotees and Niyogi Brahmins were there. A couple called Gangabhava and Devagiramma were living there. Devagiramma was always thinking of Parvati. Gangabhava would always think of Eshwara. They had wealth but did not have children. Because of this, they were thinking of God all the time. On the 14th day of the bright half of *Ashadha* [fourth month of the Lunar year] month, the moon would rise at 7:30 in the night. At that time, information came that the river Godavari was overflowing. Godavari takes its birth in a place called Nasik in Maharashtra and it was overflowing. Gangabhava had a job of helping people cross the river by boat. On hearing this Gangabhava gathered a few people and ran there so that he could anchor his boat properly. If it was delayed, then all the boats would be swept away by the river. He told his wife and went off after 3 o'clock.

Devagiramma was waiting for her husband to come back. They had a verandah in the house. At 7:30 p.m., she heard a knock on the door. Thinking it to be her husband she ran and opened the door. But there was an old man who entered there. He said, "Amma, I am very hungry. Can you please give me some food?" Their nature and tradition was to help, respect, and serve their guests. She thought she will forgo her food for her husband and offer the remaining food to this person. She gave him a leaf and in that she served the food. The old man ate the food and washed his hands. She told him, "You stay in the corridor; I will close the door of the house." She closed the door.

But after five minutes he again knocked on the door. He said, "Amma, you have given me food to fill my stomach, but I am not able to sleep. Some lady should massage my legs." Devagiramma was shocked on hearing this. She thought very intensely if the Goddess was testing her. "What kind of an old man is he that he is demanding a lady

to massage his legs and feet,” she thought. She went into the worship room and spoke to the Goddess, “Mother of the Universe, why are You testing me like this? Can You test me like this? It is not right for You to test me. You must help me pass this test.” There was no other lady present.



In that village there were some ladies who would do this kind of work. She offered them a lot of money to come and do this job. She said, “A man has come and he wants someone to massage his legs. Please come and help.” Everybody said that they didn’t have time on that day. She came back home in despair. She didn’t speak to the old man. She went

directly to the prayer room, closed the doors, and went on praying intensely to Mother Parvati. She prayed with a pure heart. She prayed that the old man should not be disappointed and that her pledge should not be broken. She asked for protection from the Goddess, “You should not disappoint me. I must fulfill his desire. I also must protect my oath. I have decided that my duty is to serve only the husband. That oath should not be broken.”

When she turned to go, she heard that somebody was knocking on the back door of the house. She opened the back door. There was a lady there. She said, “Amma, you called me in the evening but then I didn’t have time. Now I have time. I will do whatever work you ask me to do.” Through this one can know the power of prayer and its rewards. Devagiriamma was very happy that Goddess Parvati had answered her prayers and saved her honor. She opened the front door and sent this lady to serve the old man. The old man and the lady looked at each other. The old man was none other than Lord Eshwara Himself, and the lady was Mother Parvati Herself. They understood the situation and knocked on the door again.

They manifested in their true form of Eshwara and Parvati. Devagiriamma opened the door and on seeing the Divine couple could not bear the joy and fell at the feet of Parvati. Goddess Parvati then said, “I am pleased with your devotion. Today I give you the boon of one son who will redeem your lineage and a daughter who you can give to another person in marriage (*kanyadana*).” She not only fell at Goddess Parvati’s feet but also at the feet of Lord Eshwara. Lord Eshwara then said, “Amma, I came only to test you. Hearing your prayer, Parvati has come here. You have passed the test. I will be born as your third child.” As soon as Lord Eshwara said this, both of them disappeared. No one was there. There was nobody there with whom she could share her feelings.

She was sitting in the prayer room and waiting for her husband. Her husband did not come that night at all. Next morning, she had a bath and did her prayers and was waiting for him. Whole night he was awake and now he was tired and he entered the house. She could not withhold her joy and told him whatever happened the previous night. He said, "I cannot hear what you are saying. I have got a headache. I will take a bath and sleep." He took his bath and slept. At 10 o'clock he got up. She served him food and fanned him and went on narrating the previous night's incident. "Last night both Parvati and Parameshwara appeared before me. I saw them clearly and they spoke to me. I had all the three—their *darshan* (vision), their *sparshan* (touch), and their *sambhashan* (interaction)."

Gangabhava cast it aside saying it was only her illusion. "Maybe you had a dream last night. How can Parvati and Parameshwara come?", he said. He had a doubt whether Parvati and Parameshwara had really come the previous night. Then he thought, "Let me know the boons that were granted by them. Then I can believe it." Men may have devotion, but their faith is shaky. They don't believe it so easily. Ladies have devotion and deep faith.

Source: Then at Shirdi, now at Parthi, Discourse 13, My Dear Students Vol. 3, March 16, 1998; Discourse at Trayee Brindavan

The Smile on Moulmein Road

Singapore's skyline glittered like a field of stars as Meera stepped out of her CBD [Central Business District] office, exhausted from another day of deadlines. She wasn't opposed to faith; she simply found no time for it. Life was busy enough.

She hailed a taxi.

The driver was an elderly Chinese man with a storyteller's calm voice. As they drove toward Mandalay Road, the city noise softened. The taxi slowed on *Moulmein Road*, where three places stood like guardians of different prayers:

- *Satya Sai Baba Mandir*
- *A small Chinese temple in the center*
- *A quiet church beside it*

The lanterns of the Chinese temple flickered like tiny hearts between the two larger sanctuaries.

The driver pointed to it.

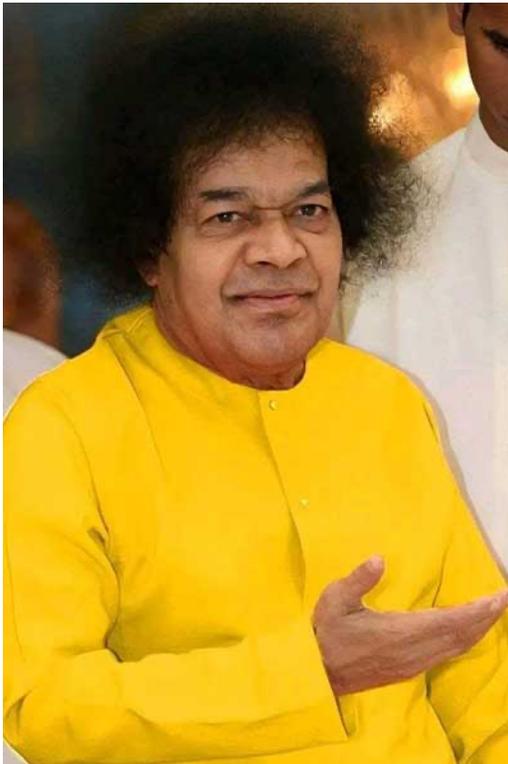
"Long ago, an old lady cleaned that temple," he began. "Very simple woman. Lived

with her daughter. Woke before sunrise to sweep every corner. People walked past like she was invisible. But she was always smiling.”

Meera raised an eyebrow. “What made her so happy?”

“Every morning,” he said, lowering his tone, “someone greeted her kindly. A man in *orange robes, with big hair and a glowing smile.*”

Meera leaned forward. “Someone from the Chinese temple?”



The driver smiled mysteriously.

“No. He came from next door—the Indian Mandir. She didn’t know his name. But he always said the same words: *‘Work is worship. Clean well. Every act is prayer.’* He gave her fruits every day. Such love in his voice! It made her broom feel like a sacred tool.”

The rain began to drizzle, temple lights gleaming like halos through the wet glass.

The driver continued:

“The lady once told me, ‘He makes me feel I’m serving God by sweeping the floor. He treats me as equal to anyone who prays. He always says, *‘Love All... Serve All.’*”

One day she suddenly fell sick. On her final night, she held her daughter’s hand and whispered just one request: *‘Tell the smiling man I cleaned well. I served with love.’*

After her passing, her daughter searched for him. She walked through the church courtyard... then stepped into the Satya Sai Mandir, heart trembling. She looked up at the wall.

And there He was.

The same hair, like a cloud of blessing.
The same robe, orange like a sunrise.
The same gentle, divine smile.

It was Sai Baba.

The man known by millions, who preached *Love All, Serve All...* had quietly visited a temple sweeper in Singapore simply to honor her sincerity. He recognized her service as prayer—even when no one else did.

Meera sat still. Not converted. Not suddenly devout. But awakened to a truth she had forgotten:

🌻 *Dignity is the highest worship.*
🌻 *Service is greater than ritual.*
🌻 *Love makes every task divine.*

The taxi stopped on Mandalay Road. Behind her, the Chinese temple glowed softly, the church bell chimed, and the Mandir lights seemed to shimmer in the mist—like the echo of a blessing that once said:

Love All. Serve All.
Work is Worship.

~ Meera, India

Thought of the MONTH

The Purity of Heart

No *sadhana* (spiritual practices) would help in realizing God if one is devoid of purity of the heart. The different kinds of *sadhana* like fasting, meditation, etc., would help to develop one's faith in the omnipresent God who, in fact, resides as the indweller in you. People generally think that God gave *darshan* (being in holy Presence) to such and such person. But the truth is God never gives *darshan* to people who have no purity of the heart. Hence, if you wish to have the *darshan* of God, you must develop purity of the heart. All kinds of *sadhana* are meant only to attain purity. The moment you attain purity of the heart, the omnipresent God will manifest right in front of you.

Unfortunately, today in the world there is a dearth of *gurus* who can firmly lead the seeker on the path of purity. They confine themselves to some mechanical techniques of meditation in exchange for money.

In fact, one does not need to undertake any complex system of meditation. One can undertake the simple *sadhana* of constant contemplation on the omnipresent God. Few teach such simple methods nowadays. People listen to and read about several

intriguing kinds of meditation and start a *sadhana* that catches their interest or imagination.

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 38, 2005

Whatever scriptures one may study, whatever *sadhanas* one may practice or pilgrimages one may make, unless one succeeds in getting rid of the impurities in the heart, life will remain worthless and meaningless. Purification of the heart is the essence of all scriptural teachings and the basic goal of life. In this context, the *Gita* refers to *swadharma* (duties that accord with one's nature) and *paradharma* (duties prescribed for others) and says that *swadharma* is conducive to the ennobling of the individual, while *paradharma* is fraught with fearful consequences. *Swadharmo nidhanam shreyah Paradharmo bhayavaha*—"Adhering to one's *dharma* is commendable, while practicing *paradharma* is full of dangers." *Swadharma* does not mean the *dharma* (duty) relating to any caste, community, race, or religion. *Swa* means *atma*. It is the *dharma* that is related to *atma*, that is *swadharma* (Divine duty). *Paradharma* is *dharma* related to the body consciousness. All duties associated with the external world are comprised in *paradharma*. These duties will inevitably involve one in the bonds of *Samsara* (worldly life). Though they may confer temporary pleasures, they are bound to result in fear and anxiety.

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 17, 1984

What is it that you should observe on this New Year Day? Many such days have come and gone. But how far has there been a transformation in the heart? Many years have come and gone. But your hearts remain unchanged. The first task is to purify the heart. You should not be content with celebrating the New Year as a festive occasion. To enjoy a feast, you do not need a New Year. The New Year should be marked not by a feast but by the awakening of new and pure thoughts in the heart. Of what use is it to be concerned only about eating from dawn to dusk?

What is the purpose of life? It is not eating, sleeping, and dying. You must control the senses and use them for sacred purposes. The power of the senses is derived from the Divine. The small human eye enables us to look at stars billions of miles away. Where is this power got? It is from the divine within you. Hence, everyone should always think of God, whatever one may do. Then one will be free from bad thoughts. Man must manifest his humanness by transcending the animal nature.

Realize your inherent divinity. Regard the whole world as your field of action. You have come as a pilgrim to this world of action. Ensure that your pilgrimage proceeds on right lines.

Source: Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.31, 1998