

Nature of Self

*Trees bear fruit for the benefit of others;
Rivers flow for the betterment of all;
Cows yield milk for the benefit of others;
Human body has been given to man to help others.*
[Sanskrit sloka]

In this world, trees, rivers, and cows help others without any trace of selfish motive. They do not expect anything in return. Without trees, rivers, and cows, the world cannot exist. In fact, it is they that sustain it. But the irony is that man does not make any effort to help and serve others. The spirit of sacrifice evident in trees, rivers, and cows is absent in man today. He spends all his time in fulfilling his selfish desires and does not give even a moment for doing good to others or for helping them. *Sai Avatar* has incarnated in this *Kali* age with the divine mission of making every individual realize his relationship with the community, and ultimately with Divinity.

True individuality of man

Transformation at individual level is absolutely essential. But today, man is wasting his time in evil practices. He indulges in unholy activities day in and day out. He demeans himself by his evil habits. He kills animals and eats their flesh. Instead of purifying his mind, he debases it by taking intoxicants. He defiles time, which is the very form of Divinity, by gambling. He nurtures evil qualities by indulging in evil activities. In addition to this, he involves himself in demeaning activities like stealing and denigrating others. He reads vulgar books, which generate evil thoughts and violent feelings in him. As he indulges more and more in wicked activities, he also pollutes and corrupts the society. When individuals take to evil ways, the entire society degenerates. Teaching and propagation of spirituality is essential for the purification of the individual and the society.

What is spirituality? That which destroys man's animal nature, nurtures humanness, and finally transforms him into a Divine being is spirituality. Worshipping, singing devotional songs, and performing rituals are acts of secondary importance. They cannot be identified with true spirituality. The word **SAI** spells out to the world the significance of transformation at three levels. The letter **S** stands for transformation at spiritual level, **A** for transformation at association (social) level, and **I** for transformation at the individual level.

Individual transformation is the basis for the other two. Therefore, this is the first step. But, these days, the word *individual* is not properly understood. You usually take only the human form into consideration and identify it with an individual. Who is an individual? He, who manifests his *Avayakta* (unmanifest) Divinity through his conduct is an individual

(*vyakti*). This latent divine principle permeates the entire being of an individual from head to foot and is called conscience. To manifest and demonstrate the presence of this conscience is the characteristic of a human being. Instead of manifesting the pure inner being, the Self, man today is manifesting evil qualities and evil tendencies, which are related to his outer being i.e. the body. The *Chaitanya* (Divine Consciousness) latent in every human being is his true individuality. This consciousness should be put on the right track.

Put your senses in right direction

I said the other day, “*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is *Brahman*).” This is a mantra. “*Easwara sarva bhutanam* (God is the indweller in all beings)” is another mantra. It is essential for everyone to understand and realize the inner significance of these mantras. Every mantra is pregnant with deep inner meaning. It is impossible to understand the true meaning of the mantras without acquiring virtues.

What are these virtues? Right vision (*samyak drishti*) is one. Humanity will be in danger without right vision. The image of every seen object gets imprinted in the mind. Therefore, first of all one must have right vision. Right vision is that which is untainted by the baneful influence of evil feelings, evil thoughts, and evil deeds. See no evil; see what is good. That which develops your insight to understand what is good, eternal, and true is right vision.

Next comes right listening (*samyak sravanam*). You should lend your ear only to good speech. Under no circumstances should you listen to evil talk. For this, you should listen to sacred texts, *bhajans* (devotional songs), and talks about sacred acts.

Everything in this world is impermanent. The *Vedas* say, "*Yath drisyam thannasyam*" (all that is seen is bound to perish). All that you see will disappear one day or the other. For the nine-fold path of *bhakti* (devotion) good listening (*sravanam*) is the beginning. *Sravanam*, *keerthanam*, *Vishnusmaranam*, *padasevanam*, *archanam*, *vandanam*, *dasyam*, *sneham*, and *Atmanivedanam* (listening, singing the glories of the Lord, constant remembrance of the name of Vishnu, serving the Lord's feet, worship, salutation, servitude, friendship, and self-surrender) are the nine paths of devotion. The first step to the final act of self-surrender (*Atmanivedanam*) is *sravanam* (listening). *Sruti* (divine sound e.g. *Vedas*) is derived from *sravanam* only.

Right thoughts lead to right action

The next virtue is right speech (*samyak vak*). Right vision and right listening lead to right speech. Your speech should be good. Never utter harsh words. Speak softly and sweetly. That is why I tell you often, "You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly." Say what you have to say without harshness. Speak softly so that only the person for whom your words are intended may hear you. Such soft and sweet speech should be developed. Good vision, good listening and good speech lead to good thoughts. "*Yad bhavam that bhavathi* (as are your thoughts, so is the result)." Right thoughts lead to right action (*samyak karma*). Without good thoughts it is not possible to perform good actions.

Buddha performed *tapas* (penance) for many years to put his five senses on the sacred path. Mere bookish knowledge is of no consequence. It is related to art, and is in fact artificial. Mere textual knowledge will not lead you to right vision.

Similarly, your sense of hearing does not become holy by listening to the expositions of a teacher. Good thoughts cannot be acquired by reading scriptures or by listening to the teachings of the preceptor. By self-effort you should put your senses of *sabda* (sound), *sparsa* (touch), *rupa* (form), *rasa* (taste), and *gandha* (smell) to right use. That alone leads you to proper *sadhana* (spiritual practice).

Senses are the cause for the wrong attitude of man

When you put your senses in the right direction, your life will also enter the right path. For the wrong attitude of man today, senses are the cause. As the senses become impure, the entire life too becomes impure and unsacred. If you want to make your life sacred, you have to first sanctify your senses. So, Buddha who did penance for several years, understood that all ritualistic practices were useless. He declared right vision, right listening, right speech, right thoughts, and right acts as the five primordial principles for the guidance of man.

These five principles are the *pancha pranas* (five life forces) and five *koshas* (life sheaths) of man. Physical body is *annamaya kosha* (food sheath). Body is transient. But you should nourish it, because only a properly nourished healthy body can support the *pranamaya kosha* (life sheath) and *manomaya kosha* (mind sheath). *Pranamaya kosha* helps in the balanced flow of *prana* (life force) in the body.

Human beings limit themselves up to these three *koshas*. Nobody attempts to reach fourth sheath, *vijnanamaya kosha* (wisdom sheath), which is beyond food sheath, life sheath, and mind sheath. This sheath is reached only after transcending the first three sheaths. What is the nature of these three sheaths? The one you think you are is the food sheath (physical body).

What others think you are is the mind sheath. The one you really are is the life sheath.

When the human being enters the wisdom sheath, only then does he experience true bliss. So, man has to maintain sound body. But he should know that as the body is associated with the senses, he should channelise them into the right path. When the senses follow the right path, only then does the life force vibrate in the body properly. This vibration is Divine in nature.

In the *Gayathri Mantra*, the word *bhur* refers to the body. Body is composed of gross materials such as water, lime, lead, iron, etc. All these materials may not cost more than one rupee. But the value of the body is not one rupee. Its value is immeasurable. *Bhur* also stands for the earth. The earth is made up of matter, which is transient.

The word *bhuvah* in the *mantra* stands for vibration. The body is made up of gross matter, which cannot have any movement without the life force of vibration. In the absence of this vibration, the body is mere lifeless matter.

What is the source of this vibration? This vibration originates from radiation (*suvaha*), which is related to spiritual knowledge.

Purity in thought, word, and deed

This spiritual knowledge comes from the *Vedas*. The four *mahavakyas* (profound statements) of the *Vedas* that give this knowledge are *Prajnanam Brahma* (knowledge is *Brahman*), *Ayatma Brahma* (*Atma* is *Brahman*), *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*) and *Tatthwamasi* (That you are). Life force (*prana*) or vibration works only through radiation. Without the radiation of *prajnana*, vibration cannot have any movement. It becomes inert. True humanness lies in harmonizing these three

principles. Man should therefore achieve the unity of materialization, vibration and radiation. Harmony in thought, word, and deed, is referred to as *trikarana suddhi*.

Example of trikarana suddhi

I shall relate to you an example from the *Mahabharata* to illustrate this. Dharmaraja, the eldest brother of the Pandavas, was an embodiment of *sathya*, *dharma*, *santhi*, *prema*, and *ahimsa*. Draupadi, born out of fire, represented *prana*. Bhima, the son of the wind God, symbolized *chaitanya shakti* (power of awareness). You know that life without awareness is *jada* (inert). Arjuna symbolized the *antahkarna shakti* (power of the inner motivator). Nakula and Sahadeva represented the *jnanendriyas* (organs of perception) and *karmendriyas* (organs of action), respectively.

Truth, righteousness, peace, and love join the senses of action and cognition, enter the *antahkarna* (seat of thought and feeling) with the help of life force called vibration and live there. So, Divinity, which exists in every individual, is associated with the five cognitive senses: sound, touch, vision, taste, and smell. To recognize the nature of this truth, man should first attain the unity of thought, word, and deed and bring about complete harmony in them. This is the real spiritual practice.

Today, the typical individual thinks something, speaks something else, and acts in altogether a different way. “*Manasyanyath vachasyanyath karmanyanyath duratmanam.*” Such a manner of functioning is typical of a wicked person.

Arjuna was the epitome of *trikarana suddhi* (purity of the triad thought, word, and deed). Nakula and Sahadeva, who symbolized the senses of cognition and action, provided the

right sources. Bhima, the son of the wind God, stood by the side of Dharmaraja. His presence was as vital as the presence of oxygen in the environment. Draupadi symbolized life force. Only with the help of this life force could Dharmaraja foster truth, righteousness, peace, and love. The Pandavas thus represent the proper use of all the powers in the body in purity and harmony.

Idealism of Draupadi

Epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata* and other *Bharatiya* (Indian) scriptures expound these spiritual realities. Though Bhima and Arjuna were seethed with anger and revenge when their sons were killed by Aswatthama, Draupadi pacified them. Though she was grief-stricken at the loss of her children, she maintained a perfect state of equanimity. When Arjuna, in a fit of anger, was ready to kill Aswatthama, she quoted the scriptures and changed his mind. Draupadi was known for her immaculate character. She was also called *Panchali*. This word is often misinterpreted as a woman married to five men. No, it is not correct. She was able to coordinate the functions of the five cognitive senses — sound, touch, vision, taste, and smell— in an impeccable manner. When Arjuna was about to kill Aswatthama, she advised him in the following manner:

*Oh Arjuna, it is an unrighteous act to kill
the one who is fear-stricken,
the one who is in distress,
the one who is asleep,
the one who is unaware,
the one who has surrendered himself,
the one who is helpless,*

*the one who is unarmed, and
the one who is a female.*

[Telugu Poem]

*Your speech is full of anger.
It is a dangerous trait.
No human being should possess anger.
The one who is filled with anger
achieves nothing but disgrace.
Anger motivates one to do evil deeds.
Such an individual is despised by everyone.*

[Telugu Poem]

Bhima was also furious. Draupadi spoke to him thus:

*Anger destroys one's riches.
It destroys one's respect.
It distances one from relatives.
It causes loss of everything.*

[Telugu Poem]

Aswatthama had killed all her five sons. One can imagine the state of her mind. She would have been justified in using the harshest language. But she did not have harsh feelings. She ran and fell at the feet of Aswatthama and questioned his ruthlessness in a gentle way:

*They didn't wear weapons and rage against you.
They were not in the battlefield.
They didn't cause you even the least harm.
They were not adept in fighting.
How did you feel like killing such
innocent children who were asleep!*

[Telugu Poem]

Draupadi spoke in such a gentle manner. She never used harsh words. Even in moments of extreme distress, Draupadi could speak softly and graciously. In fact every individual should speak softly.

What should a man learn today? He should utilize his senses in the right way and thereby make an endeavor to attain Divinity.

Purpose of the Avatar

In this human life, the most significant thing to know is devotion. *Jnana* (wisdom) is the root of the tree of love. Its fruit contains sweet juice. It is the juice of devotion. The juice or essence (*raso*) is the very form of the Divine. *Raso vai sah* (He is sweet essence). So, *bhakti* (devotion) is the very essence of Divinity. Sweetness of *bhakti* should reflect in your speech. Hence, every word uttered by you should be sweet. Only then do you deserve to be called a human being. When can you speak sweetly? When you contemplate on the Divine, your speech becomes sweet.

However, it may sometimes necessary to use harsh words to correct people who act and behave in evil ways. Though the words may appear to be harsh, the feelings behind them should be saturated with love. Sometimes when it rains, hailstones also fall along with the gentle raindrops. They are nothing but water in frozen form. In this context, I give you an example.

During the *Mahabharata* war, one day Aswatthama vowed that he would behead the Pandavas before the sun sets. Draupadi came to know of this vow. She prayed to Krishna, "I don't want anything. I don't want the kingdom. Save the Pandavas" Krishna said, "That is not in my hands. The vow cannot be changed?" Draupadi pleaded with Krishna, "Nothing in this

world is beyond Your capacity. Everything is in Your hands. If You will, You can do anything.” And she fell at His feet.

Krishna’s plan to save the Pandavas

Lord Krishna blessed her and immediately chalked out a plan. In the darkness of night, He went to sage Durvasa. The Pandavas, who accompanied the Lord, waited outside as instructed by Krishna. To protect His devotees, the Lord has to enact many roles. If He does not act, the play simply loses its significance and it becomes uninteresting. Durvasa gave an ecstatic welcome to Krishna.

Krishna said, “I have come here with a purpose. It is a very difficult task. You have to help me.” Durvasa said, “I am ready to do any task except telling a lie.” Krishna said, “Uttering lies is not acceptable to Me also. I am Divine Myself. I always adhere to truth. How can I tell you to utter a lie? I have made a plan. Please act according to it. That will fulfil My desire.”

“Lord, do You have a desire?” asked Durvasa. “I have desires for the sake of others. I have no desires for My own sake. Whatever I do, whatever I speak, it is for the welfare of others. I never seek My own welfare,” Krishna replied.

“Lord! what should I do?” asked Durvasa. Krishna said, “Dig a big pit. Put a strong plank over it and place your throne on it. Then sit on the throne. The Pandavas will hide in the pit. When Aswatthama comes here along with his accomplices and asks the whereabouts of the Pandavas, tell him that the Pandavas are under you. But say this in a harsh tone.”

Durvasa was known for his temper. Aswatthama searched everywhere and at last came to Durvasa. He offered salutations to Durvasa and asked about the Pandavas. Durvasa said in an angry tone, “Pandavas are under me.” He spoke truth but

changed the intonation. Fearing that the sage would curse him, Aswatthama ran away from that place.

In this way, God has to contrive some situations for the protection of the world. His attempts are not only to protect the holy people but to protect holiness itself. This sacredness is present in every being. To protect this sacredness the Lord incarnates. "*Paritranaya Sadhunam Vinashay Cha Dushkritam Dharma Sansthapanarthaya Sambhavami Yuge Yuge* (to protect the righteous and destroy the wicked I incarnate from time to time to establish *dharma*).” Righteousness can never be annihilated. It is ever present in every age. But occasions arise when its very existence is threatened. The Lord incarnates to re-establish *dharma* and to accord proper place to it. If *dharma* is vulnerable to destruction, how can we call it *dharma*? So, *dharma* can never be vanquished. But, it becomes obscure. To make *dharma* more manifest is the purpose of the *Avatar*.

Saturate your life with Love

The question arises, “Who is God?” You are all the forms of God. The *Atmatathwa* (Self) present in every being is in fact God. It is Divinity in its true sense. "*Mamaivamsa jeevaloke jeevabhuta sanathana*," (an aspect of My Divinity is resident in each being). Do not search for God. Look within. Divine will manifest in you.

Spiritual texts may be many, the teachings of spirituality may be different, but the *Atma* is the same. In any country, at any time, in any surroundings, the *Atma* is the same. There is no such thing as a Japanese *Atma* or American *Atma* or *Atma* of any other country. It transcends all divisions of creeds and castes. It has no distinctions like man and woman. It is beyond all distinctions. *Nirgunam, niranjanam, sanathanam, nicket-*

anam, nithya buddha mukta nirmala swarupinam (The nature of the Self is described as attributeless, pure, eternal, free from bondage, unsullied and immortal). This eternal *Atma* is present in every human being.

Love is the essence of all fruits

At one time, someone questioned Shirdi Sai Baba, “Are you God?” What was His reply? “All are the forms of the Divine. I am not only Divine, but also the Divinity that is present in the Divine,” said Baba. So, the same Divinity is present in every being as all are the forms of the Divine.

But, people are not able to realize the Divine because they drink intoxicating wine of worldly desires. Wine leads to ignorance but not to the Divine. So, you should consume something that promotes Divinity. What is it? It is love. If you taste the fruit of love, you need no other nourishment. Love is the essence of all fruits. It is the goal of all goals. It is the end of all spiritual practices. Cultivate such love with pure and steady mind. For this, you should keep the body, mind, and senses on the right track.

I told you yesterday the three ways that would help you to streamline your life: *Bend the body, mend the senses, and end the mind*. What does the maxim, *bend the body* stand for? Is it bending the body to carry out some task? No. You should bend your body with humility, respect, and love when you see elders and your parents. In olden days, in town and country, the entrances to the houses were a bit low. Visitors had to bend their heads to enter the houses. To highlight the significance of the maxim, *bend the body*, the ancients used to keep the height of the entrances low deliberately.

Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure

Mend the senses. Through right vision, right listening, right speech, right thoughts, and right actions you have to control your senses. That is the end of the mind. Here is an example. This is a piece of cloth. You call it cloth as long as the threads are intact. If you remove the threads one by one there will be no cloth. The threads symbolize your desires.

It is said, “less luggage, more comfort make travel a pleasure.” You are increasing your luggage day after day. This burden has become a great hindrance to your progress and happiness. You should remove this hurdle and move closer to Divinity. *Salokya* is closeness to Divinity. *Sarupya* is to attain the form of Divinity. How is this possible? The *Vedas* say, “*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*).” Prahlada, who contemplated on Lord Narayana, became Narayana himself. The dacoit Ratnakara recited the name of Lord Rama and transformed himself into sage Valmiki. Hanuman contemplated on the name of Lord Rama. He is worshipped by the devotees of Rama. *Sayujya* is complete integration or merger with the Lord. This is the end of all *sadhanas* (spiritual exercises).

Several ways of spirituality are enunciated in the *Vedas*, the epics and the *Puranas*, but love is the essence of all these ways. Love is changeless. There should not be any change in love. Cultivate this changeless love and redeem your life.

*Start the day with love,
Fill the day with love,
Spend the day with love,
End the day with love,
This is the way to God.*

Saturate your life with love and end your life with Divine love. All other thoughts will disturb your equanimity.

Gifts of God

Man possesses all types of wealth except two. These two are possessed by God. You can attain them by praying to God. These two are *santhi* (peace) and *ananda* (bliss). You may feel happy otherwise too, but know that such happiness is transient. Eternal peace and eternal happiness are the gifts of the Divine. So, you should pray for these gifts. Your prayer should be like this: "My Lord, I do not want anything that can be found in this world. Please grant me that which is with you alone, *santhi* and *ananda* (peace and bliss). I want nothing else other than these two." Pleasure and happiness obtained from objects of this world are short-lived. "*Anithyam Asukham Lokam, Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam,*" says the *Gita*. Let not your prayer to God be for these impermanent things. Pray to God for *santhi* and *ananda*. With such prayer you can win God's love and grace. Once God's love is obtained, you can win the whole world. When you pray to God for His love, your worldly desires also get fulfilled automatically.

Once, a king did penance. He had no children. God manifested before him and asked him to tell his wish. The king said, "Lord, I want to see my great grandson ruling the kingdom." How many desires are contained in one desire! He should have children. His children should also beget children. The kingdom should be under his control till his great grandson grows up and rules over it. His eyesight should be intact to watch this progress. This single desire expressed by him contains all the other desires. Likewise, if you pray to God for love, all your worldly desires too will be fulfilled.

*Man is seated under a tree
 Bearing twelve worries.
 Birth is a worry, life is a worry,
 Family is a worry, death is a worry,
 Childhood is a worry, old age is a worry,
 Success is a worry, failure is a worry,
 Action is a worry, obstacles are a worry,
 Joy itself is a worry, all uncertainties are a worry.
 Oh ye, all come and carry away this gift.
 All your worries will end.*

[Telugu Poem]

This tamarind tree of worries is not a fit tree for shade. If you receive God's love, all these worries will vanish. This is your only need. This should be your only desire. All other spiritual practices are of no use. Love cannot be acquired by these practices. Prayer and *bhakti* (devotion) with intense yearning for Gods love and grace will fill your heart with love. Chant the Lord's name ceaselessly to attain that love.

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I have repeatedly declared that students are My property. I consider students' welfare as My welfare and their happiness as My happiness. I never think of My happiness and My comfort.

—Baba