

Hold on to the Fundamental Principle of Oneness Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Pots are many, clay is one,
Jewels are many, gold is one,
Cows are many, milk is one,
Likewise, the same Divinity dwells in all forms.
(Sanskrit verse)

If you enquire deeply, you will find in this world that the same thing assumes different names and forms and is put to use in myriad ways. Seed is one, from which emerge the trunk, branches, sub-branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits of the tree. All these have different names and forms and are put to use in different ways. The One willed to become many (*Ekoham bahusyam*). Though God is one, He assumes many names and forms.

God is the cause of the universe

Here you have to enquire into the two types of causes: one is the instrumental cause (*nimitta karana*) and the other is primary cause (*upadana karana*). For a pot, the potter is the instrumental cause and clay is the primary cause. Pots may break and lose their form, but the clay remains changeless. The potter makes different types of pots from the same clay. Even though the pots may be broken, the clay does not undergo any change.

Similarly, there are many types of ornaments, for which gold is the primary cause and the goldsmith is the instrumental cause. You may change the ornaments into different names and forms, but gold remains the same.

But God, who is the primary cause of the universe, also assumes the role of the instrumental cause, the Creator, and creates objects and beings with different names and forms. Here, you have to understand the oneness of the instrumental cause and the primary cause.

If there is no potter, clay cannot be converted into pots. And the potter cannot make pots without clay. Therefore, both —potter and clay— are necessary for pots to be made.

For the entire universe, God is the primary cause, and He is also the creative force of the universe.

Your bodies are like different pots. You put your body to different uses and experience pleasure and pain. Just as the pot breaks when it falls down, the body also perishes when the time comes.

But God, who is both the instrumental cause and the primary cause, is permanent. The same pot, which is useful, becomes useless when it breaks. The same can be said about the human body.

Five names of God

Five names are attributed to God:

Para Nama (*para* means *higher, beyond supreme; nama* means *name*),
Vyuha Nama (*vyuha*: to arrange, dispose, separate, divide, resolve. Also refers to emanation and manifest power of Vishnu),
Vibhava Nama (*vibhava*: friend),
Antaratma Nama (*antaratma*: inner self),
Archana Nama (*archana*: worship).

With these five names, God performs various tasks in this world.

God dwells in *Vaikuntha* (heaven, the abode of Brahman). Therefore, the dweller of *Vaikuntha* is *Para Nama*. *Vaikuntha* is that which does not become deformed (*kunthita*). There, God dwells with *Para Nama*. Nobody has access to that place. None can enter *Vaikuntha*, where Divinity shines resplendently. From there, God sees and hears

everything and creates everything, but He is neither seen nor heard by anyone. Nobody can see His form. This is the principle of *Para Nama*.

The second name of God is *Vyuha Nama*. It refers to the One who reclines on the serpent Adishesha in the ocean of milk. There, gods and goddesses can see Him, but ordinary mortals cannot. Here, God, with the attribute *Vyuha Nama*, fulfils the wishes of gods and goddesses.

You have seen this in dramas and movies. When the demon king Hiranyakasipu was causing untold suffering to people of all worlds, gods and goddesses went and prayed to Lord Narayana, who was reclining on Adishesha. He accepted their prayers and incarnated on earth to kill Hiranyakasipu. Therefore, you can understand that God with the attribute of *Vyuha Nama* is visible only to gods and goddesses.

The third type of name is *Vibhava (friend) Nama*. This is the name attributed to God when He incarnates in human form like Rama and Krishna for the protection of the world. When God comes down as an *Avatar*, He establishes an intimate relationship with the people of the world, destroys their wicked qualities and wicked thoughts, and puts them on the right path by developing devotion, noble thoughts, and good qualities in them. When God comes as an *Avatar*, He demonstrates the intimate relationship that exists between God and His devotees.

The fourth name is *Antaratma (inner self) Nama*. It refers to the consciousness, which pervades a person from top to toe and protects them. The indwelling divinity (*Antaratma*) is in everyone.

The fifth type is *Archana (Worship) Nama*. Man worships God in this form to earn His grace through prayer, devotional singing (*bhajan*) with devotion and surrender.

Decline of dharma in the Kali Yuga

Since time immemorial, God has been incarnating on earth from age to age for the establishment of *dharma*. Students today may be surprised to know this. In fact, anyone will be struck with awe and wonder when they hear about the mighty power of the people of the *Kritha Yuga* (the first age of humanity). It really sounds incredible. In the *Krihta*

Yuga, people used to live for hundreds of years. People used to be very tall and well built, not short statured, like people of today. Their hand itself was six feet long.

What was the life sustaining force of people of those days? The life principle was present in their bones. Therefore, people could remain alive even when they were reduced to a skeleton in the absence of food and water. Even if there was no flesh and no blood in the body, the life principle could remain in the bones.

In the *Thretha Yuga* (the second age of humanity), the height of people became comparatively less. Not only the height, even the longevity was reduced. People could be alive as long as there was flesh and blood in the body.

Then, in *Dwapara Yuga* (the third age of humanity), the life principle was present in the blood and people could remain alive as long as there was blood in the body. This can very well be understood by the example of Bhishma in the Mahabharata war. He was lying on the bed of arrows for 56 days till his entire blood got drained out from the body. There were no life support systems like oxygen cylinders those days. The life principle was in his blood, which slowly got drained out over a period of 56 days.

In this age of *Kali* (this, the fourth age of humanity), the life principle is present in food. People remain alive as long as they take food. Without food, the body becomes lifeless. Therefore, in this age of Kali, a person is called “one who is sustained by food (*annagata prani*)”.

But in earlier ages, food was not important, connection with God was more important. In the *Kritha* and *Thretha Yugas*, people gave top priority to their relationship with God. But after the *Dwapara Yuga* started, people relied more on their head than on God. Try to understand this clearly.

In the *Kritha* and *Thretha Yugas*, people believed that righteousness is the basis of the entire world (*Dharma moolam idam jagat*). But in the *Dwapara Yuga*, people considered that wealth or money is the basis of the entire world (*Dhana moolam idam jagat*).

What was the cause of the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas? The greed for wealth was so much that the Kauravas refused to give even five villages to the Pandavas as their share of the kingdom. Therefore, wealth was the cause of the Mahabharata war.

In this age of *Kali* (the age we are now in), you should realise that it is not money (*dhana*) that sustains the world but compassion (*daya*). Compassion is the basis of the entire world (*Daya moolam idam jagat*). But there is no trace of compassion in the heart today. *Hri + Daya = Hridaya*. That which is filled with compassion is the human heart. But due to the absence of compassion in the heart of people, they are facing many ordeals.

Avatars come to establish dharma

During the time when the teachings of Buddhism and Jainism were widely followed in India, Sankara was born in a small village named Kaladi in Kerala to a noble couple Aryamba and Sivaguru. What was the state of affairs at that time? Many small kingdoms were fighting with each other for worldly gains. As a result of these wars, people's minds were filled with hatred. Hatred led to disunity, which in turn gave rise to improper conduct, falsehood, injustice, and wickedness. Not only that, *Vedic* scholars, intellectuals, and educated people started misinterpreting the teachings of the *Vedas* and scriptures (*sastras*). Therefore, people lost faith in the teachings of the *Vedas* and scriptures. Consequently, a need arose for a divine power to incarnate to set things right.

Lord Krishna declares in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

Whenever righteousness is on the decline
and unrighteousness is on the ascendance,
I incarnate on earth.

*Yada yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bhara-
rata,
Abhyutthanamadharmasya tadatmanam
srujamyaham.*

(Sanskrit verse)

When the practice of *dharma* (right conduct) declines, when injustice is on the rise, when people start acting contrary to the teachings of the *Vedas* and scriptures, either God Himself incarnates or He sends *Amsavathars* (partial manifestations of

God), prophets, and noble souls to correct the situation.

When God incarnates with all His divine attributes, He is called *Purnavathar* (Full *Avathar*) or *Vibhavavatar*. The *Archana* (Worship) *Nama* refers to the names of partial manifestations (*Amsavathars*). Not only in India, but in all countries, such partial manifestations incarnate from time to time.

In the beginning, Jesus said, "I am the messenger of God." Gradually, he understood the principle of indweller. Then he declared, "I am the son of God." Being the son of God, he acquired all the attributes of God. Just as the son has complete right over his father's property, Jesus, being the son of God, acquired all the divine attributes. When he realised that the same *Atmic* principle is present in everyone, he declared, "I and my Father are one."

The same was stated by Zoroaster. First he said, "I am in the light." He declared, God is in heaven and he is living in His light. Gradually, he understood that Divinity is present within him. Then he declared, "The light is in me." In the beginning, he thought he was in the light. Then he realised the same light was within and the light outside was nothing but the reflection of the inner being. He believed that he was being guided by the light within. When he realised the oneness of the inner light and the outer light, he declared, "I am the light."

As per Indian philosophy, these three stages are represented by dualism (*dwaitha*), qualified non-dualism (*visishtadwaitha*), and non-dualism (*adwaitha*).

Sankara taught the principle of nondualism to the world

Sankara, who came to demonstrate the principle of non-dualism to the entire world, considered himself a servant of God. Unfortunately, his father Sivaguru passed away when Sankara was three years old. Ten days prior to his demise, Sivaguru had a vision of divine effulgence, which conveyed to him that he should perform the sacred thread investiture ceremony (*upanayanam*) of Sankara. Obeying the directions of the divine light, Sivaguru performed the *upanayanam* of Sankara at the

age of three. After the *upanayanam*, Sankara started reciting the *Gayatri Mantra*.

After the death of his father, Sankara's mother, Aryamba, took up the complete responsibility for his upbringing and admitted him to a *gurukul* under the tutelage of a *guru* (preceptor).

Sankara was endowed with such a sharp intellect that before he attained his sixteenth year, he had mastered the four *Vedas* and six *Sastras* (six systems of philosophy). For ordinary mortals, it is not possible to study the four *Vedas* and six *Sastras* even in fifty years. But Sankara was a special boy; in fact, he was super special. He could understand and assimilate the teachings of all four *Vedas* and six *Sastras*. The *Guru* was wonderstruck at the intellectual acumen of his disciple.

One day, his mother approached the *Guru* and expressed her intention to perform the marriage of her son. But Sankara said he was not interested in marriage and that he wanted to take renunciation (*sannyasa*). He said, "I wish to offer my body, mind and everything to God. In fact, nothing is mine, everything is given by God. Therefore, I want to offer myself to God". He was determined to become a renunciant (*sannyasin*).

Aryamba pleaded with him, shedding tears, that he should marry. It is but natural for a mother to wish her son to marry.

One day when his mother went to the river to fetch water, Sankara followed her, pleading, "Mother, give me permission to take renunciation". But she did not budge.

As she was filling her pot in the river, Sankara jumped into the river, and after some time, he raised his hand and yelled, "Mother, I am being swallowed by a crocodile. At least now, permit me to embrace renunciation."

The mother at once said, "My dear, if taking to renunciation saves your life, so it be! It is enough for me, if you are alive". At once, the crocodile released its grip on Sankara and he came out of water. He told his mother, "I was being swallowed by the crocodile of worldliness. Once you permitted me to become a renunciant, giving up all worldly attachments, the crocodile of worldliness left me." Taking to renunciation does not mean

merely putting on ochre robes; it means changing one's outlook toward life.

Sankara offered his salutations to his mother and left home at the age of sixteen. At that time, his mother extracted a promise from him that he would come to her at the time of her death and perform her last rites.

There were no buses, cars or planes to travel from one place to another in those days. Sankara traveled on foot and visited all the pilgrimage centres in the country. During his travels, he met many *Vedic* scholars and defeated them in debates and taught them the principle of nondualism (*adwaita*). He told them, "You see diversity on the basis of external names and forms. Though forms are different and heads are different, heart is one and the same. That is Divinity."

There may be many varieties of sugarcane, but the juice is the same in all of them. Similarly, Divinity is present in everyone in the form of divine essence. At that time, Mandana Misra was considered a great scholar. He also became a disciple of Sankara when he was defeated in the debate with him. Sankara traveled widely and convinced all great scholars about the principle of oneness.

All religions teach the principle of unity

There is only one entity, not two. God is one without a second (*Ekameva adviteeyam Brahma*).

People are deluded by diversity of names and forms. They should hold on to the underlying principle of oneness. Nothing exists without this fundamental principle. It is not possible to make ornaments without gold, nor is it possible to make pots without clay. Likewise, there is only one fundamental principle for the entire creation. It is the same for people of all religions: Hindus, Christians, Mohammedans, or Sikhs.

Though the divine principle is one, people of different faiths call it by different names. God is one, goal is one. This principle of oneness needs to be taught to students. It is not so easy to understand the principle of nondualism (*adwaita*). That is why today I have told in a nutshell what it means.

What is religion? Religion is that which removes all differences. In fact, it demonstrates unity in diversity.

Having established the principle of nondualism firmly in the hearts of people, Sankara left his body at a very early age of 32. What was the reason? The task for which he had come had been accomplished. He told his disciples to preserve this principle in their hearts and propagate the same. He established four centres of nondualism—Jagannath Mutt, Sringeri Mutt, Dwaraka Mutt, and Joshi Mutt—and put his four eminent disciples in charge of these monastic establishments (*Mutts*).

By establishing these *Mutts* and promoting the sense of spiritual oneness among the people, Adi Sankara promoted harmony in the country. He strived to spread happiness everywhere by propagating the principle of nondualism and removing differences and unrest. None can dispute the principle of nondualism that Sankara propagated.

Later on, Ramanujacharya modified nondualism (*adwaita*) and called it qualified nondualism (*visishtadwaita*). Just as juice is the same in all types of sugarcane, the divine essence is the same in all beings. This was the principle of nondualism taught by Sankara.

But how long can one keep sugarcane juice? Sugarcane juice cannot remain as it is with the passage of time. But if the same sugarcane juice is converted into sugar, it becomes long lasting and can be added in any preparation. You may add it to wheat flour or rice flour or any flour for that matter; it gives sweetness. Anything that comes in contact with a sweet substance like sugar will acquire the property of sweetness.

Sugar is permanent and can be used in anything. Therefore, instead of preserving sugarcane juice as it is, it is better to convert it into sugar. This is the principle of qualified nondualism (*visishtadwaita*) advocated by Ramanujacharya.

The third principle was dualism (*dwaita*). This was advocated by Madhwacharya.

Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, and Madhwacharya are the exponents of three types of philosophy: nondualism, qualified nondualism, and dualism, respectively. But all three agreed on the fundamental principle of oneness.

Sankaracharya called it sugarcane juice.

Ramanujacharya called it sugar.

Madhwacharya said, “If Divinity is like sugar, I don’t want to become sugar; I want to be one who enjoys the sweetness of sugar. If I become sugar, how can I enjoy its taste?” Therefore, he prayed, “Oh Lord! You remain sugar always, but make me the one who enjoys Your sweetness.”

When can you become the one who enjoys the sweetness of Divinity? It is possible only when you offer yourself to God completely. Till such time, you may perform any type of spiritual discipline like chanting (*japa*), penance (*tapas*), meditation (*dhyana*) and *yoga*, and you may study any number of sacred texts, but you will not attain the deservedness to enjoy the sweetness of divinity. All these spiritual practices give only temporary mental satisfaction. Since all these practices are performed with the help of the heart, offer your heart to God. This is what Madhwacharya taught:

Oh God, I offer my heart, which You have given me.

What else can I offer at Your Lotus Feet?

I pray to You to accept it.

(Telugu Poem)

One should know one’s humanness to realise one’s Divinity

When you say, “Oh God, I offer my heart to You,” God says, “Here I give you the experience of the sweetness of Divinity.”

As are the feelings, so is the result (*Yad bhavam tad bhavati*). God is changeless. He will respond to you in accordance with your feelings.

What is the form of water? What is the form of air? They have no form of their own. God is also like that. Out of His immense love for His devotee, God assumes the form of His devotee’s choice. Air assumes the form of a football when it is filled in a football and takes the form of a balloon when it is filled in a balloon. Similarly, water assumes the form of the container or the tank in which it is put. Likewise, God assumes the form upon which you contemplate. God has no preference for this form or that form.

All names and forms are but manifestations of the Supreme Being, who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute and nondual.

He is the embodiment of *sathyam*, *sivam*, *sundaram* (truth, goodness, beauty).

*Sarva rupa dharam santham, Sarva nama
dharam Sivam,
Satchidananda rupam adwaitam, sathyam, sivam,
sundaram.*

(Sanskrit verse)

Though God has no form, He assumes all forms
and considers all names as His.

Though truth, goodness, beauty (*sathyam, sivam,
sundaram*) appear to be different, they are in fact
one and the same. Truth is beauty. Where there is
no truth, how can there be beauty? There can be
no beauty in untruth; there may be attraction but
no beauty. Therefore, that which is true is beauti-
ful. When truth and beauty come together, good-
ness manifests. Truth, beauty, and goodness are
one and the same.

The same truth was taught by Plato to his disciple
Aristotle. He said, "My dear, I have studied all the
scriptures and have realised that God is the em-
bodiment of truth, goodness, and beauty."

When a person has these three attributes, they also
become divine.

People today do not understand what humanness
is. They are unable to recognise the human values
present within. Then how can they recognise their
innate Divinity?

Lakhs of years have passed since the birth of hu-
man beings. But, so far, humanness has not taken
birth in him. The day one realises one's true hu-
man nature, that person will visualise their own
innate divinity. Unless one knows one's human-
ness, how can one realise one's divinity? How can
one who cannot touch the roof reach the sky?

Therefore, first of all, try to acquire human quali-
ties. Then it will be easy for you to develop divine
qualities.

Students should understand how noble souls in
those days realised divinity. When they follow the
path shown by those noble souls, they will be able
to develop noble feelings and selfless love and
lead a peaceful life.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the *bha-
jan*, "*Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam...*")

– Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall,
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