

Offer the Vessel Bright

*Sinking and rising, struggling in the Sea
of tasteless, futile, birth-death waves
Do you not see the Boat of Bhakti that Sridhara the Lord,
In His compassion, has brought to rescue you?*

Life is a precious gift. It must be sustained by breath. But there are victories to be won during life, at the cost of life itself. However, many successes man wins, he pictures before his mind many more and advances from one venture into another. He has no contentment (*santrupti*) despite all his achievements. He relishes new and newer wants and never reaches fulfillment.

Combined effort is the natural mode of living. Co-operation among individuals grouped as society guarantees security and stability. It is, as the sages call it, Sri Rama Raksha, the mark of Divine Grace. The surest sign of man's awareness of his Divine Nature is the recognition by him of the bond of kinship with other men. When the 700,000,000 people of India bind themselves together... this land can achieve success in all fields and limitless *ananda* [happiness].

The bond of kinship has snapped and, as a result, life has been rendered meaningless. The evil spirits of greed and pride, of envy and hatred, are executing their demonic dance in the hearts of mankind. Men cannot appreciate the value of the air they breathe, the greatness of the sun's rays that illumine the world, the drops of rain that sustain life, and the subtle power that underlies every object in nature. Humans have become low and people who have dedicated their lives to high ideals are nowhere to be seen. What needs to be done today is "fostering men who are determined to stand and suffer, even risking their lives, for realizing the holy goals of peace and prosperity for the entire world."

Dedicated service

The phrase "our country" denotes not the dumb ground that does not speak to us, but the living beings thereon with whom we are involved. You must grasp this fact. We are ignoring this truth today. Each one must regard the prosperity and joy of others in the community as one's own. Then only will India or any other country deserve that prosperity and joy. One's happiness is bound up with the happiness of

society. One's physical, mental, and intellectual strength and skills have to be dedicated, not merely to one's progress, but equally to the progress of society. Members of the units of the Sathya Sai Organization must try to benefit themselves and their societies through such service. Use the strength, skills, and spirit of service for such work. An unused machine gets rusted if it is not used, the human machine, too, gets rusted if it is not put to constant meaningful work. The pulse is not the correct indicator of your being alive; work, activity, that is the evidence and the value of real living.

Krishna declares in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "There is nothing in the three worlds that I am obliged to do, nothing unaccomplished that I have to accomplish, but I am still engaged in *karma* (activity)." For, if God is inactive, the Cosmos will grind to a halt. Man's role is to translate his strength into activity along the path of duty. The young follow the lead of elders. So elders must consistently hold on to ideals and work toward their realization so that mankind can attain prosperity and peace.



What or who is God? When the answer to this question is sought, one discovers that God is the glory immanent in Nature. Nature must indeed be laughing at the sterile frenzies, the endless pursuits, the countless miseries that man submits himself to in his search for achieving the unachievable! Man must search in Nature for the sacred lessons it holds for him; then he can understand how deep, how everlasting are the meanings it can convey. The earth rotates on its axis at a speed of 1000 miles an hour. Consequently, we have alternations of day and night, which help us to live on this globe. Besides, it moves around the sun at the rate of 66,000 miles an hour, causing the seasons that bring rains for crops and vegetation that sustain human life. The earth does not profit in the least by these rotations, but

man exists and prospers on account of them. Mother Earth teaches her children this lesson of service and sacrifice.

Character is all

The line of conduct must be the main key to the life of man. That line must be along the path of virtue. It is the 'way of living' that keeps one in the memory of people long after his death. If it is not the virtuous way, the person is as good as dead. It is often declared that knowledge is power. No. No. Character is power; *nothing* can be

more powerful on earth than character. Riches, scholarship, status, authority are all frail and flimsy before it. A strong virtuous character cannot be earned from the study of guidebooks; it is earned only through intimate involvement with society.

There is no dearth of books today; nor is there any lack of *Gurus*. Educational institutions spread knowledge all around. To all appearances, the Sun of Knowledge, the *Jnana Bhaskara*, is showering His rays in plenty. But one can hardly notice those who imbibe the nectarine wisdom thus offered and dwell in the ecstasy it can confer. The thick binding encasing the books seems to prevent the wisdom from emerging. The mountain range with lust, anger, hatred, envy, and pride as the peaks shuts out the splendor of the Sun. Charity, compassion, fortitude, sympathy, sacrifice, these arise from the higher levels of consciousness while opposite tendencies breed in the lower levels. The latter cannot confer *ananda*; they can only plunge us in grief.

Not one of the higher qualities or virtues or expressions of love is evident today. So it has become impossible to discover 'man' among the inhabitants of the world. Man, Man, Man! What are the characteristics of the God-made Man? No man knows what they are, no man demonstrates them in life. Is anger a human quality? Or pride? Or self-centeredness? No. They reveal the animal, though people infected with these faults gain currency as 'men'. Man must reveal by his conduct that he has evolved higher; he should not inflict pain, nor should he be affected by pain.

Man is not merely flesh and bone. A gramophone record is not merely a circular plate with grooves on it. Each record looks like every other—grooves, lines all over! In every groove is hidden voices, words, songs. In man, too, is latent the possibility of all *karmas*. Every object, event, or experience of ours since childhood is impressed and lies dormant in us. The rivers, mountains, and stars we have looked at are all latent in us. 'Us' means not flesh and bone. For, these experiences cannot be subsumed in flesh and bone. Why? We have in us the past, the present, and even the future. We are all that was, is, and will be.

Man sees Nature as cruel because his mind is cruel. Clear the eye, purify the mind, and you can see that Nature is divinely loving. Do not seek faults and vices. Seek the right, the correct, and the good. Develop sympathy and compassion. Cultivate *vairagya*, the attitude of detachment.

You may doubt whether there are any who have achieved *vairagya*. Let me tell you there are not only a few, but many. They have no sense of I and Mine; they dedicate all acts to God and free themselves from attachment. To feel there are none is a sign of self-deception. Out of ten evil persons, there will surely be at least one who can be guided into the good path; and out of ten such, at least one will accept God; and out of ten such, at least one will be eager to live in accordance with Divine Law.

In fact, the Cosmos is activized by one single *Chaitanya*, Consciousness, and Intelligence. Man has only a role (*paatradhaari*) in the Divine Play. God is the Dire-

ctor, the *sutradhaari*. That Intelligence, the Omni-will, urges all men to play roles decided on by It, and think and work as It directs. The scriptures declare that the body is the temple and the 'I' is the God installed therein.

Or you may take it that the body is a vessel for cooking food, given on loan for us to use while hosting a festival. Can we return it to God, who has loaned it, in a worse condition? Should we not scrub it and clean it and return it bright and free from rust and dust? When the festival of life began and we received the body from Him, it was innocent of evil, pure, fresh, and bright. While using it, we have inflicted dents, leaks, and other damages through lust, greed, hatred, anger, and envy. Only the lowest would offer it back in that condition. Offer it as pure as He gave it; you can then be classed as the worthiest of grace.

Remember always the high purpose for which we have come into this world, equipped with potentialities to acquire and utilize all levels of knowledge. Have faith in Divine grace, the grace of *Gopala* on the *go* (cows), of *Pashupati* on *pashu* (the bound animal). Wear the Garland of Devotion Gems round your necks and saturate your thought, word, and deed with Divine Love.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, April 1982

The mind must become bhaktimaya (saturated with devotion); the intelligence must be transformed into jnana-deepti (the splendor of universal wisdom), or jnana (divine knowledge); the body must be a willing and efficient instrument for sad-dharm-acharana (the practice of righteousness). Such a life is indeed the crown and glory of humanity. The rest are contaminated, contained, caged lives!

Sathya Sai Baba

Dharma Incarnate

Part I

The *Bhagavad-Gita* (wherein the Dialogue between the dispirited warrior, Arjuna, and Lord Krishna, who is God incarnated to uphold *Dharma*, is given by the immortal Sage Vyasa) opens with the word—*Dharma!* The *Bhagavad-Gita* is the essence of the *Upanishads*, which are precious repositories of the best in Indian spiritual thought.

Dharma is the very life-breath of this land and its culture. The *Vedas* laid down *dharma*; the *Shastras* elaborated it, the *Puranas* and *Itihasas* illustrated it in story, legend, and biography. The *Vedas* are the authority for the moral codes that are denoted by *dharma*.

Dharma is not the product of human intelligence, cleverness, or inquiry. God has inspired the saints and sages to lay the mores and fix the limits, and they have

revealed the message of the Lord in the *Vedas*. So, the *Vedas* are the Voice of God; the Word of the *Vedic* hymns is our Mother! The Meaning of the Word is our Father. Those Divine parents prescribed regulations for their children (humanity) and their prescriptions are named collectively—*dharma*.

Dharma that has such Divine origin and care can never suffer a fall; but it may fade, off and on. It will have no *haani* [loss], it may suffer *glaani* [disgust], that is all. Lord Krishna has announced in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that on such occasions He will incarnate Himself to uphold *dharma* and render it as strong and sustaining as ever. In the *Treta* [silver] Age and in the *Dwapara* [bronze] Age, He came among men as Rama and Krishna for this very purpose.



Why is the Lord so anxious to restore *dharma* to its pristine purity that He is willing even to inflict on Himself the limitation of the human form? If He does not so incarnate, what calamity will overtake mankind? Questions like these might arise. But consider: *Dharma* is the Body of God. When one's body is harmed can one remain unconcerned? The Universe is inextricably bound in *dharma*, the Moral Law. There is a Cosmic *Dharma* that regulates all. When this Law is broken or disregarded, the balance is upset, and man suffers with all beings. When *dharma* fades, man fails and is foiled. So man must welcome the restoration of *dharma*.

In fact, the Cosmos with all the worlds in it is the habitation of God. God is residing in the most gigantic globe as well as in the minutest cell and atom. So when His habitation is in disrepair, and threatened with dilapidation, should He not engage Himself in making it safe, sound, and beautiful?

Again, consider how strong and strength-giving is *dharma*! Our forefathers believed it to be so essential, so valid, so vital, that they stuck to its path through the most terrific temptations and the most disastrous dangers. Rama decided to enter the forest as an exile to honor the promise made by his father. His mother, Kausalya, had to agree, though all her instincts rebelled against the step. When, finally, she had to part with him (the exile was for 14 long years; he was sentenced to undergo the exile just when he was stepping toward the throne to be crowned Emperor of the realm!), what were the words she blessed her son with? Listen!

"Rama! The *dharma*, the Moral Law, you are obeying with such faith and tenacity, that itself will guard you and guide you!" Adhering to *dharma* is no mere matter of

verbal profession; it is to take up arms against a host of foes and failures. Kausalya was reminding Rama that it was his duty to stand up four-square against all obstacles and maintain *dharma* in the face of fearful odds.

When her eldest son, Duryodhana, had declared an unjust war against his own dear cousins and refused to give them their share of the imperial power, his mother Gandhari recognized that it was against *dharma*. During the 18-day battle, Duryodhana used to fall at the feet of his mother every day before proceeding to the battlefield, praying for her blessings. On no day did she bless him as he desired! On the other hand, she repeated every day the warning counsel, "Son! Why seek my blessings? Where there is *dharma*, there victory is secure!"

Note how tenacious was the hold that *dharma* had on our forefathers! Sri Rama and Sri Krishna came into the world to insist on this type of tenacious faith in *dharma*. Sri Rama is acclaimed as *DHARMA INCARNATE*. Obedience to the father, reverence toward the mother, faithfulness to the wife, love toward brothers, compassion toward the weak, service to those who take refuge, fidelity to the word once given—these rules of Moral Right were practiced by Him and taught to others. When Rama obeyed his father and moved into exile in the forest, how many obstacles he had to overcome? Until He reached Chitrakuta Hill, and until He sent back His two brothers who had followed Him to persuade Him to return, how many trials he had to undergo! From the *Ramakatha Rasavahini* that our Lord is writing for our edification, we can all picture to ourselves the heroic determination of Rama to stick to *dharma*, come what may.

He showed great reverence to Kaikeyi, the stepmother who was the very instrument to send him to exile; so His brothers had perforce to revere her themselves! When Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, could not suffer any more at his brother's court, he came to Rama and sought refuge. Sugriva and others in Rama's camp raised objections against his admission into the presence, but Rama declared it as His *dharma*: "Whoever seeks refuge shall be protected, whether it is Vibhishana or even his brother, Ravana, against whom we are now leading this army."

This day we have our Lord, Sri Sathya Sai, proving once again that the Incarnations of God are ever *Dharma-Embodied*. For the upholding of *dharma* that has now reached a far more critical stage of decline, Baba is adopting more significant and more pervasive means than were used in His careers as Rama and Krishna. Those days the wicked were killed; today this method will mean a cataclysm for mankind itself. Baba has said that man is like a tree whose roots are being eaten up by white ants. He is removing the white ants and saving the tree. The wicked are weaned off evil ways and placed on the path of virtue through the strange new stratagem of Love! Sri Rama taught by His own example. Sri Krishna sought to instruct and inspire. But Sathya Sai has both precept and example as His means.

~S. V. Rama Sarma, Translated from *Telugu*
Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, April 1973

POETRY



The Clouds: and Baba's Child

Clouds
Clouds
In the blue.

A beauteous sight are thee!
Colors soft and mountain high
You break the monotony of the sky.

You draw our eyes upward by your charm
You build castles for the homesick crowd
You are an aerial zoo, an upturned sea,
You run races, play trapeze galore,
You hide, reveal, pull curtains on and off.
You eternally play
With sun and stars
And rain and rough
And thunder tough.

You add to the Infinite
And embroider the `Formless'.
You are painted and puffed with silver robes
Or pink or red, or gold on fire.

Float on by,
Float on by.

I am Baba's Child;
You are Baba's loving fold
I love to applaud, greet!

Thoughts
Thoughts
In the deep blue mind.

A motley crowd are they!
Thoughts flimsy, furious, fearsome, high
You break the monotony of life.

You draw the thinker down or up
You build systems for geophilous crowd,
You are an inner zoo, full thick with beasts.
You somersault, and skip over many a slip;
You tantalize so near, so far from goal.

You eternally play
With ideas, I and Mine
And senses tough

You subtract the Infinite,
And prolong the Eternal.
And limit the Unlimited.
You are tainted and clogged with lust and hate
Or envy and greed, a brain on fire.

Float on by,
Float on by.
I am Baba's Child,
I am Witness
Of your flickering film
On the Untouched Screen of Truth!

~Kaston

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, April 1973

Enviro-Care

Tidbit:

Are you turning the tap/faucet off while you are brushing your teeth so that water is not running while you are brushing? Turn it back on only when you are ready to rinse your mouth.



Swami's quote on nature and the environment:

Nature is God's vesture. The universe is the 'University' for man. Man should treat Nature with reverence. He has no right to talk of conquering nature or exploiting the force of Nature. He must proceed to visualize in nature its God.

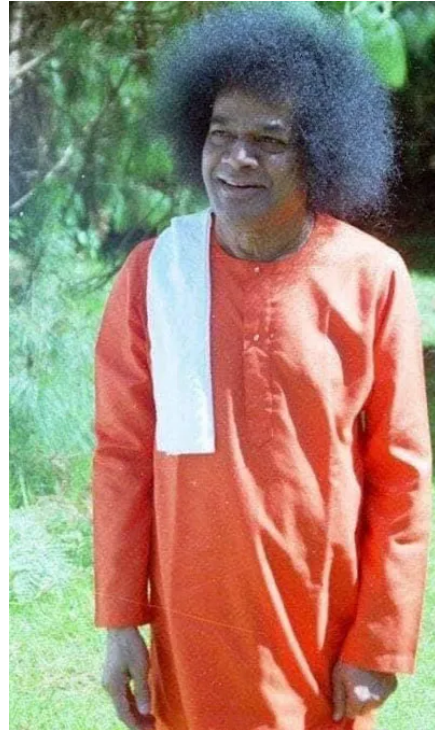
Sathyam Sivam Sundaram, Vol. 4, p.55

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: The Light of My Life

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S. P. Malhotra, PVSM, served as Commandant, and retired as GOC-in-C, Northern Command; served in Burma and the Far East during the Second World War; was appointed as the first Indian Adjutant at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun; served in the United Nations Emergency Force at Gaza, Palestine; recipient of Padma Bhushan award, a rare honor for a soldier. He merged at the Lotus Feet in 2010.

Our first contact with Baba came while He was visiting Ooty. The year was April 1974. At that time, I was stationed at Wellington (Nilgiris), Tamil Nadu, commanding the Defense Services Staff College. I got to know about Baba's visit from my staff officer, Brigadier Dixit, who had gone for His *darshan* [sight of a holy person] the previous day. Till then, we had no knowledge of Swami. After hearing so much about Baba's miracles, our curiosity was roused and we decided to go for His *darshan* the next day. We listened to His discourse, which was in Telugu. We returned blessed and with a feeling that He is Divine. We were told that Baba was visiting Wellington the next morning. So I requested Him to visit our Staff College temple and bless the staff and the students. Baba very kindly acceded to my humble request and visited our temple. His discourse in *Telugu* was interpreted in English by one of the students. We, indeed, felt blessed by Swami's visit to our institution.

We were told that Baba was leaving for Bangalore that day, but we took a chance and went again for His *darshan*. We were lucky because Baba had not gone. He called us for the much-coveted interview. He was all love and kindness and we were immediately drawn to Him. This started our journey of realizing the Supreme and my Light of Love. He changed the course of my life. I believed in God, but I was not particularly a religious man in the conventional way. My contact with Swami turned me Godward in the true sense. A professor from Arizona University characterized Baba as "Love walking on two legs", Walking or sitting, talking or silent, Baba is Love all the time to all in all places. Many people have been transformed by His very *darshan*.



My wife and I visited the *ashram* at Puttaparthi a few months later. The occasion was *Shivaratri* 1975. The crowds were large, but He made it possible for us to have a vantage position in the auditorium. The *Shivaratri* experience was breath-taking. The next morning I was fortunate to get *prasadam* [consecrated food] from Swami's Divine hands. My joy knew no bounds. My conversation with Baba was a heavenly experience.

We have been visiting Puttaparthi again and again for three decades. He has showered us with His grace and given so much love. His love is phenomenal, very difficult to understand fully. Baba is a great giver, and His love flows to all alike. Our greatest blessing was when Swami listened to our prayers and visited Kashmir. It was a real boon for the people of Kashmir and His devotees in particular. During his stay, he blessed thousands of devotees irrespective of caste or creed. He appeared to be happy and relaxed during His stay at all the places He visited.

As you enter Srinagar, there is a giant hoarding that reads, 'If there is a paradise on earth, it is here'. This became a reality when Baba spent almost two glorious weeks there. The time spent in His close proximity was absolutely heavenly and seems like a dream today. He was like a father, mother, friend, *guru*, all in one. It must have been our great good *karmas* of past births that brought Bhagavan to our humble home.

Baba has been our tower of strength, whenever we faced a crisis. Our son met with a serious scooter accident in 1978. He was in Mumbai at that time. In the middle of the night, a speeding taxi had hit him.

He was grievously hurt but his head was saved even though he did not have a helmet on. It was Swami's mercy that saved his life. It took some months, but he recovered fully without any permanent disability. We faced another crisis in the early 80's when our son-in-law came up with a rare kidney ailment. The doctors did not have a ready cure for it. They also felt that even if he recovered, the disease would recur. We were very worried and approached Baba for his help. Swami knew about the ailment and created some medicine to be given to him. After he took the medicine for a few days, the disease started receding and has never recurred. It was Swami's grace.

My own case is well known. I came up with herpes zoster of the eye. It came up in a severe form and got aggravated due to my preoccupation with some important work. By the time, I was flown to the Army Hospital in Delhi, my eyes were not opening. It was a real bad case, and the doctors were very concerned. Dr. Bhagavantam and Mr. Sohan Lal came to see me in the hospital; Baba had very kindly sent some *vibhuti* [sacred ash] packets through them. Once I was better and able to travel, I came to Swami. He reprimanded me for being negligent and said He had gifted me my eyes. During this period, I was suffering from acute post herpes pains, for which medical science has only pain killers. Baba took away these pains when I spent a week at Puttaparthi under His benign eye. He took me off the pain killers and I came back fully cured. My face had ugly pigmentation marks that the doctors said would never go. In course of time, even those marks disappeared. Such is Swami's love for His devotees, and I felt His benevolence as I recovered. Swami has been our anchor all these years. We have felt His benign influence in our day-to-day life, more so in our hour of stress and need.

Sai Baba's mission does not imply any new cult or religion. Swami wants us to respect all faiths; however, He would like each of us to adhere to our own religion and practice it sincerely. He says there is only ONE GOD and all the religions are various paths leading to Him. He talks about love as the only true religion and wants us to embrace the whole of humanity in our love. We are asked to develop a positive attitude, be good human beings and meet hate with Love. Baba emphasizes love as a doctrine of life. His saying, 'Start the day with love, spend the day with love, and end the day with love—that is the way to God', sums up His teaching. Love, He says, is a wonderful thing, which works from within a person so that the change is thorough and absolute.

My light of love is the fruit of my life; through this love I visualize Truth. There is nothing above love in this world. All problems can be solved with love, devotion, dedication, and determination. My light of love says, 'love more and more people, love them intensely as love is universal and divine and has a deep sense in life and has immense strength'.

Baba's miracles are numerous and mindboggling. But His greatest miracle is the transformation He brings in an individual. Swami's main program is of reforming the next generation. He is rendering yeomen service through His educare, sociocare, and medicare programs. Under the educare program, several educational institutions have been started providing free education to all from primary to doctoral levels. He has started *Bal Vikas* classes and Education in Human Values as well.

Along with academics, moral education is emphasized in all educational institutions. Baba stresses on the role of teachers and the students. He feels much can be done with the help of ideal teachers and students of high character. Thousands of candles can be lit with a single candle when teachers are ideal *gurus* guiding the students on right lines. The medicare program is an eye-opener to the world of commercial medicine. Through the super-specialty hospitals with free medicines to all, Baba's medicare provides medical services particularly to the rural poor. One of the projects under sociocare has been His Drinking Water Project, providing water to 731 villages in Anantapur district. Such a huge project, unparalleled in human history, is a monumental example of Baba's benevolence for the betterment of the living conditions of the masses in remote villages.

The list of what Baba has done and is doing for humanity is endless. We are indeed blessed to have Him amongst us. We pray to Swami to keep us in His protecting care. I am most grateful to Bhagavan for giving me the honor and privilege to serve on the day-to-day management committee of the Sai International Centre for Human Values. I pray fervently to Baba that I come up to His expectations.

~Lt. Gen. S. P. Malhotra (Retd.)

Source: *Sai Sparshan* (2005)

Master of Time and Space

Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a modern wonder through whom cosmic energies flow and genuine miracles manifest.

I first heard His name while taking part in a radio show three years ago in Long Beach, California. One of the panelists was Indra Devi, well-known *Yoga* teacher. She told me that He materialized objects with a wave of His hand, healed people with a thought or word, and even raised the dead. She was so enthusiastic that my first response was skepticism. I was to find that she did not exaggerate in the least!

His name is a combination of words—Sathya means 'the highest truth'; Sai means 'saint', and Baba means 'revered father'. Truly, Sathya Sai Baba embodies the meaning of His name, and has all the attributes of a Divine Incarnation.



Being a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, and having met many illumined people over the years, I know the signs of sainthood. Baba is, without a doubt, a true adept and Master-Teacher. Some people are, at first, in a state of wonder when they see Him, for He does cut a dramatic picture. He is not a large man but is very lithe and nimble; He has a certain rhythm when He moves and walks. He is ever aware and spontaneous... He is more than sharp, He knows and is aware of what is happening all the time.

As a personality, He is an incarnation of love. The emanations just flow out to take in those who are close to Him, either physically or telepathically. He is not confined to His body, He moves easily through inner spaces not only in thought, but in His subtle body. He has been *seen* at the bedside of dying devotees, even while conducting services or meetings hundreds of miles distant... Sai Baba is master of

time and space. This I know. And this is what a true Master is—one who comprehends the mystery of *maya* [illusion], the fabric that makes up nature. When I sat with Him last November, He turned to me and said, "Everything is one thing. Do you agree?" The realization conveyed with this simple statement was profound... To Sai Baba, the manifest worlds are projections from the Central Source, and imagination makes external life possible. It is all Divine Dream, and Baba lives from the position of seeing the true nature of the Life Process...

After landing in Bombay, I flew to Bangalore and met Baba the very next day. The first evening session with Baba and about two dozen other visitors lasted three hours. I sat just to His left and was able to observe Him closely and take in His consciousness. A more alive and vital person cannot be imagined. The following day, we spent over six hours with Him... I witnessed at least 50 or 60 occasions when Baba produced things for various people. Each time it was appropriate, 'right' for the person and situation, He does this in two ways: he materializes an object by holding a mental picture of it and exerting His will; at other times he will teleport an object. In the first instance, Baba brings *available substance* into concrete form; in the second instance, He dematerializes an object, wherever it is, and reproduces it in His hands. It happens in a moment. I have seen Him do it time and time again.

But His miracles of manifestation are not the important aspect of His ministry. He has come to restore the '*dharmā*', the creative law of life. He has come to encourage people to abide by moral and spiritual laws in order to regenerate society and transform human consciousness. He does not teach any specific method for all people. He teaches according to individual need. When it is required, He encourages the guru-disciple relationship, gives instruction in meditation or advice relative to better living or healing of a condition. Whether speaking to one person or 100,000 (as He did last year at New Delhi), he always says the right thing.

During the 12 days I spent with Sai Baba, I watched Him closely and received His love... Several times He called me into small group interviews where I had the opportunity to see Him work with individuals. Sometimes, He opened the sessions with a casual remark or asked a question. At other times, He would turn to a person He had never seen before and give helpful advice. Baba has said to many people, 'I know your past and I know your future'. Being with Him as He worked with so many men and women, there is not a shred of doubt in my mind, that He does know...

After visiting Sathya Sai Baba, I am convinced of His greatness and of the importance of His world-mission. He will surely visit the West one day, and the impact on mass consciousness will be profound.

~Roy Eugene Davis
(Director Center for Spiritual Awareness.
Author: "*Darshan: The Vision of Light*")
Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, May 1973

Thought of the MONTH

Kshama

Kshama is a word rich in meaning. Besides forbearance, it also implies extreme patience and an enormous capacity to forget as also to forgive. In view of this, the word kshama is directly used in most places so as to not dilute Bhagavan's emphasis.

Among the qualities a man must develop if he is to realize his divinity, the foremost is *Kshama*—forbearance or forgiveness. It is essential for every human being. It is supreme among virtues. *Kshama* is Truth, Righteousness, Sympathy, Non-violence, and all else. *Kshama* comprehends every quality.

How is *kshama* acquired? It is acquired by practicing four kinds of purity: 1. *Dravya Soucham* (purity of materials); 2. *Manasika Soucham* (purity of mind); 3. *Vak Soucham* (purity in speech); 4. *Kriya Soucham* (purity in action or purity of body).

Dravya Soucham (Purity of materials): This covers all things used by a person—from clothes, food, and cooking utensils to houses and all the varied things used by a person. Everything that is in daily use should be completely pure.

Manasika Soucham (Purity of mind): This calls for total elimination of attachments and aversions from the mind. Hatred and envy should have no place. One should cultivate the large-heartedness to return good for evil and not to cause pain to anyone in any circumstance. This is a mark of a pure mind. Today people are filled with hatred and envy. They cannot bear to see others happy or prosperous. This is a sign of a polluted mind. Men with evil minds develop demoniac traits. To be truly human, one must have a pure, unsullied mind. He must recognize that the same divinity is present in everyone. He should realize that the pure spirit that dwells in him and the power that animates him are present equally in every human being. One who is conscious of this unity will have an untrammelled mind.

Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, vol. 21

True and selfless love manifests as sacrifice. Such love knows no hatred. It envelops the entire universe and can draw near even those who are seemingly far away. Love it is that transforms the human into the Divine. It can transform *pashu* (a bestial person) into *Pashupati* (Divinity). In the phenomenal world, you come across many shades and derivatives of this primordial love. You love your father, mother, brother, sister, friends, and so on. In all such cases, there is always a tinge of selfishness somewhere or the other. Divine love, on the other hand, is totally free of even the slightest trace of selfishness. You must surrender to such love, become completely submerged by it, and experience the bliss it confers.

For acquiring such love, the quality of *kshama* or forbearance is a vital necessity. Every individual must cultivate this noble quality. *Kshama* is not achieved by reading books or learnt from an instructor. Nor can it be received as a gift from someone else. This prime virtue *kshama* can be acquired solely by self-effort, by facing squarely diverse problems, difficulties of various sorts, anxieties, and suffering, as well as sorrow. In the absence of *kshama*, man becomes susceptible to all kinds of evil tendencies. Hatred and jealousy easily take root in a person lacking this virtue.

Divinity is nothing but the combined manifestation of *prema* (love) and *kshama*. At one stroke, *kshama* subsumes *sathya*, *dharma*, and the entire *Vedas*. It is the greatest among *tapas* (penance). It is the grandest and the noblest among virtues. It is all encompassing.

The *Mahabharatha* and the *Srimad Bhagavatham* both contain many episodes that illustrate the disaster that befalls when *kshama* is lost. Jealousy is the first bad quality that makes its entry when *kshama* makes its exit. The *Mahabharatha* gives a graphic portrayal of how life that is otherwise smooth can be totally shattered by jealousy. The Golden Island Lanka was like the very heavens, but Ravana's jealousy reduced it to ruins.

Whereas *kshama* can give complete protection, its absence can plunge one into distress and disaster. Impatience breeds selfishness and promotes jealousy, which together spur infighting and divisive tendencies of various kinds. The troubles the country is currently passing through are largely due to the absence of this noble quality of *kshama*. Impatience has ruined even very great spiritual aspirants. Likewise, kings have been reduced to beggars. Absence of *kshama* can make *yogulu* (yogis) into *rogulu* (sick persons). Without *kshama*, mankind becomes degraded and starts declining, but if it has this quality then it can progress by leaps and bounds. *Kshama* is thus the very breath of life.

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