

Celebrate Ugadi By Purifying Your Heart

Man should enquire how the sun rises and sets with utmost regularity every day and how the stars which glitter in the sky at night though they are not visible during the day. (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

WE have been experiencing the bliss of celebrating *Ugadi* (Telugu New Year) for the past many ages and generations. The *Bharatiyas* have been spreading peace and security to all the nations of the world with their strength of spirituality. Since time immemorial the prayer of the *Bharatiyas* has been: *Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) But the present-day condition is just the opposite. Man has progressed in the worldly sense but morally he has regressed. He is not able to give up his narrow-mindedness and criticism of others.

Desirelessness Leads To Bliss

If one enquires into the reason for this, one will realise that one's selfishness and self-interest are the cause for this. Man does not love objects or individuals for their sake; he does so for his self-interest. He does not love his country and work for its welfare. All his thoughts, words and deeds are motivated by selfishness. We will be celebrating Ugadi in its true spirit only when we give up our narrow-mindedness and selfishness.

On *Ugadi* day, people get up early, have a sacred bath, put on new clothes and partake of sweets and various delicious items. They are interested only in external cleanliness and are not concerned about purifying their hearts which are tainted with evil thoughts and evil feelings. It is rather easy to have external cleanliness and to wear new clothes but that is not the purpose of celebrating festivals. True celebration of *Ugadi* lies in giving up evil qualities and purifying one's heart. Human heart in its pristine state is highly sacred and human birth is difficult to attain. *Janthunam narajanma durlabham* (out of all the living beings, the human birth is the rarest). Having attained such a precious life, man is not making any effort to live like a true human being. Today he has become a bundle of desires. He is spending all his time and effort in fulfilling his desires. He is under the mistaken notion that fulfilment of desires will confer happiness on him. He should realise that only annihilation of desires will lead him to ultimate bliss. True happiness lies in the state of desirelessness.

Unity Is The Essence Of Human Life

Embodiments of Love!

Ages have gone by and the world has undergone many changes; but there is no transformation in the human heart. Some people say that education is bringing about a change in man. No doubt, there has been a change. But what type of change is it? It is a peculiar change that is leading to perversion of human mind instead of transforming his heart. In fact, modern education has added to the confusion of man. Man is not learning what he is supposed to. He is wasting his life by cultivating bestial qualities and by indulging in demonic deeds. The culture of Bharat lays great emphasis on the underlying unity in diversity. It wants us to understand this principle of unity and work for our own redemption. But we are following what is contrary to our ancient culture. So, there is a rise today in the number of the so-called educated and intellectuals who fragment unity into diversity, but the number of noble souls who visualise unity in diversity is on the decline. It is unfortunate that *Bharatiyas* themselves have not understood how sacred and noble their culture is! Oh sacred souls of Bharat! Try to understand fully the value of *Bharatiya* culture. You are endowed with unlimited potentialities. But you are unaware of your mighty strength. The way of life of ancient *Bharatiyas* was such that they evinced great concern for everyone's welfare. They found fulfilment in giving happiness to others. But man today lacks such broad-mindedness. He is not able to realise and experience his innate noble qualities.

Time is highly sacred and valuable. Each one has to introspect whether he is making proper use of time. Time once lost is lost for ever. Future is not in your hands. So, man should make proper use of the present. This is the teaching of *Bharatiya* culture. Time is God. Hence, the Vedas extol Him as *Kalaya namah, Kala Kalaya namah, Kaladarpa Damanaya namah, Kalateetaya namah, Kalaswarupaya namah, Kalaniyamitaya namah* (salutations to the embodiment of time, to the one who has conquered time, to the one who transcends time and to the one who ordains time). God dwells in all. He has thousands of heads, eyes and feet. Our ancients realised this unity in diversity and recognised the innate divinity of man. They sanctified their lives with such noble feelings and exemplary behaviour. Our ancient sages and seers stressed the need for unity and cooperation among human beings. They prayed, “*Let us move together; let us grow together; let us grow in intelligence together; let us live in harmony with each other without giving room for conflicts.*” (Telugu Poem) This is the main principle of *Bharatiya* culture. But such spirit of unity is lacking in modern society. These days there is no unity even among the members of the same family. Unity is the essence of human life. One can attain the goal of human life only by putting this principle of unity into practice. This divine principle of unity is being forgotten today.

Faith In God Is The Basis Of Bliss

Every man aspires for bliss. In order to attain everlasting bliss, he studies sacred texts, listens to the discourses

of noble souls, undertakes pilgrimages and performs various spiritual practices like penance, meditation, etc. But none of these confers bliss on him. There are five sheaths in every human being, namely, *annamaya kosha* (food sheath), *pranamaya kosha* (life sheath), *manomaya kosha* (mental sheath), *vijnanamaya kosha* (wisdom sheath) and *anandamaya kosha* (bliss sheath). Though man has bliss sheath in him, he is unable to experience bliss. There is no trace of bliss in him. The happiness that man derives out of worldly comforts is limited. It is utter foolishness to think that wealth and property, comforts and conveniences can bestow unlimited joy on him. None of these can give true happiness. True happiness has no limits. How can it be attained? It cannot be attained from outside. It originates from the heart. The heart is the dwelling place of God. To experience true happiness, man should develop firm faith in God. Where there is faith, there is love. Only when man has love in him can he practise righteousness. Righteousness leads to truth which in turn leads to God.

God alone is the source and basis of bliss. Truth is the basis of God. Righteousness is the basis of truth. Love is the basis of righteousness. Faith is the basis of love. But man today has no faith. A person without *viswasa* (faith) is verily without *swasa* (breath). A faithless man is virtually a living corpse. Our ancient sages and seers therefore emphasised the need for faith. But man today has become virtually blind having lost his faith. What are the two eyes of man? The two eyes of man are *sastra* (scriptures) and

dharma (righteousness). But today even the Brahmins who are supposed to study the scriptures are neglecting them. All sections of society, whichever caste or community they may belong to, should perform their duty with devotion and dedication. Instead of discharging his duty, man is wasting his life in mean pursuits. Consequently, he is unable to enjoy even a fraction of the unlimited peace and happiness he is endowed with.

Gratitude is the most fundamental virtue of man. People, while performing *Suryanamaskara* (offering salutations to the sun), praise the sun god in various ways. One of them is *Kritaghnagnaya namah* (salutations to the one who punishes the ungrateful). The light of the sun god is present in our eyes in a subtle form. *Chandrama manaso jatah chaksho suryo ajayatah* (the moon was born out of the mind and the sun out of the eyes of the Supreme Being). It is said that the sun god withdraws his light from the eyes of the ungrateful. One without the sense of gratitude can be called a blind person. Whoever he may be, one should always remain grateful to one's benefactor. One should show gratitude even without caring for one's own life. God is helping man in ever so many ways but man does not show gratitude to Him. He is all the time engaged in selfish pursuits. How can such a foolish person be called a human being? What is *adhyatmikata* (spirituality)? It is not just contemplating on the *adhi atma* (primordial spirit). True spirituality lies in destroying one's bestial nature and rising to the level of the divine. But instead of ascending to divin-

ity, man is degenerating to animality. He has forgotten the principles of spirituality. He celebrates festivals by merely partaking of sweets and wastes his time in pomposity. One should ponder over the inner significance of each festival and celebrate it in a meaningful manner. Man should have total faith that he is not just a human being but there is God within. Only then will the animal nature in him be subdued. As man has forgotten his true nature, he has become bestial. You may belong to any country, religion, race, caste or sex, but you should firmly hold on to humanness. Do not waste your time keeping selfish goals in your mind.

Who Is A True Devotee Of God?

Once Lord Narayana wanted Narada to search for a true devotee who spent his time in a sacred way. Then Narada asked the Lord for the qualifications of a true devotee. The Lord said, “A true devotee is one whose heart is pure and who chants the Divine Name wholeheartedly at all times. He may involve himself in worldly activities, but he should not be attached to them. His mind should be constantly focused on God.” Then Narada said, “Swami, I chant Your Name wholeheartedly at all times and under all circumstances. There is not a single moment when I don’t remember You. Can there be a greater devotee than me?” To consider oneself as the greatest devotee is a sign of ego. Narada became egoistic with the feeling that he was the greatest devotee. Lord Narayana replied, “Narada, there

are many devotees like you. You find them in every house and in every place. But this is not true devotion. True devotion is that which finds expression in every thought, word and deed of man. Just as the food partaken gets digested in the stomach and its essence is supplied to all limbs of the body, likewise, when you fill your heart with the divine name, its effect should spread to your eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, etc. When the sacred effect of the divine name spreads to your eyes, you will develop sacred vision. Likewise, your speech will become sacred, and you will listen only to sacred words. Your hands will undertake sacred deeds and your feet will take you to sacred places. Thus, a true devotee will sanctify each of his limbs with sacred activity.”

Lord Narayana wanted Narada to search for such a devotee. Narada went round the world, but his ego prevented him from accepting anybody as a devotee greater than himself. As he was returning, he found a tribesman in a forest. He was sitting under a tree and chanting the divine name. He was carrying a big sword in his hand. Narada out of curiosity asked him, “May I know who you are?” He replied, “Sir, I am a hunter and an ardent devotee of the Lord.” Narada asked, “If you are a devotee, then why should you carry a sword in your hand? Whom are you going to kill?” The hunter replied, “Sir, I want to kill four persons. The first of them is Droupadi.” Narada was startled to hear this. “Don’t you know that Droupadi was constantly chanting the Name of Lord Krishna? Pleased with her devotion

and surrender, Krishna came to her rescue and protected her honour when Kauravas tried to disrobe her in the royal court. Why do you want to kill such a great devotee?" The hunter said, "No doubt, she was a devotee. But she called out Krishna while He was having His food. Immediately, my Lord left His food and rushed to her rescue. As she was responsible for my Lord not having food on that day, I want to kill her." "Who is the second person whom you intend to kill", queried Narada. The hunter said, "My Lord could not have proper food and rest because of Prahlada who chanted His name continuously and time and again sought His help. When he was being trampled over by elephants, he prayed to the Lord for succour. In order to protect him, the Lord had to take upon Himself the pain of being trampled over by elephants. As he was the cause for my Lord's suffering, I want to kill him. The third person is Mira. She was all the time chanting the Name of Giridhar Naagar. As a result, all the persecutions inflicted on her had to be borne by the Lord Himself. It amounted to hurting God. So, she should be killed." Narada asked, "Then who is the fourth one?" "There is a person called Narada, who carries a *Tanpura* and keeps chanting the name of Narayana. His is only *swartha bhakti* (devotion intended for selfish gains) and not *parartha prema bhakti* (devotion filled with pure love for God). So, he also should be killed."

Narada got frightened and did not want to prolong this conversation. He realised that it was his ego that was

responsible for this predicament. Narada went to Vaikuntha and told Lord Narayana about his encounter with the hunter, “Swami, I have investigated that even those who chant Your name continuously are guilty of causing suffering to You.” Lord Narayana said, “Narada, you are mistaken. This incident only reflects the intense love the hunter has for Me. He is a true devotee who considers God’s happiness as his own. He always aspires to give happiness to the Lord and does not want to cause any inconvenience to Him. Only the one who always gives happiness to the Lord is a true devotee.” This incident was an eye-opener for Narada. He said, “Swami, now I realise that you enacted this play only to crush my ego.” The history of Bharat contains many such sacred stories in order to spread the message of the Lord to mankind.

You should never cause inconvenience to God in the name of devotion. If you earn the displeasure of God, it will reflect on you. Consider that God’s happiness is your happiness and your happiness is God’s happiness. Imbibe this spirit of oneness. “God and I are one.” Today most of the devotees are selfish. They have only *swartha bhakti*. They are concerned with their own happiness and not that of Gods. God is the embodiment of love. Such divine love is present in all. You should see to it that your love is always pure. Share your love with everyone. This is what God expects from you.

God Resides In Every Heart

Since ancient times, the *Bharatiyas* have been sharing their sacred culture with the rest of the world. They considered God as one and never nurtured the feeling of difference between man and man. They believed in the Vedic statement: *Sahasra seersha purusha sahasraksha sahasra pad* (God has a thousand heads, eyes and feet). It does not mean that there is someone with thousand heads, eyes and feet. It only means that all heads, eyes and feet are His. God is present in everyone. He resides in every heart. So, do not confine God to a temple, a mosque or a church. Where man is, there God is. *Daivam manusha rupena* (God takes the form of man). As you do not realise this, you indulge in criticism of others. Whom are you criticising? Whom do you adore? Enquire yourself. God is present in all. So, when you criticise others, it amounts to criticising yourself. When you love others, you love yourself. If you criticise others, you criticise God. *Sarva jeeva namaskaram Kesavam pratigachchati* (whomever you salute, it reaches God) and *sarva jeeva tiraskaram Kesavam pratigachchhati* (whomever you denigrate, it also reaches God).

Embodiments of Love!

Today is *Ugadi*, the beginning of the New Year. Since ancient times, people have celebrated many *Ugadis*, but they are yet to give up bad qualities. True *Ugadi* is the day when you give up bad qualities, fill your heart with love

and take to the path of sacrifice. Do not limit the celebration of *Ugadi* to merely putting on new clothes and partaking of delicious food items. Today you may wear a new shirt, but how long will it remain new? Tomorrow it becomes old. Nobody reads the same newspaper everyday. Today's newspaper becomes tomorrow's waste paper. Our life is like a newspaper. Once you have finished reading a newspaper, you do not like to read it again and again. You have been given this birth, and you have gone through varied experiences of pleasure and pain. Enough is enough. Do not ask for another birth as you would not like to read yesterday's newspaper. You should pray, "Oh God! You have given me this life and I have gone through all the experiences of pleasure and pain. I do not want to have another birth."

Adi Sankara said,

*"Punarapi jananam punarapi maranam
Punarapi janani jathare sayanam
Iha samsare bahu dustare
Kripayapare pahi murare."*

(Oh Lord! I am caught up in this cycle of birth and death; time and again, I am experiencing the agony of staying in the mother's womb. It is very difficult to cross this ocean of worldly life. Please take me across this ocean and grant me liberation.) Sankara was a great scholar and was well-versed in all forms of knowledge. Yet he propagated the path of devotion. Once while he was going to the river Ganga with his disciples, he noticed a person sitting under

a tree and trying to learn the rules of Panini's grammar by rote. He was repeating "Dukrun Karane, Dukrun Karane". Sankara who was very young at that time took pity on him. He went near him and said,

*"Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam
Govindam bhaja moodha mathe
Samprapthe sannihithe kale
Nahi nahi rakshati dukrun karane."*

(Oh foolish man, chant the name of Govinda, the rules of grammar will not come to your rescue when the end approaches.)

Sankara authored many Vedantic texts, but ultimately he also took to the path of devotion. *Namasmarana* (chanting of God's name) is the easiest path to liberation. This was his main teaching. Even today there are many people who do *namasmarana*, but they are not experiencing its essence. What is the purpose of life? Is it to be born again and again?

Man is performing various tasks and undergoing many experiences in this world. But what is the use of all that he does if he is unable to enjoy everlasting bliss? Neither by wealth nor by action nor by study of texts nor by *darshan*, *sparshan* and *sambhashan* (vision, touch and conversation) of noble souls can man attain eternal bliss. He can visualise the manifestation of God and experience bliss only when he purifies his heart. Love all. Have faith that God is present in all. Make everybody happy. Only then

can you attain happiness. It is impossible for you to attain happiness without making others happy.

True Significance Of Celebrating Ugadi

On this day of *Ugadi*, take a firm resolve to purify your heart. Past is past. It cannot be retrieved. When you are walking on the road, you should look at the path ahead of you. What is the point in looking behind? Likewise, there is no point in brooding over the past. Future is not certain. What is the guarantee that you will be alive until tomorrow? So, do not worry about your future. Live in the present. It is not ordinary present. It is omnipresent, meaning the results of past and seeds of future are contained in it. So, when you make proper use of the present, you can be rest assured that your future is safe and secure.

Embodiments of Love!

Today is *Ugadi*, the New Year day for the people of Andhra Pradesh. Tomorrow happens to be the Tamil New Year day and also *Vishu*, the New Year Day for the people of Kerala. There are many festivals in a year. You should celebrate them by understanding and experiencing their true significance. Right from this moment, embark on a new life giving up bad thoughts and bad qualities. Purify your heart. Only then will your life be blissful. There is no point in reading sacred texts or visiting noble souls unless you purify your heart in the first instance. Let your thoughts, words and deeds be sacred. This is the true significance of celebrating *Ugadi*.

Tomorrow is the New Year day for the people of Tamil Nadu. Hence, many of them have come from Madras (Chennai) and other places of Tamil Nadu. Madras is not new. Since long it has been an important centre for the *Bharatiyas*. Later on, due to political considerations different States were formed and Madras was bifurcated. But I do not observe any difference between one region and the other. I adhere to the principle of unity. All are one, be alike to everyone. This is My ideal. At present, the people of Chennai are suffering from scarcity of drinking water. The rich can afford to buy water and quench their thirst. But what about the poor? They are drinking impure water and spoiling their health. Hence, I have decided to provide them pure drinking water so that they can lead a happy and healthy life. In this connection, Chakravarthi (Secretary, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust), V. Srinivasan from Chennai (President, All India Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations) and Indulal Shah from Mumbai (Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Council) met the World Bank authorities yesterday and explained to them about the selfless service activities that we have undertaken. They told the World Bank authorities that all our activities were purely service-oriented and we did not expect anything in return. They repeated what Swami had told them to convey.

The World Bank people were very much impressed. They said they had never heard about or seen such stupendous service activities undertaken by a charitable organisation anywhere else in the world. (*loud applause*)

They were happy that Sathya Sai Baba was providing drinking water to a distant place like Chennai. They have agreed to provide funds for this project. On this sacred day of *Ugadi* before I came out to give *darshan*, we received a telephone call at about 7 a.m. conveying this message. If the feelings are sacred, the result is bound to be sacred. They told us, “You don’t need to be concerned about the funds and you don’t need to come to us again. We are prepared to meet all your requirements.” With broadmindedness, they have come forward to extend their help.

When you undertake any task with a sacred heart, you will certainly meet with success. I am the living proof of this ideal. There is no trace of selfishness in whatever task I undertake. Whatever I do is for the benefit of humanity. Many people do not try to understand this and think that it is done with some expectation. But I do not expect anything from anybody nor do I get any benefit out of it. I derive only one benefit, i.e., I feel happy when everybody is happy. As you claim to be Sai devotees, you should strictly adhere to the Sai path and make everyone happy.

When you follow in My footsteps, you will certainly achieve sacred results and earn a good name. You do not need to wait even for a fraction of a second. Whatever Sai says is bound to happen. Being Sai devotees, you should give up selfishness and dedicate your lives for the welfare of society. Fill your lives with love. Stop criticising others. Respect even those who hate you. Hatred is a bad quality. It will ruin you. Hence, get rid of this evil. Love everyone.

Help the poor and needy to the extent possible. *Help ever, Hurt never.* Sage Vyasa has given the essence of eighteen Puranas in two sentences, *Paropakara punyaya, papaya parapeedanam* (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). This is the main principle of *Bharatiya* culture. When you help others, you will receive help tenfold. If you harm others, you will be put to harm ten times more. Keep this in mind. On this sacred day, fill your hearts with love and undertake sacred activities.

Ugadi, 13th April, 2002, Brindavan, Bangalore

