

Goodness is Godliness

As oil is present within sesame, as ghee is present within milk, as fragrance is present in flowers, as sweet juice is in fruits, as fire is latent in wood bundles, even so you must recognize the immanence of God in creation (prakriti).

The cosmic consciousness that pervades and illumines subtly the visible phenomenal universe is the Self (the Atma). The Lord pervades the cosmos like the thread that holds the garland together.

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Creation proclaims the *Easwara ichcha* (Will of the Lord). It is called *prakriti* (nature or creation). This means that the whole of creation is a manifestation of the Will of the Lord. Every being existing in creation has necessarily to bear the qualities of the Divine. Man has taken birth in this world to manifest the Will of the Divine. A seed sprouts into a plant and puts forth a flower. The plant and its different constituents like branches and leaves are all the basis for the blossoming of the flower. God is the seed for the whole of creation. God is present in every human being as a seed, which sprouts into a plant, develops leaves and branches in the form of *gunas* (qualities) and blossoms into the flower of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

For a seed to become a plant, earth and water are necessary. Likewise, for the divine seed in man to grow into a tree and blossom into the flower of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, it needs *bhakti* and *shraddha* (devotion and faith). Humanness does not consist merely in turning the mind toward God. The Divine must be experienced within him. The human estate is the manifestation of the infinite potential of the Divine. Man is the individualization of the infinite rays of the Divine. Not recognizing his divine essence man is wasting his life in the pursuit of transient and trivial pleasures.

What is spirituality? It is the resolute pursuit of cosmic consciousness. Spirituality aims at enabling man to manifest in all its fullness the divine *chaitanya* (cosmic consciousness) that is present within and outside him. It means getting rid of the animal nature in man and developing the divine tendencies in him. It means breaking down the barriers between God and Nature and establishing their essential oneness.

Goodness is a synonym for God

To realize such a state of divine consciousness, devotion is essential. Devotion aims at awakening consciousness of the *Easwara* (Divine) in man. All activity aimed at turning the mind toward God is a form of devotion. To think of God for attaining worldly desires and physical comforts is not devotion. To envisage and experience the Divine *Sat-Chit-Ananda* within him is the true mark of devotion.

Anil Kumar said in his speech that God does not dwell in some foreign place but resides within everyone. Because from ancient times man went after external material objects, he forgot the Eternal Divine Reality within him. Imprisoned within his qualities, man forgets the Divine. The one who is immersed in spirituality is indifferent to the *prakriti* (phenomenal world). Spiritual transformation calls for changing the mind from a prisoner of the three *gunas* (qualities) to one that is bound to God. You must acquire the firm conviction that the Divine is the basis and sustainer of the Universe. Goodness is a synonym for God. The power of the cosmic consciousness consists in making the good qualities manifest in a man.



Pure mind is the abode of the Lord

Almost everyone in the world is unaware of what is true spirituality or devotion. When one is submerged in worldly desires, how can he recognize the Divine? It is only by persistent effort that this can be done. One must endeavor to experience the presence of the Divine in every particle and at every moment. A devotee must regard a pure mind as the abode of the Lord. He must fill the mind with pure, sacred, and divine thoughts. Thereby he redeems his entire life. The *Chataka* [Jacobin cuckoo] bird endures many ordeals to secure unsullied raindrops from the clouds. The moment it espies a dark cloud in the sky, it embarks on its adventure. There is water aplenty on the earth in lakes, ponds, and rivers. But the *Chataka* bird has no use for these polluted waters. It waits for the pure raindrops in the month of *Kartik* [in Hindu Calendar, overlaps October & November] and does not seek any other water. It is undaunted by thunder and lightning. It seeks only the pure raindrops falling from the clouds, without fear or concern. It sings in joy as it drinks the raindrops.

The *Chataka* bird is an example of pure love. The true devotee should perform a similar penance (to realize God). He must have the same determination. He must go through similar ordeals to experience the ultimate ecstasy. He must not succumb to the wiles and attractions of the world.

Man is not merely a human but verily a God

The golden life of man should be tested on the touchstone of the Lord's name. Instead of following this easy path, man involves himself in multifarious troubles and wastes his precious life. Man is not merely a human. Verily he is God. He is submerging his inherent divinity in worldly desires. He should utilize the pure and sacred thoughts that arise in him to turn away from the transient attractions of the world and to set him on the path toward the Divine.

"Whether it is described as *Chaitanya* (Cosmic Consciousness), or the *Kshetrajna* (Knower of the field), or *Jnana* (Supreme Wisdom), or *ahamkara* (ego), or *Easwara* (the Supreme Lord), or Vishnu, or *Ananda* (Pure Bliss), or the *Paramapadam* (Supreme Abode), or *Prakriti* (Nature), or the *Aadi Sakthi* (Primal Energy)—all these are only different names given to the *Atma* (the Supreme Spirit). Originally It had no name." (Poem)

The effulgence of the *Atma* exceeds the splendor of a multi-faceted diamond. The diamond may have a myriad of facets, but it is one and the same. Likewise, the *Atma* radiates infinite number of rays, but is only One.

Man, today, is like a horseman riding two horses at the same time. He aspires for the Divine but also yearns for worldly pleasures. He forgets that the creator contains the creation. Forgetting this truth, he goes after the phenomenal world regarding it as different from the Divine. He is foolish like the man who cries for *ghee* [clarified butter] while having milk in his hand, not realizing that *ghee* is latent in the milk. Today's devotees study the Vedas and other scriptures as a ritual, but do not put into practice any of the injunctions contained in these.

Scriptures are guides for practical living

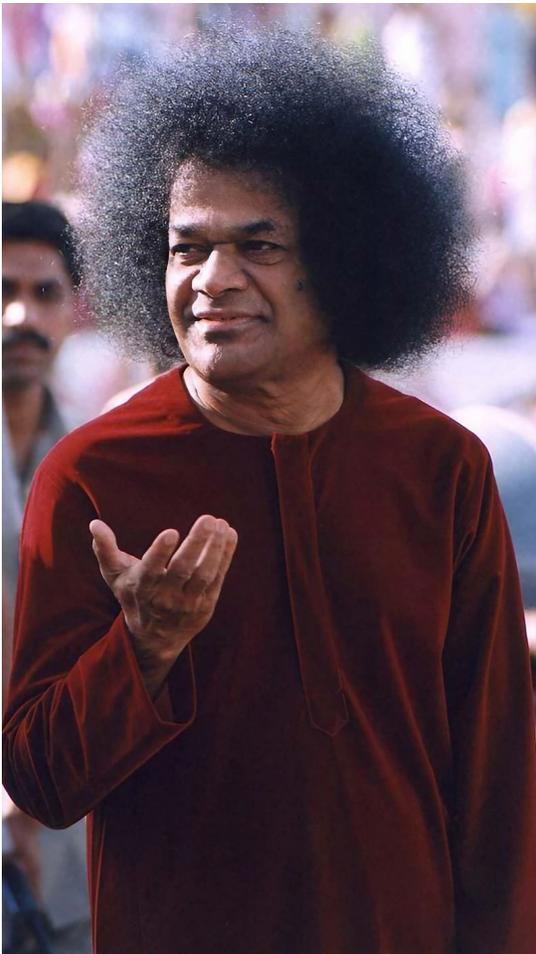
Of what avail is it merely to know how the *Vedas* or *Upanishads* have described the Divine? This book lore is not reflected in his life. He is like a blind man who hears about the existence of the world but cannot see it. There is no difference between this physically blind man and the spiritually blind person who merely studies the scriptures. The scriptures are intended to provide guides for practical living and not merely to be learnt by rote.

*Everyone knows the word 'God',
But that does not mean they know God.
The meaning of 'God' has to be known
Only by serving those who have realized God.*

Everyone utters the word God, but how many really seek to know God? What efforts do they make to know God? Goodness is another name for God. How much of goodness is there in you? When there is no goodness, how can God be understood? For understanding anything subjective, experience is essential. In the fast-flowing Ganga, a small fish is able to swim freely and joyously, without fear of the depth or swift flow of the river. But in the same river, a big elephant is likely to be swept away by the current. One should know how to keep afloat in the current and protect oneself.

A tiny ant, for instance, is able to get at the sugar that is mixed with sand because it has the ability to distinguish between sand and the sweet sugar in the mixture. But another animal, however big it may be, if it does not possess this ability, it cannot separate the sugar from the sand. Likewise, if a man has experienced the bliss of the Divine, will he go after worldly pleasures? Only the person who has not tasted the nectar of Divine love will seek these pleasures. This Divine love is within man. All Divine feelings and thoughts emanate from within him.

The Creator and the Cosmos are inseparable



Today, people think that spirituality has no relation to mundane life and vice versa. This is a big mistake. True divinity is a combination of spirituality and social obligations. National unity and social harmony are founded upon spirituality. It is the Divine that links spirituality and social existence. The Creator and *Prakriti* (Cosmos) are inextricably associated with each other. Hence, God should not be regarded as separate from the Creation. See God in the Cosmos. For instance, here is a tumbler made of silver. The one who notices the silver in the tumbler thinks only of the material base and not the form of the tumbler. The one who sees it as a tumbler does not note its silver base. Only the person who can recognize both silver and tumbler can recognize that it is a silver tumbler. Likewise, without the Omni-Self there is no Creation.

Today, most people see only the Creation. Very few recognize that the Creation is a projection of the Creator. It is essential that every human being should have the realization that without the Brahman (Supreme) there can be no Cosmos. Unfortunately, man today adheres to a different view. The reason is that he has

become a slave of the senses. It is high time he recognized the truth about his inherent nature and started exercising control over the senses. Only when man has mastery over the senses can he perceive the ultimate reality. It is disastrous for man to be dominated by his senses. He forfeits peace and forgets the Divine.

Every man is inclined to ignore his own defects and see the faults of others. The root cause of this tendency is selfishness and self-centeredness. All his attachments are based on self-love. And this applies also to man's love for God. Men pretend to love God, but one who truly loves God will forget himself. Loving anyone for your own sake is *anuraga* (affection). But loving God for His own sake is *Prema* (true love).

Man fails to recognize the power of the Divine because of his selfishness and self-centeredness. Only when he can get rid of the impurities encrusted in his heart will man be able to experience his divinity.

Eschew ostentation and self-conceit

Ingratitude is a great sin, which brings in its wake a host of troubles. To forget what one owes to others for his position and prosperity is to forfeit the grace of the Divine. He is as good as dead. You must be grateful to those who have helped you to achieve position, power, wealth, and prominence. By forgetting the good done by others, the ungrateful person is setting at naught the highest human values and strutting about as a vain-glorious creature.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Eschewing ostentation and self-conceit, cultivate selfless love toward all. There must be a limit to one's self-interest. Selfishness carried to extremes leads to disaster. Excessive selfishness can cause loss of friendship and honor and ultimately result in utter ruin. Reverence for one's parents is a sacred obligation.

"Kesava" symbolizes the oneness of the Trinity

Whatever be the school of thought in which one believes—whether it is *Advaita* (non-dualism) or materialism (as expounded by the *Charvaka* school) or *Mayavada* (the doctrine of the illusory nature of the phenomenal world)—one thing common to all of them is belief in the power of the Lord's name as "Kesava." This name is regarded as cardinal principle. What is the inner significance of this name? It is made up of the three terms: *Ka* + *eas* + *va*. "*Ka*" stands for Brahma, "*Isa*" stands for Easwara and "*Va*" for Vishnu. Together the name symbolizes the oneness of the Trinity, who represent the powers of creation, dissolution, and protection of the Cosmos. Men today do not understand the inner meanings of such terms as "Kesava."

Embodiments of Divine Love! It is necessary to study the scriptures, the Upanishads, and other sacred books. But this should not be done as a mechanical ritual. The religious preachers today merely prescribe the reading of the Gita or other spiritual texts as routine exercise. Of what use is mere reading of scriptures if their precepts are not put into practice? The sacred names of different deities are repeated as a

daily routine (*parayana*). Is it of any use? Instead of reciting a 100 *slokas* (hymns) mechanically, it is better to put one *sloka* into practice after grasping its full import. For instance, there is the expression, *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. *Sat* refers to the *Paramatma* (Omni-Self). *Chit* refers to the *jivatma* (the individual soul). When *Sat* and *Chit* come together, there is *Ananda* (divine bliss). If *Sat* and *Chit* are apart, how can there be bliss? There can be only sorrow. You must strive for the union of *Sat* and *Chit*. You can have light only when the current to the bulb is switched on.

All are embodiments of the Divine Spirit. But because of their submergence in worldly desires, they are leading mundane existence. Experience the Divine in all your activities. In worshipping God, do not make distinctions between one name or form and another. All names—Rama, Krishna or Govinda—are Divine. Some fanatics adoring the name Vishnu will not like to utter or even hear the name of Shiva at all. Such an attitude should be given up. You must regard the entire Cosmos as the embodiment of the Divine.

Significance of Shivaratri

Today is celebrated as *Shivaratri*. *Shi-va-ra-tri* consists of four syllables. Numerologically, the three letters, "*Sha*" "*va*" and "*ra*" together make 11. These 11 represent the five *jnanendriyas* (sensory organs), the five *karmendriyas* (organs of action), and the mind. These 11 are governed by the 11 *Rudras* (deities or vital forces). These 11 organs involve man in sensual desires and drag him down to worldly existence. Beyond these 11 is the *Paramatma*, the Omni-Self. When one relies on the Supreme, he can master the other 11. No one should make any distinction between Shiva and Ranga or Rama and Krishna, because the Divine is One, under whatever names it may be worshipped.

The essence of all Divine names is the same

To worship one name and revile another is not true devotion. Most devotees today are narrow minded and sectarian in their attitudes. There are some who go about glorifying the name of Rama and collecting money in Rama's name. No quarter should be given to such commercialization of the Divine name. Do not lend your ears to such preachers. Recognize that the Divine dwells in all beings. Love all. Realize that the essence of Divine names is the same. Chant the name of the Lord in this spirit. When you perform *bhajans* in this way, you will realize the oneness of all mankind. In community singing, all have the feeling of oneness.

Shivaratri is an auspicious night. On this night, of the 16 aspects of man, 15 are merged in man's Divinity. One aspect remains. It is an easy and convenient time for experiencing the Divine. If at least on this one night the 11 senses are kept under control, one is bound to experience the Divine. If on this night all bad thoughts are kept out and the mind is concentrated on the name of the Lord, it will experience the consciousness of the Divine. This process has been described as *Jagarana* (nocturnal vigil).

Most people claim that they have observed *Jagarana* on *Shivaratri* night by keeping awake witnessing two or three cinema shows at night. Observance of sacred wakefulness on *Shivaratri* night is not achieved by playing cards the whole night. It is a caricature of *Jagarana*. This is the kind of religious observance that is practiced in the *Kali* age. During the 12 hours of this night, if all the senses are kept under control and the mind is wholly concentrated on the Supreme, that alone constitutes *Jagarana* (spiritual vigil). If such a vigil is observed by even one in a million, that is enough. Seek to observe such a pure, holy and divine vigil this night and experience divine bliss.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 24

“Krishna as the Guru gave the Gita to the world through Arjuna because He found a worthy disciple in him. Your lives will become blessed when you develop faith in God, reverence for His words, and the resolve to implement His sacred teachings in your daily lives.”

~BABA

In Adoration of the Lord

POETRY



I go through life adoring you, O God,
In whatsoever form you may appear;
You are the owner, whether far or near,
Of every form and shape of clay and clod.
You shine in radiance, or in lambent flame;
Or in the dusky airy form of light;
Or in the sham and shape of fear and fright,
You are the being, holder of the frame.

You are the fairy fragrance in the flower;
Indweller everywhere, you are the tree,
As also you are spirit in the knower;
You are the mighty mover of the sea,
In stone, or wood, or flesh, or air, or fire,
You are the sole essential lordly sire.

But you are more than all the things that are;
More than the universe and all there is
For you are Being, Consciousness, and Bliss

You are not just the radiance of a star;
You are not just the fragrance of a flower;
 You are not just remembrance of a mind;
 You are not just delight of any kind,
You are Existence, Consciousness, and Power.

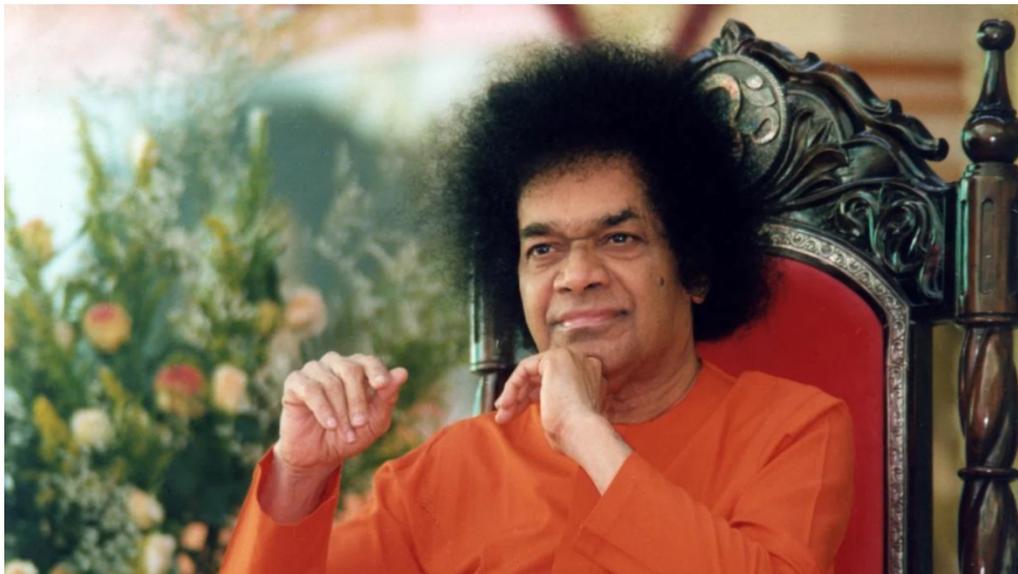
For you are Love that none can circumscribe;
 And you are Joy that nothing can exhaust;
And you are Grace nobody can describe;
 And you are Mercy, endless and uncaused!
You are a Being, worshipful and kind,
You are beyond all stars and worlds combined!

So we prefer to call you "Father": word
 So simple and so sweet, it makes us feel
 We do not have to bow and bend and kneel;
But rather, lovingly and not absurd,
Embrace you, kiss you soft, and undeterred,
 Lay our tired spirits on your lap, and heal
 Our wounds there, and like children cry, appeal.
Thus: crying to our Father is preferred.

And so we call you, Baba sweet;
 Dear Baba, dearest Baba, Father, wise
Your wondrous name we endlessly repeat;
 And by your name enable us to rise
Above our littleness, and realize
We, too, are children of your paradise.

—Benito F. Reyes, California.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Feb 1991



The Two Sais: Sathya Sai and Shirdi Sai

Continued from Part 1

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—Devagiriamma, 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.

Later Devagiriamma became pregnant. She told her husband that by the grace of Parvati she is carrying a child. Nine months later the child was born, and it was a boy. One year later, she became pregnant again and a daughter was born. They named them as *Eshwara* and *Gauri*.

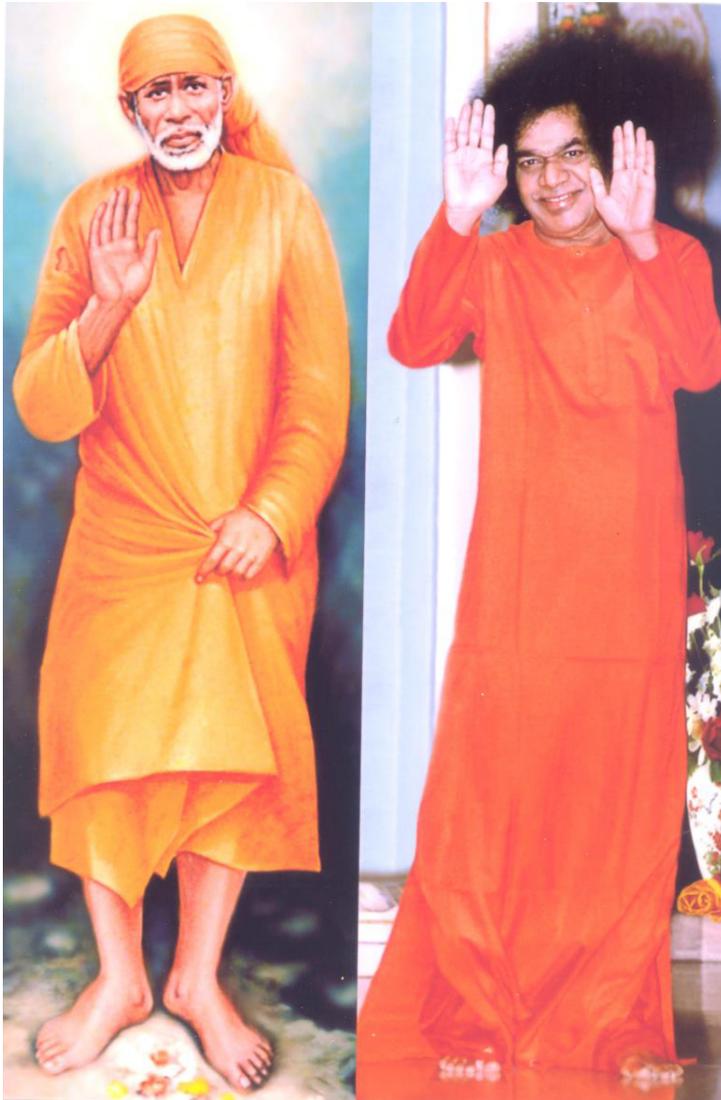
Now for the third time she became pregnant. Then her husband's mind started changing. Gangabhava started thinking that his wife's experience was true. He, too, wanted to see *Parvati* and *Eshwara*. Devagiriamma said, "*Eshwara* promised me that He will be born as the third son. When He himself is coming here, it is foolish of you to go to perform penance to see Him." He said, "Even when God is being born to us, we will develop the maternal and paternal feeling toward Him and we won't think of Him as a God. I will not get that Divine feeling. Therefore, I have to go and pray to *Eshwara* and He should manifest himself." She said, "If you are leaving the house, then I, too, will follow you."

She sent the son and daughter to her native place with some workers. The husband was walking in the front, and she was at the back. Around that village there was a dense forest. These days you don't find forests. At that time the teachers used to take their students into the forests and in that cool environment the students would be chanting *Vedas* [holy scriptures]. Even to reach another village you had to go through a dense forest. She went on telling him that she had pains and asked him to stop for 5 minutes. She gave birth to the boy under a tree. She thought, "*If my husband does not want this child then why do I need him.*" So, she covered the baby with some leaves and some parts of her sari and followed her husband. They went away and both of them had the vision of God.

The Foster Parents

In that village there was a Patel whose wife had gone to her native village for a festival. This Patel was bringing back his wife in a horse coach. The Patel had a lot of

money and therefore he got the horse coach. They also didn't have children. When they reached that place, she heard a baby cry. She saw that this boy was on a piece of sari, and he was playing and crying. Drops of honey were falling from the tree into the mouth of the child. She called her husband and said that the baby's body was smeared with blood. They did not know who had left him there. They looked around and nobody was seen. Patel's wife thought that God had himself presented her this boy. She took the boy home. No one asked them who the child was. They were very happy thinking that God had given this child to them.



The boy grew up. At the age of 7, the boy used to go to the Hindu temple and read the Quran; in the mosque he used to chant *Vedas*. In those times the hatred between the Hindus and Muslims was too much. The Hindus and Muslims started complaining against this boy. The Muslims said, "You come to our mosque and chant *Vedas*!" The Hindus complained, "You come to our temple and read the Quran!" The Hindus and Muslims boycotted this boy from their places of worship. How much ever the boy was told, he still wouldn't understand. Even the father tried but he still did not pay heed. The mother wanted to send the boy somewhere. She was thinking of that when someone came and suggested that the boy should be sent to the *ashram* of Venkusa.

At Venkusa's Ashram

She took the boy to that *ashram*. From inside Venkusa came outside and said, "Boy, I have been waiting for you for the past 10 years." He hugged this boy and took him to the *ashram*. Then Venkusa went to the mother and said, "Amma, from now on he is my son. I will look after him properly. You can go home peacefully." She was very happy thinking that this was the end of her troubles." She said, "Now and then I will

come and see my boy.” Then Venkudas answered, “If you want to see him now and then, it’s alright. If you want, you can even stay here.” But she went away.

From that day Venkusa showed immense love for that boy. When he was eating food, he used to make this boy sit by his side and eat. He would make the boy sleep in his room. He taught him all the *Vedas, Shastras* (scriptures), and the epics. In the school, other children were jealous of this boy. This jealousy is a curse in this age of *Kali*. Generally, if someone is subject to showering of love, others will develop jealousy and feel that this boy has come only recently and why is he being given so much love. This is jealousy. This jealousy crossed all the limits.

One day Venkusa was taking this boy to the forest. He sat under a tree and was teaching the boy all about *Vedanta*. Other jealous boys threw stones at this boy from a distance. One stone hit the boy’s forehead. It started bleeding. Venkusa tore a piece of his *dhoti* [men’s attire] and tied a piece as a bandage on the boy’s head. That piece of cloth that was tied around His head was not removed by Sai Baba till the end. They thought that it was sunset time and getting dark, it isn’t safe for them to be in the forest, so they came back to the *ashram*. At that stage in the film the story of Shirdi Baba ends.

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



POETRY

From Over the Ocean

A two-syllable pilgrimage brings me to You—Sai Ram!

*Ram is that—which—pleases, delightful—Sai is Ram—
Across the ocean a bridge is built with Sai Ram.*

*Sai Ram is in my heart, in all hearts. Endlessly we draw on
Sai Ram's endless sweetness. Sai Ram is the strong
center song of living perfection, one's true Self—Sai Ram.*

*I wondered 'what shall be my song, my saving sound,'
You came along; I heard You say 'Sai Ram', I laughed.*

*I leaned upon a shadow and fell until I reached the
support of Sai Ram. Sai Ram!*

*I stopped but felt too low to touch Your Feet; so I
imagined doing it. You felt my feeling and blessed me
bountifully—how to thank You, Sai Ram?*

*You are the white Light of purity itself, Sai Ram,
And my impure hand You held! I was ashamed my hand
seemed unclean, but how else can You show Your pure Love
Sai Ram, unless You touch us, even as You did from over
the ocean, when we first heard of Sai Ram. Sai Ram!*

~Bill Jackson

Source: Sanathana Sarathi, Aug 1973

Be Perfect!

Years ago, Bhagavan granted interview to a group of youngsters from Kerala. Bhagavan graciously materialized a ring and put it on the finger of one of the boys. Amazed and overjoyed, he was enjoying the beauty of the Creator's Creation. "Is ring perfect?" queried the Lord. "Yes, Swami!" the boy answered. To this, Swami said, "Be perfect!" Life's journey as a humble child of our Beloved Bhagavan is a journey 'from Sai, with Sai, to Sai'. This journey demands perfection at every step, then only can we realize the perfection that is within ourselves!

This journey to perfection demands constant self-audit; the 'ABC of Life' that Swami has given us, "Always Be Careful" is very important in this regard. During one of the Vishu celebrations, I got the opportunity to speak in the Divine Presence. In the speech, I highlighted Bhagavan's assurance: "When you take one step, I take a hundred." In the Divine Discourse that followed, Bhagavan said, "What Mukundan said is correct. When you take one step, I take a hundred. But that one step must be in the right direction." The awareness about this 'right direction' must be the light that guides our life's journey.

Another important aspect of this journey is: be positive always. The second Sadhana Camp of the Sai Youth of Kerala was in progress at Brindavan. On 11th of April 2004, a drama was to be staged by the Sai Youth in the Sai Kishan Kalyanamandapam. At 4.45 pm, we went inside Trayee to report to Bhagavan that everything was ready. But Bhagavan gave us the opportunity to sit near him and talked to us on the theme of the drama. When the discussion came to the point of positivism, Bhagavan asked, "Where does this positivism come from?" Bhagavan was evidently not satisfied with the various answers that we gave. He went on asking the question over and over again. All that we could do was to pray for the Divine Answer on this vital point. Finally, Swami declared, "Positivism need not come from outside; it is inside only. Our duty is to develop it."



Bhagavan's Love knows no limits. On one of the days of the Sadhana Camp for the Sai Youth of Kerala in 2005, two youngsters were selected to speak in the Divine Presence, as instructed by Bhagavan. When Swami came to the verandah of the Sai Kulwant Hall, the boys were about to get up to come to Swami. I signaled to them to sit down and conveyed to them that they could come to Swami after Swami occupied the chair. But Swami intervened and told me, "No... They are coming from distant places... Let them come to Me..."

It was on the first day of the Sadhana Camp for Sai Youth in 2003. All the Sai Youth had assembled at the Sai Ramesh Hall when Swami came for *darshan*. I prayed to Bhagavan to inaugurate the Camp, to which Swami asked, "At what time?" "Swami... 8.30..." I replied. "Why so early?" asked Swami, "The boys and girls have just come. They may not have had their breakfast." It was another instance that revealed how much Swami cares for each one of us.

Bhagavan has categorically remarked that His love for us is to the level of seeing Himself in every one of us. Let us see Swami in all, so that our love is pure, selfless, and perfect. In this divine journey, it is best to realize that we are nothing and He is Everything. It is He who plans; it is He who does.

In 2004, a school named 'Sri Sai Vidya Vihar' was opened in Aluva. The response from the public was tremendous and applications piled up in our office. It became necessary that we purchased a new plot and constructed a bigger building. Banks came forward to offer help. Everything was set to take a financial loan from a bank. Suddenly a devotee came to our office and said, "Why take a loan? This is Swami's school... I shall contribute the cost of the entire project."

We are amazed at the amount of confidence the society has in Swami and His Principles. When we announced the opening of the Sai School, many parents withdrew their children from prestigious schools (despite the heavy donations they had paid to them) and enrolled them in our school. To one of the Muslim parents who had come for admission, we made it clear that we would teach the children Bal Vikas lessons, *Veda* and *Yoga*, he happily responded, "Why not? These are part of our culture, let my child also learn them..." After one of the sessions of 'Sai Parenting' that was held in the school, a mother approached us and said, "I am terribly upset after today's session; to this day I have not been a good mother."

It is a matter of great joy seeing how the society of Kerala is adhering to Sai ideals. 'Sai Parenting' has become the guiding principle of families all over the state. When our young 'Sai Soldiers'—the team formed to take Swami's message to newer and newer areas—visited new areas, they observed that Swami was not at all new there. Wherever they went, they were greeted by Bhagavan's photographs. Now Swami's Message is reaching every nook and corner of Kerala.

Bhagavan's Infinite Love has transformed the Sai Youth of the state. The three Sadhana Camps in the Divine Presence were unique and have provided golden opportunities for them. Now they are fully involved in the Grama Seva Project. We have also been arranging Summer Camps for the Bal Vikas children all over the state for the past three years. Going through the responses of the children, we understand that much more than the sessions of the camp, what touched and transformed them was the love and care the Sai brothers and sisters shared with them. They are motivated to involve themselves in the Sai activities.

Now we have 'Deenajanodharana Projects' in all the 14 districts of the state for rehabilitating destitutes - old and young. One of those who joined one such project was a boy who had discontinued his studies. We enrolled him in the school and encouraged him to study. He has passed this year's Std. X Public Examination with 68% marks. These centers convey Swami's message of Love and Seva to the society. When we commenced this project in one district, the local people, belonging to all religions approached us and asked as to what they could do for the project. Thus, Sai Seva transforms not only us, but the society also. Really, we are becoming the "role models" for the society to gauge the Glory of Sai. Once Swami asked a devotee as to what he wanted. He promptly replied, "Swami.... I want to merge in you..." "How is that possible?" Swami asked, "You are very fat... I am very small..." The statement that followed was very revealing, "It you want to merge with Me, become like Me..." Let us observe our Lord; let us emulate Him. Let us try to become like Him, so that we become one with Him.



It was during the Onam of 2002. Bhagavan called me inside the interview room to ask about that year's Onam Program. When I took out my glasses to read, Bhagavan smilingly remarked, "See... You are only 50... I don't need any glasses... One must use one's energies properly." What a great lesson! We should always be aware as to how we can match His *Sankalpa*.

This narrative will not be complete without sharing with you the Infinite Grace that Swami is showering upon my family and me. During one of the interviews, Swami said, "I am above you, below you, around you and in you... I shall always protect you..." Every split second of our lives has proved this to be Absolute Truth. When we are fully engaged in Sai Seva, Swami will take care of everything—not only the

major things of our lives, but also the minutest ones. Once my elder son, who was then a student at Prasanthi Nilayam, developed distressing headache. He was examined at the Super-specialty Hospital; nothing abnormal was found. The Warden asked me to take him to the NIMHANS for a second opinion. I took him to Brindavan, as Swami was there at that time, to take His blessings and permission. There Swami told the Warden, "The boy has no problem, but for the satisfaction of the father let him take him to the NIMHANS."

As I entered the doctor's room at the NIIMHANS, he greeted me with a smile as if he knew me. He appeared to be from Kerala; when I told him that I was a Professor at the U.C. College, he was very happy. He was an old student of my college! And it is needless to say that the doctor, after examining my son, said that he had no problem of any sort! A few years back, we were about to leave for Puttaparthi. My younger son who was then studying in the eighth standard developed pain in the abdomen. The doctor diagnosed acute appendicitis and advised emergency surgery. His right lower abdomen bulged and was extremely painful. We took him to Parthi and Swami graciously granted us interview. After discussing the matters relating to the Sai Organization, I told Swami that my son was having appendicitis. "What appendicitis..." Swami asked, "No... No... Just Gas..." Within hours, all the pain and bulge disappeared.

The rehearsal for the drama, 'Bhakta Hanuman', to be presented in the Divine Presence was on. One night Swami came in my wife's dream and told her that the boy who was enacting the role of Hanuman was not holding the mace in the way it should be. True, Swami takes care of even the minutest aspects of our life. Gratitude to our Beloved Bhagavan cannot be expressed fully. It is not to be explained with words, but to be expressed by plunging ourselves into Swami's Divine Mission. What greater opportunity can we have than to be part of His Story!

~Prof. E. Mukundan, State President
Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, Kerala
Source: *Sai Sparshan* (2005)

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Thought of the MONTH

True Friendship

While in this transient world, wading through joy and grief, man has sore need of someone of his kind with whom he can communicate his feelings, with whom he can share his discoveries and depressions, his moments of bliss and sorrow, to be by his side while trekking the hard road to truth and peace, encouraging and enthusing him toward the goal. Who is one's true friend? Who is one's false, fake friend?

Today's friendship often falls short of the ideal. Friends who can confer real counsel, comfort, and consolation are precious gifts, rarely found today. A friendship knit by monetary bonds is disrupted as soon as you ask for the loan to be repaid. So, when you oblige your friend with a loan, the friendship too is broken at that very moment. How can friendship be cemented by words or by coins? Heart must understand heart, heart must be drawn to heart, if friendship must last. Friendship must bind two hearts and affect both beneficially, whatever may happen to either—loss or gain, pain or pleasure, good fortune or bad. The bond must survive all the blows of fate, and be unaffected by time, place and circumstance. Each must correct the other; for each knows that they come from sympathy and love. Each must be vigilant that the other does not slide from the ideal, cultivate habits that are deleterious, or hide thoughts and plans that are productive of evil. The honor of each is in the safe keeping of the other. Each trusts the other and places reliance on the other's watchful love.

Only those deserve the name "friends"—who help in uplifting life, cleansing ideals, elevating emotions and strengthening resolves. Those who drag you into pomp, pedantry, paltry entertainment, and petty pranks are enemies, not friends. Friends cannot be got by social status, financial squander mania, outer scintillation and verbal assertions. See into the very soul, the inner motives and motivator, the deeper aspirations and achievements, and then yield your loyalty to such.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.12, 1973-74

The feeling of friendship must activate every nerve, permeate every blood-cell, and purify every emotional wave; it has no place for the slightest trace of egotism. You cannot elevate the companionship that seeks to exploit or fleece for personal benefit into the noble quality of friendship. Perhaps the only friend who can pass this rigorous test is God. To understand and practice this noble emotion, the *Bhagavat Gita* is an invaluable guide. When Arjuna was dispirited and dejected, Krishna injected courage and a high sense of duty into him and helped him avoid disgraceful defeat. And Arjuna, too, like a good friend, took the advice in good spirit with the full confidence that Krishna meant well by him. Why, we know how confident he was of

the wisdom and power inherent in Krishna. When Krishna gave him the choice, "To help you in battle, you can have either my entire army or myself alone, unarmed and determined not to fight in spite of any provocation." And Arjuna did not hesitate to decide which of these two he wanted. He chose the unarmed Krishna, and prayed that He might be his charioteer during the days when he rode into the field.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol.12, 1973-74

Embodiments of Love!

Love is in you. It need not be acquired from outside. Worldly love is based on worldly relationships. Whomever you love, you love your own reflection. It is a mistake to think that you love someone else. You point to somebody and say, "He is my friend." But, in fact, God alone is your true friend. He will never betray you. Sometimes you may doubt your true friend, but He will never doubt you or forsake you. Your feelings may change according to time and situation, but God is changeless. He always has the feeling of oneness. Once you consider God as your true friend, everyone will be friendly toward you. Truly speaking, you have no enemies. There is none other than you in this world. When there is no second person, how can there be an enemy? All are like passing clouds. But you think they are permanent and repose your faith in them. Consequently, you are unable to have faith in God, who is pure and selfless. You are forgetting the Divine love and getting intoxicated with the "deep wine" of worldly love.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol 37, 2004

It should be realized, however, that there is no greater friend for anyone than God. He is beyond the reach of praise or censure. He does not give up man on the ground of the latter's failure to come up to His expectations. That is why God has been given the appellation, *suhrid* (a good friend). God desires no offerings from any devotee. God is the only one friend who confers benefits on devotees without expecting any return. Nevertheless, man does not readily accept such a friend. Only the man who accepts God as such a friend and is guided by His advice can understand the full meaning of Divine friendship. Faith of this nature alone constitutes true *jnana*.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 24, 1991

Adoration of God has to be through one name and one form; but, that should not limit your loyalty to that particular form only.

~ Sri Sathya Sai Baba