

31. Spend Your Days With Siva

Looking at this vast sea of faces, I do not feel like speaking to you; I wish to derive bliss (*ananda*) by just looking at you from here; looking at your devotion and your faith. Your looking at Me, Me looking at you — what else is needed for bliss to well up?

You yearn to hear my words and listen to My voice also. That is the measure of your love. You are so accustomed to hearing people speak that if you do not hear, your ears ache! If they do not speak, their tongues become restless and even restive. They are both so used to activity that it has now become difficult for you to sit quietly for a few minutes, communing with the silence within you!

Man is called so because people have the capacity to enjoy *manana* (inward contemplation of the meaning and significance of what one has heard) — not only this capacity but also the urge to the inner life. But you have not yet emerged out of the stage of listening, and the teachers have not progressed beyond the stage of talking, so you crave My discourse today.

Rama Sharma recited some fine stanzas composed by him on Siva and on the means of winning His grace, evidently because the day is Sivarathri. The poems are so full of sweetness that you should not discard even the rind. He described the Lord as the indwelling spirit of every living thing and called upon you to practise the unremitting chanting of the Name of the Lord.

Judge your own spiritual practices unaided

However, some of you might question why. Some have come to Me and asked this very question: “We have been engaged in this spiritual practice for years now; we have written the name of God lakhs of times, we have repeated it ceaselessly for many years, but we have not succeeded! Why have we not reached the goal?”

I want each one of you to search within yourself for the answer. Examine your own effort and achievement and judge your own spiritual practices, unaided by Me. Have you yearned, have you pined, have you wept for the Lord as Thyagaraja did, for example? Have you shed tears of contrition tears of exultation while repeating His name, so full of sweetness and beauty, while visualising His form, so full of loveliness and charm? You might have wept, but who knows for what, who knows the impulse that swept you into that sadness? Were they tears shed out of fear or greed or pride — or because the Lord was not near?

A little child sits with a book of the *Upanishads* on its lap and turns over the pages, intent on the printed lines and watching the curious types, deliberately, slowly and with great care. A monk does the same. Can you equate the two and say they are both engaged in the same act? The child is unaware of the treasure it holds in its hand; the monk gets into immediate contact with the spiritual power the lines convey. Find out for yourself whether your spiritual practices have also been purposeful and sincere, wakeful, and worthwhile.

In his poem, Rama Sharma sang of Sayisa, the Sayi as Isa or Iswara, or Siva Sayi, as he is fond of addressing Me. He spoke of the great, well-nigh immeasurable, indescribable joy of merging with Siva-Sayi and of the devotion and love necessary for that consummation. When he was describing it all, I could see that you were thrilled. The exhilaration out of which that song was born and the joy he himself experienced while reading it before us is a sure means of attaining that goal, let Me assure you. Whoever has the enthusiasm, the steadfastness, the deter-

mination to reach the goal will certainly succeed. Cultivate that faith in ultimate success; never despair or cavil or doubt. That is My advice to one and all. Success is your birthright, and you must get it sooner rather than later.

Be concerned about your goal and your ideal

Above all, do not give room for the cancer of doubt. Why argue over Me, over this point or that concerning Me? Who exactly is the Baba who you discuss and debate! What does it matter to you who I happen to be? You are concerned about your goal, your ideal, your experience, your effort, is it not? Why then worry about My origin, My nature, My mystery, My miracle? The basic thing is the hand, and the cup it holds is secondary. The supported is less in importance than the support, the Basic Reality, the Pure Existence. When you cannot reach down to your own Basic Reality, why waste time in exploring the essence of Godhead? As a matter of fact, you can understand Me only when you have understood yourself, your own Basic Truth.

The gross can grasp only the gross; its categories of knowledge can proceed only as far as that. Fish die when they have to breathe the air above the water. Children can learn the alphabet only with the help of boards, slates, pencils, and pieces of chalk. Spiritual aspirants, going through the primers of spirituality, need symbols, images, and rituals. You cannot discard Name and Form until you transmute yourself into the Nameless and Formless — just as the fish needed water and could not come up into the atmosphere as long as they did not transmute themselves into land animals, giving up their aquatic nature. That is the why the Nameless and Formless has often to assume Name and Form and come before humanity with limitations imposed by its own Will, so that it may be loved, respected, worshipped, listened to, and followed, so that the purpose of humanity may be fulfilled.

“I give only one thing: bliss through love”

A wooden elephant, however artistically perfect and lifelike, is but a toy; it cannot create the awareness of the genuine elephant. A library stacked with books is incapable of impaling the authentic touch of the living guru. You may trek to ten temples and then, at last, arrive here, believing this to be the eleventh. That is as fruitless as wandering from the tenth library to an eleventh. You must see, hear, study, observe, experience, and reflect; then only can you understand Me.

You will learn then that I am love (*prema*) itself; that I give only one thing, bliss (*ananda*), through the love. My task is to distribute solace, courage, and peace. That is to say, My characteristics are the ancient authentic ones; only the Manifested Form is new. My desire —if I can put it in so many words— is this: More and more should yearn for Me. The desire could be realised only if I assume this Form and come among you.

Those among you who have been following the unfolding of My story will have discovered this by now, though even to the best of you only a fraction of the mystery is revealed. You are like a Telugu audience sitting through a Tamil picture, or vice versa. The nuances, the subtler significances, the deeper meanings are all beyond the grasp. My language, My role, My career, My purpose can be understood in a general way only by sitting through the entire film, watching earnestly and vigilantly and trying to get at the meaning of every word and act with patient attention.

Attaining good character is very important

As a matter of fact, language is an impediment in dealing with Me. All languages have a place in the con-

course of men, bringing out their feelings, hiding their weaknesses, shaping their thoughts, etc. But I speak and listen to the language of the soul. The words uttered by the tongues of men confuse and confound; they breed factions and sects; they erect walls. But the words that emanate from the soul radiate love and concord.

Spiritual practices have to be done after attaining a good character; that is very important. In the midst of impurity, wickedness, and evil, spiritual effort will be fruitless. It is as the jewel in the head of the cobra, in the centre of poison and cruelty. Some come here and earn peace and joy, but after years of sharing and serving, they fall prey to waywardness and fall back into the old morass, declining to such an extent that they deny their very experience and play false to their own conscience! Not that I am anxious that they should worship Me or adhere to Me; far from it. I ask only that truth be proclaimed, regardless of the company you have fallen into; there must be courage of conviction, which will help you to overcome the temptation to deny your cherished joys.

The Lord is like the diamond

Some others are swept off their feet by hysterical demonstrations by certain weak minded individuals who are described as My speaking through them or acting through them! Take it from Me, I am not given to such absurdities! I do not use others as My media; I have no need to. I do not swing from side to side and prattle! Why, even those who torture their bodies and suffer the pains of asceticism for years until ant hills overwhelm them and they become as stiff as tree-stumps find it difficult to realise the Lord. How then can these idlers, who eat their fill and wander about as slaves of their senses, earn that status so cheaply? Their gestures, words, and actions are hollow and vain; those who bum incense before them and revere them are turning away from Me and running after falsehood.

How can the Full ever dally with the paltry and wear the habiliment of the trifling? When God has come assuming form, take it from Me, it will not fill inferior vessels or embellish tawdry stuff or enter impure bodies. So do not extol these falsities and ruin those unfortunates. Deal with them severely, and they will be cured. Those who have seen the brilliance of the diamond will not be misled by glass trinkets. The Lord is like the diamond, call it by any name. But a trinket cannot be turned into a diamond, however loud the praise and however adamant the claim.

The Lord is anxious to assuage your pain

The Lord is as anxious to assuage your pain as you are anxious to secure His grace to get rid of it. You may not know this but I know, for I feel it.

Uddalaka, a contemporary of Chaithanya, chose to worship the Lord as the manifested, as nature (*prakriti*). He chose to worship the Creator through His creation; he adored the container for the thing contained. In short, he adored Radha, or Dhara (mother earth), in reverse, the *prakriti* aspect, the feminine principle of Krishna, the Supreme Person (*Purusha*), the inseparable other! His yearning was so moving, his penance (*tapas*) was so compelling, that the following happened.

One day, a bangle seller trudging along the bank of the Saraswathi River by the side of the village found a damsel washing clothes in the bathing *ghat*. The damsel called the bangle seller near and, selecting many pairs of bangles, wore them all. When he asked for the cash, she said, “Oh, I forgot all about the money that is due to you; please go to Uddalaka’s house in the village; anyone will point it out to you. Tell him that his daughter purchased

them, and he will surely pay. Or, wait, tell him that he will find the cash behind the picture of Radha in his shrine room.”

The man took her at her word and hurried to the village and the house. Uddalaka was amazed at the tale, for he had no children. In fact, he had not even married. But the bangle-seller insisted on his looking behind Radha’s picture because, he said, the girl was incapable of deceit. Uddalaka denied having ever placed any cash there. How could he use that space, of all places, to keep cash! But just to satisfy the bangle-seller, he peeped there and, lo! He found a knotted piece of cloth containing just the cash needed to pay for the bangles. Then, in a flash, he realised that it must be Radha herself who had sent the man, and he fell at the feet of the pedlar and ran with him to the bathing place, overcome with joy and thankfulness. For an instant, he saw a glorious vision above the waters: the right arm of Radha, with the bangles scintillating in the morning sun. He knew the arm was raised to bless him; he felt it was calling him; and he flew out of the mortal coil into Her lap.

You can worship even nature. There is no harm, provided you realise that the Lord is immanent in it, giving it name and form and value; that the cloth is just yarn, the pot is just mud, the jewel is just gold. Why, you can worship your parents and realise the Lord through that spiritual practice. They are your creators and guides and teachers and protectors, and by idealising them, you can grasp the Truth of the Lord, the Primeval Parent.

God is all Love at all times

Even if you are not able to conceive the idea of a Lord or a God, you must be able to know what love is by experience, is it not? You have experienced the love of your parents, of a friend, of a partner, of a brother or sister, or toward your own children. That love is itself a spark of God, who is all love, who is all the love in all the worlds at all times. Call upon your mother and the love she bears toward you and, even if your physical mother cannot come to your rescue, some mother or the Supreme Mother herself will certainly hurry toward you.

There is a fine story to illustrate this: One dark night, when Siva and Parvathi were journeying through the sky, they saw a man perched on the branch of a tree, about to fall on the ground through sheer exhaustion of limbs. Parvathi pleaded on his behalf and wanted Siva to save him, but Siva preferred that She should save him instead! Meanwhile, the fall became imminent, so they decided that if while falling the man shouted “*amma* (mother),” Parvathi would hasten to arrest his fall, but if he shouted, “*appa* (father),” Siva would help and see that no bones were broken. The man fell, but he shouted neither *amma* nor *appa* but *ayyo* (sigh of misery)! So he had to be left severely alone!

“Do not be false to yourself or to Me”

Of course, it is all a question of deep-rooted taints or traits or attitudes. You draw from the bank only according to what you have put in; you have to study your pass-book before you write out a cheque or calculate your assets. Go on, pile up your assets; do not feverishly exhaust them by recklessness. Unfortunately, people take greater pleasure in liquidating their assets than in building them up. It is the bane of the times that they revel in destruction and recoil from construction.

When a committee is engaged in some constructive work, members find the work uninteresting and stay away. If the task set is to pull down someone or another institution, more members are eager to join the fray. So keep your wisdom intact and discriminate between destructive and constructive impulses. Do not listen to de-

structive criticisms and cynicisms, which are the poisons eating into the vitals of spiritual life today. Bear witness to the truth of your own experience; do not be false to yourself or to Me. My name is Sathya Sai; it means, “He Who reclines on Truth.”

I am reminded now of past events, events in my previous body. Even then, I had *sathya* or truth as my Support. A wrestler challenged Me then for a fight, and he was defeated before a large gathering of villagers. Pained by the insult, he invited Baba for a second tussle the next day, so that he might win back his lost reputation. The man swore that if defeated again, he would wear a long rough kafni (a knee-length one-piece robe) and move about with his head covered in cloth. He dared Baba to swear likewise. Baba was in no mood to enter the arena again, and he was quite prepared to concede the fellow the victory he craved. So he accepted defeat and himself donned the kafni and the kerchief. The wrestler felt great remorse, and his insolence melted away. He appealed to Baba to resume his usual style of dress and released him from the obligation. But Baba stuck to his word. He was *Sathya* Itself, then, as He is now. He wore the new attire.

Truth is the very nature of Sai

I am reminded of another instance. Some friends of Justice Rege came one day, a mother and her little son. After an hour or so at the Dwarakamayi, they went to a *Puranic* recital in the village where the *pandit*, much to the exasperation of the child, described Baba as an impostor and a fraud. The child insisted on the mother coming away from the place; it ran toward Baba and told him the whole story, when Baba asked them why they came back in such a hurry from the recital. Baba laughed and said, “Yes, I am an ordinary man, not the Divine Power that you take me to be.”

But the child could not be put off. It declared that Baba was God. Baba replied, “I am not God, little chap. See, my clothes are torn; I have only two hands; God should have four, isn’t it?”

But the boy was in no mood to agree. He declared that He was God, in spite of the two hands that He then seemed to lack. Even while they were arguing thus, some others arrived, exulting over a miracle they witnessed. A child had slipped from the top floor of a house and escaped unhurt.

Baba told them, “Yes, I held it in my four arms.”

The boy jumped at the words and said, “Now you yourself agree that you have four hands and so you are God.” Baba clasped the child to His bosom, and, taking it inside, gave him a vision of the Lord with four hands. Such was adherence to truth even in the previous body. It is not adherence, it is the very nature of Sai.

Spiritual endeavour is an inescapable task for all

You must learn the significance not only of My name but even of yours. You are all given names redolent with divine fragrance, and you should draw inspiration and strength from them. Swami Abhedananda said this evening at the meeting that he would prefer to be called Sathya Sai “Charanananda” and that he had written to Me about that desire a fortnight ago. But his name teaches that he should not posit any distinction between him and Me. It must be an *abheda* (non-distinct) relationship. He has to practise unity, non-distinction. This is what I wrote to him; “Learn the lesson your present name teaches, that is enough.” So too, accept your names not as labels or means of identification or distinction but as guides for conduct, as focuses for spiritual endeavour.

Endeavour. That is the main thing, that is the inescapable task for all mortals. Even those who deny God to-

day will have one day to tread the pilgrim road, melting their hearts out in tears of travail. If you make the slightest effort to progress along the path of liberation, the Lord will help you a hundred-fold. Sivarathri conveys that hope to you. The moon, which is the presiding deity of the mind, wanes, until on the fourteenth day after full moon, it is just a tiny curve of glimmering glow. The mind too must be starved into that condition, so that the person becomes free.

Spend all the days with Siva and the conquest of the mind is easy. Spend the fourteenth day of the waning moon with Siva, reaching the climax of spiritual effort on that final day, and success is yours. That is why all the *Chaturdasis* (fourteenth days of the dark half of every month) are called *Sivarathris* (Siva's nights); that is why the *Chaturdasi* of the Magha month is called *Mahasivarathri*. This is a day of special dedication to Siva, and since so many of you here and elsewhere pray to Siva, the *Linga* is emanating from Me for you all to receive the grace and the bliss of the great moment of *Lingodbhava* (Emergence of the *Linga*).

Prasanthi Nilayam, Mahasivarathri, 1962-03-04

Discover for yourself your stage of spiritual development, to which class in the school you would fit in. Then determine to proceed from that class to the next higher one. Strive your best and you will win the grace of God.

Do not bargain or despair. One step at a time is enough, provided it is toward the goal, not away from it.

Beware of the prides of wealth, scholarship, and status, which drag you into egoism. Do not seek the faults of others; seek your own. Be happy when you see others prosper; share your joy with others.

Sathya Sai Baba