

Divine Proximity is the Real Wealth

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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14 July 1996

Editor's note. This discourse does not appear in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series. It appeared in *Sanathana Sarathi*, December 2011.

When you already have a lighted lamp
in your house, where is the need for
you to go to the house of your
neighbour to light the lamp?

If you forget God, it amounts to for-
getting yourself because you your-
self are God.

Telugu Poem

Students!

The culture of Bharat (India) affirms the all-pervasiveness of God. In this world, there is no entity, living or non-living, that is not divine. From a stone to a diamond, from an ant to a lion, from a small bird to a mighty eagle, from a pebble to a mountain, everything is divine. That is why the *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have been worshipping trees, anthills, hills, oaks, stones, etc.

But today, people have forgotten this sacred tradition and consider such practices as acts of superstition. Modern students also condemn these ancient traditions, considering them as acts of foolishness.

The same Atmic Principle is present in all

In fact, there is a deep inner meaning associated with the sacred traditions of Bharat. The *Bharatiyas* do not limit the principle of love that God has bestowed on them to human beings alone. Rather, they share their love with all sentient beings and insentient objects. That is why Thyagaraja also sang:

Oh Rama!

In Your pure and unsullied form of
love,

You indwell all beings from an ant to
Brahma as also in Siva and Kesava.

Please be my protector too.

(Telugu Poem)

Divinity is all-pervasive. Never doubt that God is here and not there. The *Bharatiyas* (Indians) worship even a small roadside stone. They worship even an anthill, in which poisonous snakes live. There is no object in this world that is not worshipped by the *Bharatiyas*. They worship every hillock, considering it as the sacred Govardhana mountain and every hillock as the Himalayas. In this manner, every hillock, anthill, tree, bird, and stone is the object of veneration for the *Bharatiyas*.

They feed the ants by providing food to them in the form of rice flour and look after them with love. In this way, this sacred land of *Bharat* earned the reputation as the land of compassion and penance. There can be no greater foolishness than considering such sacred traditions of *Bharatiya* culture as superstitions.

Many people in other countries believe that there is no greater principle than the principle of Brotherhood of Man. But there is a principle that is even superior to this principle of Brotherhood of Man, and that is *Ekatma bhava* (the Principle of Oneness). There is no greater foolishness than condemning the sa-

cred culture of Bharat (India), which pro-
pounds the truth that the same *Atmic* principle
is present in all.

It is this sacred land of Bharat that promotes
the principle of unity in diversity and the
principle of social justice. Since ancient
times, Bharat has been sharing her spiritual
wealth with other countries and promoting
peace and prosperity in the world. In this
modern age also, one should not forget such
sacred traditions and divine feelings associat-
ed with the culture of Bharat. Only broad-
minded people can understand this truth. But
to narrow-minded people, this will appear to
be foolishness.

Follow the spiritual path

Where is the place where there is no God?
What object is not permeated with Divinity?
Everything is God. *Anoraneeyan Mahato
Maheeyan* (Brahman is subtler than the sub-
tlest and vaster than the vastest).

All objects in this world are a combination of
atoms. Can any scientist in the world can de-
ny the existence of Divinity in every atom of
the universe? A scientist who denies this is no
scientist at all. There is divine effulgence in
every atom.

That is why Ramdas sang, *Anta Ramamayam
Jagamanta Ramamayam* (the Rama principle
permeates the entire universe). There is no
principle other than Rama principle in this
world. The divine Name of Rama is that
which confers bliss. Due to the defective
modern system of education, students are for-
getting this divine principle. Modern educa-
tion is only for a living; it does not illumine
the intellect.

Today there is no fear of sin.
Wicked deeds and acts of cruelty have
become an every-day occurrence.
Their magnitude is beyond all descrip-
tion.

Devotion to the Lord has become ex-
tinct. Oh man!

Understand that you can attain peace
and happiness only by chanting the
divine Name.

(Telugu Poem)

Oh man!

Do not feel proud of your education.

If you do not offer salutations to God
and do not think of Him with devo-
tion, all your education will become
useless.

(Telugu Poem)

Oh man!

You struggle hard in life merely for
the sake of filling your belly.

You acquire myriad types of know-
ledge from various fields.

Examine and enquire for yourself what
great happiness you have achieved
by spending all the time from dawn
to dusk in acquiring worldly know-
ledge and earning wealth while for-
getting God.

(Telugu Poem)

Jantunam nara janma durlabham (of all liv-
ing beings, human birth is the rarest). Having
attained such a precious human birth, is it
what you are supposed to attain? Should you
attain this type of mundane happiness in your
life? No, no. Your purpose and goal of life are
different. What you should achieve is true
happiness.

But forgetting such an eternal and everlasting
happiness, you are craving ephemeral and
transient happiness. No doubt, secular educa-
tion is required. I don't dispute that. Worldly
education is for life here and spiritual educa-
tion is for life hereafter. However, worldly
education leads only to the path of *pravritti*
(worldliness). What you should follow is the
path of *nivritti* (spirituality).

All that is related to *pravritti* is momentary
and transient, and all that is related to *nivritti*

is true and eternal. That is why you should aim at attaining the happiness that comes from following the path of *nivritti*.

Books are no doubt full of knowledge. But what is the use if the head is filled with mud? How far is the bookish knowledge useful? If your head is filled with mud, even the knowledge contained in the books will become useless for you, like mud. What is the reason? The reason is association with wrong company. When you fill your *mastaka* (head) with knowledge contained in *pustaka* (book), your *mastaka* itself will become *pustaka*. What you need to acquire is not knowledge of *pustaka* but the knowledge of *mastaka*. That is practical knowledge. It is possible to acquire practical knowledge only when you follow the path of spirituality.

Deservedness depends upon faith

Yad bhavam tad bhavati (as the feelings, so is the result). When your feeling and faith are sacred, the result is also bound to be sacred.

In olden days, there used to be a niche in the wall at the entrance of a well-to-do family, in which they used to place a small lighted lamp. The people of the village would come to their house to light their lamp from it. This tradition originated from the belief that if they lighted their lamps from the one kept in the house of a prosperous family, they would also become prosperous.

In accordance with this tradition, Yasoda also kept a lighted lamp in the outer wall of her house so that the *gopikas* (cowherd maidens) of the village could come and light their lamp from it. It was the time when Krishna had left Gokul and was living in Mathura.

A newly married *gopika* named Suguna came to Repalle after her marriage. When she heard the divine *leelas* (sports, plays) of Krishna in Repalle, she became ecstatic and thought it was her misfortune that she had come to Repalle only after Krishna had left for Mathura.

She felt dejected and cursed her fate, thinking: Is it possible to change one's destiny?

Earlier her mother-in-law used to come to the house of Yasoda to light her lamp. Once, her mother-in-law was laid up with fever, so Suguna had to go to Yasoda's house to light the lamp. This opportunity turned out to be her good fortune. She was overjoyed to think that she would be seeing the place where Krishna lived and moved around.

She approached the house of Yasoda with pure heart and total faith in Krishna. Experience of Divinity depends on faith rather than on spiritual practices or scholarship. There have been many great scholars, yogis, and men of great penance and sacrifice in this world. But they could not attain the deservedness that was attained by Suguna. Right from the time when she set her foot in Repalle, she contemplated on Krishna all the time, thinking that she did not have the good fortune to see Krishna.

When she lighted her lamp from the lamp placed in the house of Yasoda, she saw Krishna in the flame. She became so ecstatic that she lost all her body consciousness. She even did not know that her fingers were getting burnt in the flame. Seeing this, Yasoda came running and asked, "Where are you, my dear? You are not even aware that your hand is getting burnt! Have you fallen asleep? Did you not sleep last night?"

Other *gopikas* who had come to light their lamp also watched this. Suguna was seeing Krishna in the flame all the time, and, as a result, she had no body consciousness. The other *gopikas* surrounded her and asked, "What is the matter? What are you seeing?" When she said that she had seen Krishna, the *gopikas* burst into a joyous dance, singing:

Our Suguna had the vision of Krishna
in the house of Nanda,
Krishna appeared to her in the flame of
the lamp.
(Telugu Song)

What type of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) and worship did Suguna perform? She had no knowledge of spiritual practices like *japa* and *dhyana* (chanting and meditation). Women in those times were not educated. That, in fact, was their good fortune. If they had this type of modern education, they would not have been able to attain such divine bliss. Their entire focus in those days was on Divinity.

But the focus of modern students is always on acquiring bookish knowledge. After they acquire it, their focus shifts to passing the examination. During the time of examination, they drink cups and cups of tea and coffee to keep themselves awake at night. Thereby they ruin their health and lose their memory power also. In this way, man today is ruining his innate powers.

But people like Suguna in those days always focused on Krishna. It was their firm faith that was responsible for their deservedness. Deservedness depends upon faith and nothing else.

When one wants to go to the terrace of one's house, one has to climb a ladder. The ladder has to have support at both ends, at the base and also at the top. Love is the support at the base of this ladder of spirituality and faith is the support at the top. Without the support of love and faith, it is not possible to reach spiritual heights. In fact, to develop love and faith is the real *sadhana* (spiritual discipline).

God can come to devotees' houses of in any form

During the time of Shirdi Sai Avatar, there was an ardent devotee of Baba named Hemadpant. His other name was Annasaheb Dabholkar. He always contemplated on Baba

and kept repeating, "Baba, Baba, Baba" all the time. One day, he was awakened at night at 3 o'clock by a tall person who patted his back and said, "Hemadpant! Tomorrow I am coming to your house for food."

He wondered whether what he saw was a dream or a reality. When he noticed that the door of his house was open, he realised that this was not a dream. Then he was filled with joy and started shouting loudly, "My Baba came to me and told me that he would come to my house for food tomorrow."

Hearing this, his wife got up and asked, "What happened to you? Did you have a dream? Have you gone mad that you are talking so loudly like this? How is it possible for Baba to come tomorrow? Where is Shirdi and where is our house? All this is your imagination only."

Hemadpant said to his wife, "Oh foolish woman! For God, there is nothing like far or near. How can there be any coming and going for God, who is all-pervasive? God neither comes nor goes; He is everywhere. Those who have deservedness can see Him anywhere. But those who lack deservedness cannot see Him. It all depends on one's faith."

Hemadpant told his wife, "Baba will come to our house tomorrow. Therefore, prepare befitting food tomorrow morning."

She was very happy to hear that and said, "Is there any greater fortune for us than Baba visiting our house?" She got up early in the morning, cleaned the house and the cooking utensils, and prepared many delicious items such as *vada* (savoury snack of South India), *payasam* (sweet pudding), etc. She decorated the house with mango leaves and garlands of flowers and waited for the arrival of Baba.

It was 12 o'clock, but no sign of Baba's arrival was visible. She was beset with anxiety. Hemadpant tried to pacify her, saying, "Baba will never go back on his promise. Baba is the embodiment of truth. In fact, he is verily Lord

Sathyanarayana. Therefore, Baba will definitely come.”

It was already two o'clock but Baba did not come. Hemadpant did not know what to do. At that very time, two persons came to their house and said, “Hemadpant! You appear to be very busy. Maybe you are waiting for the arrival of some relatives. That is why you have already prepared food for them. Hence, it does not appear proper for us to disturb you at this time. We will come later. But kindly take this packet.”

Hemadpant took the packet, and they left. When he opened the packet, he found Baba's picture in it. He put the picture close to his head with reverence and exclaimed, “Oh dear Baba! You have come to my house in the form of this picture!”

Devotion is a sort of madness. Sai Baba is the embodiment of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss), who removes your worldly madness and makes you mad for God. Why does he make you mad for God? It is only to drive away your worldly madness. If you want to get rid of your worldly madness, you should become mad for God. Baba wipes away the tears of your worldly sorrow and makes you shed tears for God.

Hemadpant placed the food before Baba's photo, closed his eyes and prayed, “Baba! You must eat this food.” When he opened his eyes, a *vada* was missing from the plate of food. He could also see the marks of Baba's fingers in the rice served in the plate. Then he said with joy, “Baba has eaten the food,” and offered it as *prasadam* to all.

Baba used to satisfy his devotees in this manner. Having given his word to his devotees that he would visit their house, he would come to them in some form or the other. In order to make his devotees realise that God is present in all beings, he went to their house in the form of animals also, like a buffalo, a cat, a dog, etc., and ate the food meant for him.

God is present in all beings

Now I don't do like that. Once I promise that I will come to your house and accept your food, I will go Myself and have food there. I told many people that on coming to Mumbai, I would visit their house and have food there. Accordingly, I went to their houses and partook of the food served by them. Only then were they happy.

What was the reason of their happiness? It was the result of their love, faith, and feelings. Devotees in those days were full of love and total faith. But people today have only part-time faith. When God tells them that He will come to their house, they are very happy at that time. But, later, they start doubting whether Swami will come or not. They also think that Swami might have casually told them for their satisfaction.

Never give room to such doubts. When you develop total faith in Swami's words, they will certainly come true. God's words are divine and ambrosial. They are ever true. But if you lack faith, they may not come true.

Therefore, develop firm faith. Come what may, never give up your faith under any circumstances. Faith is your life-breath.

In My *Avatar* as Shirdi Sai Baba, some people could not understand the subtle meanings of My words and actions. They would come to Baba and complain, “Baba! We were waiting for you because you promised to come. Why did you disappoint us? Why did you put us to so much trouble? What sin have we committed?”

Baba would reply, “You people are really very foolish. I did come to your house, but you drove me away with a stick.”

These devotees would wonder and say, “What Baba! Can we ever commit this sacrilege of chasing you away with a stick?”

Then Baba would tell them that he came to their house in the form of a black dog. In this

manner, Baba demonstrated the truth that God is present in all beings.

When you see a rat, you try to catch it in a rat trap or kill it with a stick. But when you see it with Lord Ganesh, you offer your salutations to it. Similarly, when you see a snake, you try to kill it or call a snake charmer to catch it. But you offer your salutations to it when you see it adorning Lord Siva.

Whosoever is in the proximity of God will be revered and respected. Divine proximity is the real wealth. You will be honoured depending upon your closeness to God. But if you become distant from God, nobody will even look at your face.

In fact, you are always in the proximity of God. Whatever you look and whatever you see, there is only Divinity. The divine principle is omnipresent; it neither comes nor goes.

Bliss is the speech of a true devotee of God

Once, Parvati and Parameswara held a competition between their two sons, Vinayaka and Subrahmanya. They told them that whoever came first after going round the world would be rewarded. Vinayaka has a huge belly, and his vehicle is a rat, so his parents were curious to know how he would compete with Subrahmanya.

Meanwhile, Subrahmanya got onto his vehicle peacock and sped away. However, Vinayaka continued to be where he was without even bothering to call his vehicle rat. When he noticed Subrahmanya returning after completing his journey around the world, he circumambulated Parvati and Parameswara and declared himself to be the winner of the race.

Parvati, said, “How clever you are! What sort of knack is this? Your brother returned after going round the world. Therefore, he deserves the reward. How can you claim to have gone round the world by merely circumambulating us?” It was not as if Parvati and Parameswara were not aware of this truth. They enacted the

drama only to demonstrate to the world that God is all-pervasive.

Then Vinayaka said, “Mother! Is it not true that wherever we look, you both are present? Therefore, circumambulating you amounts to going round the entire world.”

Wherever you look, there are only two things in this universe: energy and matter, represented by Parvati and Parameswara, respectively. Vinayaka could win the reward due to his intelligence.

Parvati took pity on Subrahmanya and gave him a fruit, lest he be disappointed after taking the trouble of going round the world. She said to him, “My dear! You have come first after going round the world. But Vinayaka came first because he understood the inner significance of the divine principle that God is everywhere.”

When you enquire deeply, you will understand the inner significance associated with the divine principle. One who is totally immersed in water cannot say anything. Similarly, one who is totally immersed in divine love cannot describe it. Only those who remain at the surface can describe it in a superficial manner.

One who is totally immersed in the ocean of devotion, faith, and love for God will be saturated with bliss; that one will not know anything else. Scholars, educated people, and poets who claim to know Divinity are, in fact, those who are at this superficial level only. But one who is totally immersed in the divine principle will not be able to talk about it. Bliss is that one’s speech and bliss is their language. There is nothing higher than this. Therefore, it is a great mistake to say that you are in search of God. Where is the need to search for God who is all-pervasive?

There are nine paths of devotion: *sravanam*), *kirtanam*), *Vishnusmaranam*), *padasevanam*), *vandanam*), *archanam*, *dasyam*, *sneham*, *Atmanivedanam* (listening, singing, contemplat-

ing on Vishnu, serving His Lotus Feet, salutation, worship, servitude, friendship, self-surrender). It is said that these paths lead a person to God. But one should realise that one is already God. In fact, everyone is the embodiment of Divinity. It is God who is in search of a true devotee.

I am searching.
I have been in search of a true human
being and
a true devotee then and now.
(Telugu Song)

Even birds and animals have true devotion, but, unfortunately, it is not found in human beings. Human beings have only part-time devotion.

Where is God? Have firm faith that you yourself are God. The body is the temple and the *jiva* (individual soul) is the deity. Therefore, you are God. Where else can you find God when you yourself are God? But you should strengthen this faith. Only then can you have the taste of true love and bliss. When you have sugar in your hand, you will not know its taste. Put it on your tongue and start chewing it. Only then will you be able to experience its sweetness.

(Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the *bhajan*, “*Madhura Madhura Murali Ghanashyama ...*”)

– From Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 14 July 1996.