



Pathways to Enlightenment

Address by Dr. Narendranath Reddy,
Chairman, Sathya Sai International Organisation

Guru Poornima - 5 July 2020

With love and gratitude, I offer my prayerful *pranams* at the divine lotus feet of our dearest, sweetest, loving, and omnipresent Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Dear brothers and sisters, loving Sairam to all of you. I wish all of you a happy and holy Guru Poornima filled with love, peace, and bliss.

Homage to Our Guru and God

This is the day we pay homage to our Guru and God, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and offer our heartfelt gratitude. As the beautiful song said, we shower the rose petals at His divine lotus feet and offer the lotus flower of our pure heart at His divine lotus feet. Swami, one time, beautifully said in Telugu, then I will translate:

*Poovulu enne thechi poojalu chesinaa mechu-
konadu thanu putsukonadu, hrudaya kamala
meya saadayudai grahienchu Sathya Sai
Shanthi Premadayi.*

Swami was telling about Himself. You may bring any number of flowers, garlands, everything. I will not be pleased, I will not be excited, but if you offer the flower of your heart which is pure, I will be very pleased and happily accept it. So, that is the flower we can offer on this special day. As Swami was talking about it today, all the spiritual seekers say: 'Gurur Brahma – Guru is Brahma, Gurur Vishnu, Gurur Devo Maheswara, Gurur Sakshaat Parabrahma, Tasmai Sri Guruve Namaha'. But Swami gave a beautiful inner

meaning – that is the beauty of the Lord. Brahma is really the Guru, Vishnu is really the Guru and Shiva is really the Guru and Sakshat Parambrahman – Supreme Parabrahman is the Guru.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as Lord Dattatreya

We can relate this beautifully to Swami's life story. This unique episode happened on Mahashivarathri on Thursday, March 7th, 1978. I was fortunate to hear this story directly from Uncle Colonel Joga Rao and Aunty Mrs. Ratanlal who were part of this particular divine *Leela*. Swami as some of you may know, was bringing out the lingam during Mahashivarathri till 1977. Then in 1977, there were such huge crowds and stampede, Swami stopped the public celebration of Mahashivarathri. So, in 1978, Swami went away from Prasanthi Nilayam, and on the day of Mahashivarathri, on Thursday March 7th, 1978, He was going from Ooty to Brindavan. On the way, He stopped in a place, Mudumalai Forest, in a guest house. And after breakfast, Swami was out in the lawn, and as people would enjoy it, Swami had a photo session with the people. He invited everybody to have a photograph with Him. Those days the Polaroid was new in the market. Not the digital age like now. So, you take your photograph and right away it is available. The students and the guests were excited. Each one had a photo taken with Swami and Swami gave it back to

Pathways to Enlightenment

them. Uncle Colonel Joga Rao had this question in his mind, "Who is Swami, who really He is?" We know Swami is all-knowing, He knows even what goes through our thoughts. So, Swami told a student to take His photo by Himself, without anybody else. When that boy was about to click the photograph, Swami's robe at the bottom was folded. So, people wanted to make it look good. Mrs. Ratanlal, who is a wonderful devotee and used to cook for Swami, rushed to correct the fold of Swami's robe. Swami is so sweet and gentle in His talk. That day, He yelled at her. He shouted "Stop, don't come!" So, she was all scared and she retreated back. Then the boy, the student clicked the photograph, and the photograph came out. Swami gave it to Colonel Joga Rao to see because he was thinking who Swami was. As it developed, it becomes Dattatreya, the trinity- Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara together with the accompanying four dogs which represent the four Vedas. Then Swami gave it to him and the next day, Swami told the students in Brindavan, "That is my true form". So, He is Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara together. And Swami told the students also, another interesting thing. If Mrs. Ratanlal, that time, was not stopped and had touched Me, she would not have survived. Because so much power is in Swami, she would have been almost electrocuted. So, this shows, Swami is our Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara.

Swami is Sakshat Parabrahman

We also said Swami is *Sakshat Parabrahman*. There is one great Saint by the name Swami Abhedananda. He went to Prasanthi Nilayam for spiritual guidance from Swami. Swami called him, so he had divine interaction and when he came out, he was blissed out and he happened to meet Professor Kasturi, who was an exemplary devotee and biographer of Swami's life, 'Sathyam Shivam Sundaram' and did a lot of wonderful work. So, he told Professor Kasturi, "Swami – He is "*Sakshat Parabrahman*." He is that indivisible supreme reality from which everything comes including all Avatars. He had that experience because he was of the *Advaitic* tradition. Swami Abhedananda even wanted to change his name to Sai Krupananda because of Swami's grace he had

experienced. When he said that to Swami, Swami said "Your name is Abhedananda – that means you don't see any differences. Why do you want to change the name?" So, Swami is *Sakshat Parabrahman*. We may have a question, does God have a form? Yes, He has a form. God has no form? Yes, He has no form. Does God have a name? Yes, He has name. Does God have no name? Yes, He has no name. Does God have attributes? Yes, He has attributes. Does God have no attributes? Yes, He has no attributes. So, God is everything. All in all, and also beyond all. That is why the Taitreya Upanishad says, "*Yato Vacho Nivartante, Aprapya Manasa Saha*" – something which cannot be comprehended by the mind and expressed in words. That is what the supreme reality is. That is why Swami repeatedly was telling we ourselves are Brahman, supreme Brahman, but we need to realise that. So, in His previous Avatar, which is Shirdi Baba, a lot of Shirdi Baba devotees considered Him as the incarnation of Dattatreya – what I was talking about, Datta Avatar.

Three ways to Enlightenment

So, in that Avatar, Swami gave a beautiful significance of a particular shloka from Bhagavad Gita, chapter 4, shloka 34. I will just touch briefly about it. The shloka goes like this:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśhnena
sewayā, upadekṣhyanti te jñānam jñāninas
tattva-darśhinah*

So, this Sanskrit scholar, Nanasahab Chandorkar, who was a great devotee of Shirdi Baba, was reading the shloka. Baba asked him what is the meaning, word by word. Not the total meaning of the shloka. He tries to tell, and then Baba gave him the inner significance. There it says if you go to a realised soul, man of knowledge of Brahman, he will give you jnana. That is what all the commentators write, when they describe the shloka. If you go to a realised person, because of their grace, they will give you jnana. But Baba said that is not correct. Saints show what is *Ajnana*, Guru will show you *Ajnana*. He said, "No Swami, all the great commentators including Adi Shankara says jnana". Baba said,

Pathways to Enlightenment

“It doesn’t matter, read it again, *upadekshyanti te ajnanam*”. And then that made sense because even our Swami says (who is the same incarnation), we are already embodiments of *jnana*. Something which comes, always goes. Something which does not come and go is *jnana*. We are already *jnana*. What all the Guru has to do is remove the *ajnanam*, the ignorance. You can take the example of the Sun, covered by the clouds. When the clouds go away, automatically the Sun shines. Similarly, God, the Guru comes to remind us – “Remind me my Lord” – that we are the Supreme Brahman, we are the embodiment of knowledge.

Then how do you get that knowledge? In that same shloka there are three ways; *Tad viddhi pranipātena*; that means the path of *bhakti*. That means you do the *sashtang namaskar* to your Guru and worship Him. And *sevaya*, by service and *paripraśnena* that is, by the path of enquiry. So, all the three yogas are covered. Thus, you serve the Lord: by the path of devotion, by the path of service and the path of self-enquiry.

Path of Devotion and Surrender

Just briefly I will touch on, *pranipātena* – that means you serve the Lord with *bhakti*. How do you do that? That is also very simply common sense. We all can do that. Lord Krishna says in Gita:

*yad karoṣi yad aśnāsi yad juhoṣi dadāsi yad,
yad tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madar-
paṇam*

*“Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever
you drink, whatever charities you do,
whatever penance you do (japa, dhyana),
everything offer to me, that is bhakti.”*

Then, we are pleasing the Lord. That simple act becomes devotion. As we practice that, we ultimately develop surrender – we are one with Him. Swami says the ultimate surrender is we do not see God and us as separate. “I and You are One”, that is what we realise. That is why the ultimate in surrender, is Charama shloka accord-

ing to Vaishnavites – in the Gita. It is in the eighteenth chapter:

*Sarva dharmaan parityajya maam ekam
sharaṇam vraja, aham tva sarva paapebhyo
mokṣhayiṣhyaami maa shuchah*

Lord Krishna says, “giving up all your obligations, just surrender to me alone, *maam ekam*” – not divided *bhakti*, but one-pointed *bhakti*. So, if you do that, what does He do? He will remove all our grief, destroy all our sins, and give the highest – that is liberation itself. For that the qualification, the first thing, we need to do is to surrender to Him alone, depend on Him alone, then He will remove our grief, and destroy our sins, and give liberation. That is the thing about the path of *bhakti* – *pranipātena*.

Path of Selfless Service

Sevaya – that means service. Swami was telling that massaging guru’s feet is not service. Swami says the whole creation is the manifestation of guru. There is a beautiful episode in the Shirdi Avatar. One of the devotees feeds a dog in her house a *puri*, a *chapati*. The next day, Baba says; “Oh, you have fed Me well. I am very happy.” She says, “Swami, when did I feed You?” Baba says, “whatever service you do to anybody you are doing the service to Me.” That is the message. That is the important aspect of service. Whatever *seva* we do to anyone, it is *Narayana Seva*. ‘*Manava Seva* is *Madhava Seva*’. Swami, whatever we do, we are doing it for the Lord. That is the attitude with which if we do service, then the *seva* helps us purify our hearts. Because when we do *seva*, the major obstacles are two things: *Kartrutva* and *Bhokrutvaa*, I am doing, I am enjoying. This is very much a pitfall for all of us. We think we conquered ego. But, it is not easy to get rid of that doership and enjoyership.

Even the Gods were subject to that. I can tell you a brief story Swami mentioned in the Upanishad Vahini. In Kena Upanishad, one time there was a big war between the demons and demigods. After thousands of years of war, the Gods won the war. They were very happy. They were celebrating; “We won! We won!” Then meanwhile because the ego went up that; “We

Pathways to Enlightenment

won the war. We succeeded”, God, the Brahman, wanted to teach them a lesson. He comes down in the form of a big pillar of light, *Yaksha*, and appears before them. They were wondering, “Who is this?” Then Indra, the head of the Gods, King of the Gods, tells Agni, the fire God, “Go and find out who he is”. He goes and asks, “Who are you?” He says, “Who are you?” Agni God gets insulted, “Don’t you know who I am? I am the powerful fire. I can burn anything into ashes, I can burn, even the green forests.” *Yaksha* says, “Oh?” So then he puts a blade of grass in front of him. “Ok, burn this.” “Ah, it is so easy.” But he tries and tries, but he cannot burn it. Then he gets humbled and he recognises his folly. He goes back and tells Indra, “This is some power. I don’t know what it is.” Then Indra sends God Vayu that is the wind God, “Go.” He goes and encounters the same power who says: “Who are you?” Vayu says, “I am the air, the wind which can blow like tornadoes, I can blow out the towns, hills, hillocks, I can destroy.” *Yaksha* says, “Oh so, look at that blade of grass. Try to move it.” He tries, but he could not. Then he recognises his folly and goes back to Indra and says, “We don’t know who this is. You, yourself, now should go and find out.” He goes and meanwhile that pillar of light disappears and, in its place, appears the Mother, Hymavathi (Uma). She appears and blesses them and then Indra asks; “Mother, who was that?” She says, “That is Brahman. He wanted to teach you a lesson because your ego was going up, that you are the one who is doing. Because pride goes before a fall, in His love, He wanted to teach you a lesson so that you come to your senses and you know you are just an instrument. God is the one who is doing, and He happens to use you. So do not get bloated up that you are the doer and you are the enjoyer. That is the way we should do seva, with the attitude of doing service to God and second thing is, always have that feeling that God is working through us.

Path of Self Inquiry

The third important aspect is now *paripraśhna*. He says you should enquire to know the Brahman. What is that *pariprasna* everyone should have? *Koham Koham* (Who am I? Who am I?) And finally, you realise, *Soham Soham* (I am that, I am that). That is the realisation we should have. That is what is in the Vedas. Swami often quotes these four *Mahavakyas*. *Prajnanam* Brahma, first statement is all things, everything, consciousness is Brahman. Then the teacher tells, “Yes, *Tat Tvam Asi*. You are that. You are that. You are the Brahman.” Then the student, like all of us seekers, practises the sadhana. And then what do we realise? *Aham Brahmasmi*. Yes, I am that Supreme Brahman. And also, *Ayam Atma* Brahma. I am the *Atma* and *Brahman*. So this is constant practice and not just by saying “I am Brahman, I am Brahman”, which even a parrot and a tape recorder can say. But it should be our experience, so it does not come easily. I would recommend that people read the Sutra Vahini which Swami Himself has written.

Requirements for Brahma Jnana

First, there He says *Athato Brahma Jijnasa*. Thereafter, you have knowledge of the Brahman.

Thereafter means what? After we get credentials, qualifications. If we want to have knowledge of the Brahman, we need to have certain credentials. One is *viveka*, that is discrimination to see between the real and unreal. Second, *vairagya*, that means detachment, renunciation from the unreal and attachment to God. Third is *Shad Sampathi* - six virtues to develop. I have no time to go into that, which are *Dama, Sama, Uparati, Shraddha, Samadhana* and *Titiksha*. These are the six virtues we need to develop. And finally, the fourth qualification is *Mumukshutva*. So if we have these qualifications, then we will realise we are Brahman. Otherwise, just saying without those qualifications, we will go nowhere. Swami gives this lesson - how we can attain Brahman. We need to have that intensity to persevere in this path to have these qualifications: use either the path of service, path of devotion, path of self-enquiry. So, in this beau-

Pathways to Enlightenment

tiful shloka with explanation, Baba has given the inner significance of these particular scriptures.

I pray to Swami to bless all of us with devotion, dedication, determination, discrimination, and detachment, so that we realise the goal Su-

preme that is self-realisation in this very lifetime. As Swami says, the goal of life is to realise and manifest our innate divinity and experience that same divinity in everything, everywhere, ever.

Jai Sai Ram.

Concluding Remarks

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Loving Sai Ram again to all of you. First, I would like to offer our love and heartfelt gratitude to Bhagawan for His presence, His blessings, and guidance for this inspirational and beautiful programme. I appreciate the hard work and dedication of the members and Chairs of the IT Committee very much, as well as the Media Committee, and Events Committee. I also want to thank everyone who are participating online, for their valuable time. Also, I appreciate the valuable contribution of the members and officers of the SSIO and all the children and enthusiastic and energetic Young Adults for this beautiful programme.

Swami's Message

Now I would like to read at this concluding time a letter with a profound message written by Bhagawan on 30 August 1975. Please pay attention. Every word is so profound.

After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earths and in heavens, at last you come back. Completing the circle from where you started to your own soul and find that He for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you are looking as the mystery of all mysteries, shrouded in the clouds, in nearest of the near, He is your own self, the reality of your life, body, and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it. Manifest it. It is truth and truth alone that is one's real friend and relative. Abide by this truth, tread the path of righteousness and not a hair of your body will ever be injured. Meditation is nothing else

but rising above desires. Renunciation is the power of battling against evil forces and holding the mind in check.

*With love and blessings,
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Five-Letter Mantra

Now, I want to conclude with a message Swami gave on July 21, 1986. Swami gave a five-letter mantra. Swami says this is the most powerful mantra. In Telegu, He said: "Devudu unnaadu" De-vu- du-na-du - five. And in English, it is "God is". G-O-D-I-S -" God is". Swami says this mantra is more powerful than the mantras attributed to the name of any deities we know of. And Swami said we should make this mantra a constant companion. Swami said, "this is the message of Guru Poornima, and this mantra is My message for Guru Poornima". On that occasion, He said we should chant this mantra in all circumstances, in all situations and wherever we are, with complete conviction and strength. Then we will derive the benefit, and this whole earth will become a paradise and we will be able to overcome any challenges and difficulties. Swami says when we make this a constant companion of ours and propagate it all over, then we will promote love for God and fear of sin among people. Swami proclaimed and encouraged us to make this mantra our constant companion.

I pray to Swami to bless all of us so that we can move forward with steadfastness, unconditional love, and absolute faith till we reach the goal.

Jai Sai Ram



Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

PRASANTHI NILAYAM P.O.
ANANTPUR DT. (A.P.)
PHONE NO : 30.

30-8-75

After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earth and in heavens, at last you come back. Completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds in nearest of the near, is your own self, the reality of your life, body and soul. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. It is truth and truth alone, that is one's real friend, relative. Abide by truth tread the path of righteousness and not an hair of your body will ever be injured. Meditation is nothing else but rising above desires. Renunciation is the power of battling against evil forces and holding the mind in check.

With Love and Patience
Sri Sathya Sai Baba