

Work With Discrimination, Worship With Awareness Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam
22 August 1996

Editor's note. A condensed version of this discourse appears in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series. This more complete version was published in *Sanathana Sarathi*, December 2013.

*Why do you search for God here and
there when He is present in your
heart?*

Give service and receive love.

*This is how you can know the principle
of divinity*

(Telugu poem)

Students!

Education bestows humility (*vidya dadati vin-ayam*). Humility is the hallmark of education and its very goal. Humility does not mean merely mean to bow your head and stand with folded arms. Humility means to perform actions without ego. A truly educated person performs all actions without ego and attachment in their daily life. Don't become egoistic just because you are educated. Don't be proud of your intelligence.

In spite of education and intelligence, a foolish person will not know their true Self and

A mean-minded person will not give up their evil qualities.

(Telugu poem)

Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom.

What is the use of acquiring education that cannot lead you to immortality?

Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal.

(Telugu poem)

Desire and hatred cover up your innate Divinity

Lord Krishna declared in the *Bhagavad Gita*: spiritual education is true education (*Adhyatma vidya vidyanam*). "Out of all types of knowledge, I am spiritual knowledge," He said. No other knowledge is superior to this.

Modern education gives only worldly and bookish knowledge, but spiritual education gives practical knowledge. Modern education deals with only physical, worldly, ephemeral, and transient knowledge. It is not proper to even call this education. That which confers true knowledge is education. God is the embodiment of true knowledge.

You say that you need God. I ask you, "Why do you need yourself?" You yourself are God. God is not separate from you. He is in you, with you, around you, above you, and below you. Spiritual knowledge is that which gives you realisation of this truth.

Students!

How does spirituality grow? If you put a seed in a tin and pour water over it, the seed will decay and the plant will not come out of it. For the seed to germinate, it has to be sown in soil.

Similarly, if you sow the seed of spirituality in the soil of love, it will grow into a big tree and yield the fruit of bliss. The seed of spirituality will not grow in a heart bereft of love.

Any task can be accomplished by practice. Practice is necessary for everything in life, whether it is walking, talking, eating, reading, or writing. When you are a child, your mother teaches you words like mother, father (*amma*, *appa*). All these come only with practice.

You say that you want peace. For that also you need to put in some effort. All of you are squatting on the floor. Without practice, you cannot even sit in a cross-legged posture. If you want to perform a small drama, you start practising at least ten days in advance. The world is like a stage. All are actors. God is the director. You need practice for everything in this drama of life.

Divinity can be attained only by following the spiritual path. The fire of wisdom is in every human being. If you neglect this fire of wisdom, it gets covered by the ash of ego, attachment, and hatred.

Where does the ash come from? It comes only from the fire and ultimately covers the fire itself.

Similarly, Divinity is in every human being. Plato described the same in three words: truth, goodness, and beauty. The ancients in India called them *sathyam*, *sivam*, *sundaram*.

Everyone is endowed with goodness, which is the attribute of Divinity. No one in this world is devoid of goodness, but this goodness is covered by desire and hatred (*raga* and *dwe-sha*). If you want to visualise your innate Divinity, first of all, you have to remove the ash of ego, attachment, and hatred.

Students!

No path is easier than spirituality. Nothing is easier than this in this world. There may be some effort involved in crushing the petal of a rose, but spirituality is much easier than this. Why? The reason is that Divinity is within you. In fact, Divinity is not different from you, so there is no need to search for it.

Students!

Do you search for yourself anywhere outside? No one will search for themselves. One who says, "I am searching for myself," will be considered a fool. You yourself are God.

The Vice Chancellor quoted Ramakrishna Paramahansa, explaining the principle of the individual soul and the universal Self (*jivatma* and *Paramatma*). I wish to elaborate on this in a different way.

There are three steps to Divinity: I am the body, I am the individual soul, and I am the universal Self (*Aham dehatma*, *Aham jivatma* and *Aham Paramatma*).

To say that I am the body is a sign of ignorance. This is dualism (*dvaita*). To say that I am the individual soul is qualified non-dualism (*visishtadvaita*). To say that I am the universal Self (*Paramatma*) is non-dualism (*advaita*).

You are not one but three: The one you think you are, the one others think you are, and the one you really are.

In the three terms *dehatma*, *jivatma*, and *Paramatma*, *Atma* is common. One should know the difference between these three terms to understand Divinity.

The terms *bhur*, *bhuvah*, and *suvah* in the *Gayatri Mantra* convey the same meaning.

Bhur refers to *bhuloka*. What is *bhuloka*? It consists of worldly matter. This can be described as materialization, which is represented by the human body.

Bhuvah represents the life principle, which makes the body move. Hence, it can be described as vibration. It is due to the presence of vibration within that the body is able to move.

Therefore, the body is materialisation, the life principle is vibration, and the *Atma* is radiation.

All these three are very much present in you. Then where do you search for Divinity? Why

should you search for it? When you understand this truth, you will realise that you are everything.

Everyone has God as his master

Kabir was a poor weaver. He used the money that he earned by weaving cloth to feed the poor. He never worked to earn profit. He used to sell his cloth at a very cheap price, without any consideration for profit. If any poor person came to him to buy cloth, he would give it to him free and would starve that day. He constantly chanted the Name of Rama while weaving. That is why the cloth weaved by him acquired great value.

Some devotees arrived from Greece today. They came by plane from Greece to Bengaluru. From Bengaluru, they came to Puttaparthi on foot, carrying their luggage on their back, while chanting the mantra *Om Sri Sathya Sai Babaya Namah* at every step.

I received them in the temple (*mandir*). I asked if their feet were aching. They said, “No Swami, we are very happy, it is a great opportunity for us. We can walk even ten miles more. If we had traveled by car, we would not have had the good fortune of chanting Your Name all along.”

That is why our ancients said, Hard work yields rich rewards (*Kashte phali*). Only when you put in hard work can you enjoy the fruit.

Kabir also used to chant Rama’s Name continuously while touring other places on foot. That is how the whole country came to know about Kabir’s devotion to Lord Rama.

A king came to know about Kabir’s devotion to Lord Rama. He heard that Kabir was very poor and had nothing to depend upon for his livelihood. Considering him to be forlorn (an *anatha*), the king sent him money, clothes, and food provisions in a palanquin.

When Kabir returned home after bathing in the river, he saw four people bringing the pal-

anquin to his house. He was surprised to see this and asked the bearers, “Why did you bring this palanquin, which has to be carried by four people? We are quite all right.” What is being carried by four people? It is dead body.

Kabir meant to convey to the king that he did not need a palanquin to be carried by four people since he was quite all right.

The bearers replied, “Sir, the king has commanded us to give all these things to you because you are a poor *anatha* (meaning he is forlorn).”

Kabir replied, “Oh, did the king say that! Did he say that these things are to be given to me because I am *anatha*? Well, I am not *a-natha* because I have Lord Rama as my *natha* (master). In fact, Rama is *a-natha* because He has no master above Him. Therefore, please offer these things to Lord Rama.”

See, what a profound meaning is in Kabir’s statement! No one in this world is *anatha* (without master) because everybody has God as their master. If there is any *Anatha*, it is only God, because He has no master above Him.

In fact, God is neither a master nor a king; He is the king maker. Many devotees pray, “Swami, please don’t make me forlorn (an *anatha*).” I tell them, “My dear, you are not A-natha (without master). In fact, I am A-natha.” Unable to understand God’s nature and His reality, devotees misunderstand Him and form wrong notions. One who has total faith in God will not lack anything.

Become egoless like Me

To light the lamp of Divinity in you, you have to get rid of ego, attachment, and hatred and develop love. I am the ideal example in this regard. How? During *darshan*, you remain seated where you are and I Myself come to you, bend My back, stretch My hand, and take your letters. Instead, out of ego, I could as

well sit at one place and tell you to come to Me and give your letters. You would certainly do that. I don't do like that because I don't have even a trace of ego.

Just as I come to you and serve you, you also should go to others and serve them without ego. This is the ideal I want to demonstrate.

All of you come to Prasanthi Nilayam from far off places. Would it be difficult for you to walk a small distance and give Me your letters if sat at one place? You could very well do that. But I act in such egoless manner to set an ideal before you.

I don't observe any difference like so and so is Mine and others are not. All of you are Mine. I am yours. Every devotee and every student should recognise this truth.

I am present as the *Atma* in all beings (*Mamatma sarva bhutantaratma*). The same *Atmic* principle is present in all. Then why is it not visible to everyone?

You think as though some are close to Me and others are not. God is not the cause of this. Since you are overpowered by worldly tendencies and attachments, you become distant from God.

Moreover, modern youth are always in a state of excitement. They have a craze for all sorts of vulgar words, songs, and dances. They are not interested in *bhajans*, discourses, or talks about God. Some of them who come here hear Swami's words in one ear and let them out from the other.

Assimilate what you hear and read

Once, a sculptor brought three dolls to the court of King Bhoja. All three looked alike and beautiful. The emperor summoned the prime minister and asked him to decide which of the three dolls was the best.

The prime minister brought an iron wire and put it in the ear of one of the dolls. The wire

came out from the other ear. He remarked, "This is the worst doll."

When he put the wire in the ear of the second doll, it came out of its mouth. He said, "This doll can be given second prize."

When he put the wire in the ear of the third doll, it went inside and did not come out. The prime minister declared, "This deserves the first prize."

What does this mean? It means that the person who assimilates what he hears is the best person.

In this modern age, some people hear sacred teachings in one ear but immediately let them out the other ear. Some others repeat like parrots what they read in scriptures and what they hear from Swami. Only a few assimilate what they hear and put them into practice.

Why? Where does the difference lie? The difference lies in the likes and dislikes of individuals. Where do these likes and dislikes come from? They come from the company you associate with.

You will be happy when all are happy

People want only their own well-being and the well-being of their family. How foolish it is to think like that! Oh simpleton! You aspire for the well-being of you and your family! But where do you live? On whom do you depend? You depend on your family, and your family depends on society.

Hence, when society is safe and secure, your family will be safe and secure. And when your family is safe and secure, you will be safe and secure. So, it is necessary that you strive first and foremost for the well-being of society. That is what the *Vedic* prayer, May all the beings of all the worlds be happy (*Samasta lokah sukhino bhavantu*)! teaches. When all are happy, you will also be happy.

In this way, *Vedanta* propounds sacred and fundamental truths. Unfortunately, today few

teachers can impart such sacred teachings. As a result, people have lost interest in them. Where there is 'in trust' there is interest. What you need today is 'in trust', but only 'in-rest' prevails today. It means people have become lazy. It is not a good sign.

Consider every work as God's work

Always associate with good company. *Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are.*

Good company leads to detachment;
Detachment makes one free from delusion;
Freedom from delusion leads to steadiness
of mind;
Steadiness of mind confers liberation.

*Satsangatwe nissangatwam,
Nissangatwe nirmohatwam,
Nirmohatwe nischalatattwam,
Nischalatattwe jivanmukti.*

(Sanskrit verse)

What is meant by good company? Good company is that which makes you think more of God than the world. What does the world signify? It signifies coming and going, coming and going.

Oh Lord! I am caught up in this cycle of birth and death.
Time and again, I experience 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.

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

(Sanskrit verse)

The term *jagat* (world) has two syllables, *ja* and *gat*, that which comes and goes. There is nothing real in it. So, this is a big zero.

It is said that every good work is God's work. How does it become God's work? There are four letters in the word *good*. When you

remove one zero from the word *good*, it becomes *God*.

If you give up your attachment to the world, you become divine. However, you don't need to renounce the world. You may look after your family, discharge your office duties, but do everything as an offering to God. Consider every work as God's work. Then your work will be transformed into worship.

You cannot perform even an ordinary task properly unless you do it with a sense of worship. You have your office work. If you do not perform it with a spirit of worship, you will neglect it. Worship is not only limited to God. Every task you perform, every subject you deal with, consider it as worship. When you do it with this spirit, you will get the desired results.

If you do not focus your mind on the work at hand, you will only spoil it. Every work you perform from morning to evening is, in fact, worship to God.

You eat to satiate your hunger. That is also an act of worship. Whatever you eat reaches God within. Otherwise, how would the food get digested? Before eating your food, you recite this prayer:

Brahman is the ladle as well as the oblation.
He is the sacrificial fire as well as the sacrificer.
And finally, Brahman is the goal of one who is engaged in the act of sacrifice.

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmanahutam
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahma Karma Samadhina.*

When you pray in this manner before you partake of your food, God immediately responds thus:

I am present in all beings in the form of digestive fire.
United with the exhalation (*prana*) and inhalation (*apana*), it is I who consumes the four kinds of food.

*Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva
Praninam Dehamasrita
Pranapana Samayukta
Pachamyannam Chaturvidham.*

God says, "My dear, I am present in your stomach in the form of *Vaishvanara*. I digest the food you eat and supply its essence to all the limbs of your body. That is how you can lead a happy and healthy life."

Who grinds the food you eat and supplies its essence to all parts of the body? What effort do you make for this? None whatsoever. What effort do you make for your heart to beat? It is only the power of God that makes the heart beat.

Some people, out of ego, think they are the doers of everything. What effort do you make for the circulation of blood and beating of your pulse? It is all done by God. It is God that makes your heart and pulse beat, fills your lungs with oxygen, and supplies oxygen to all limbs of the body. The entire mechanism and functioning of the body is ordained by God. Without the presence of Divinity within, you cannot perform any task.

Therefore, first of all you know your innate Divinity. Whether you believe it or not, God is doing all the work.

However, you will experience bliss only when you develop faith in God. Work with discrimination, worship with awareness. Whatever you do, do it with total awareness and understanding.

When you know there is fire, you will not put your hand in it. On the other hand, if you put your hand in fire without knowledge, your hand will get burnt. That is why Thyagaraja sang, "Oh mind! Contemplate on the glory of Rama with full awareness. God pervades everything. Nothing happens without His Will:"

Oh Rama! In Your pure and unsullied form of love, You indwell all beings from an ant to Brahma as also Siva and Kesava. Please be my protector too.

Sita Rama! This Thyagaraja, who praises You, has not indulged in evil deeds aspiring for acclaim, nor in his overweening pride forgot his origins.

*Cheemalo Brahmalo Siva Kesavaadulalo
prema meera velasi unde birudhu
vahinchina Rama nannu brovara.
Meppulakai kannataavu nappu badaka Vir-
raveegi tappu panulu leka yunde
Thyagaraja vinuta Sita.*

Develop inner vision

When you constantly think of God, anything you do will become perfect. Education is required to acquire this knowledge. I am telling you all this at great length only to impress upon you the true meaning of education.

Vid + Ya = Vidyā. That which gives knowledge is education. What type of knowledge? Is it material knowledge? Material knowledge is associated with reaction, reflection, and resound.

Here is a table. This is a material object. When you hit it hard with your hand, your hand will also be hit hard. You say you have hit the table hard. This is not the full truth. The table has also hit you equally hard. Thus, there is reaction, reflection, and resound in this objective world.

So, whatever you think, say, and do will come back to you as reaction, reflection, and resound. That is why it is necessary for you to think good, speak good, see good, do good, and experience good.

The goal of human life is to do good. Having been born as a human being endowed with great intelligence and education and having attained high position, if you behave like birds and animals, then what is the use? Even an ant has hunger and fear like you. Even animals like dogs, monkeys, foxes and birds like crows and eagles have desires like you. If you conduct yourself as they do, then in what way are you superior to them?

Once, King Janaka called an assembly of great scholars and poets. Famous learned men came from all over the realm. The assembly was composed of such giants that there was no room at all for ordinary people to enter. The daily meetings were presided over by King Janaka himself. Only the most outstanding and accomplished scholars were given an opportunity to speak and present their views.

A person with a deformed body came to this magnificent and august assembly of scholars. His name was Ashtavakra. On seeing the strange form of Ashtavakra, most of the great scholars who had gathered there began to laugh. Ashtavakra carefully looked around the hall, and then quite inexplicably started laughing even louder than the scholars who were seated there.

Ashtavakra's loud burst of laughter greatly surprised the scholars and also King Janaka. The king asked him, "The scholars gathered here laughed seeing your strange body. But what is the reason for your loud laughter?"

Ashtavakra replied, "Well, sir, I entered this gathering thinking it to be a sacred assembly convened by you to discuss holy scriptures. If only I had known what kind of people were attending this assembly, I would not have bothered to come. I looked forward to being in the company of great scholars. But, alas, I find only cobblers (*charmakaaras*) here, shoemakers, who stitch chappals and work with leather. That caused my laughter."

Addressing the scholars, Ashtavakra said, "All of you are laughing at my skin and have obviously decided that it is not worth much, but not even one of you has made any effort to know about my scholarship. Pandits should develop the vision to look inward, but you seem to care only about the outer covering. If you have not developed inner vision but are only concerned with the superficial outer vision, then you cannot be considered scholars at all. You are only shoemakers, cobblers, specialists in hides."

The scholars hung their heads in shame on hearing these words of profound wisdom. King Janaka, who understood very well what Ashtavakra was saying, invited him to take a high seat in the assembly and subsequently bestowed numerous honours upon him.

As was the case then, so is the case now throughout the world. However great you may be, you have developed only external vision. You do not bother to cultivate inner vision. When you look at someone, you pay attention only to their physical features, wealth, status, education, degrees, and so on.

On the other hand, when God sees a person, He looks at the purity of their heart; He pays attention to the peace that is within. It is such inner vision that you must develop.

Whatever be the circumstances with which you are confronted, do not get excited or agitated. Allow time for the nobler feelings to well up from inside you and manifest themselves. By practising patience and forbearance, you will be able to acquire all the other important spiritual qualities, such as mind control, faith, renunciation, endurance, and concentration. This will bring a state of inner purity and fill you with abiding peace.

Inner purity is much more important than outer purity. The Lord is ever present both inside and outside. Therefore, both the inner and the outer—the entire place where the Lord is to be found—must be purified and sanctified. Then the indwelling God will protect you wherever you go.

Attain divine proximity

Each has their own way of looking at things. Opinions vary from person to person (*Munde munde mathir bhinnah*). Today people have perverted thoughts. First of all, they should purify their hearts.

Some people consider themselves to be great scholars and poets, but God does not see your

scholarship or poetic talent. God sees your inner feelings, not the outward show.

Some people feel proud that they offered food and clothes to thousands of people. Fie on them! Is it something to boast about? If you have offered food and clothes to thousands of people, you may give this statistical account to income tax authorities. God says that you don't need to tell Him all these details.

What I see is the purity of your heart. If your heart is pure, that is enough. This is what Ashtavakra taught to those scholars in the court. He told them, "Don't see my physical frame, see the knowledge that I have."

Who is a true scholar? A pandit is one who is equal-minded (*Pandita samadarshina*). A real scholar is one who is endowed with the quality of equal-mindedness.

But do you possess the quality of equal-mindedness? You may wear thick gold bracelets, adorn yourself with a costly shawl, and sit as though you are posing for a photograph, but that is not the sign of true knowledge. Open your heart, understand the nature of the world, and propagate the eternal teachings of Divinity. That is the sign of true knowledge. That is the type of knowledge you should acquire, develop, and propagate.

Students!

I am happy if you study well, get 'O' grades, and win a gold medal. Along with all this, you should develop faith in God. Without faith in God, you cannot achieve anything worthwhile in this world. What is the use of all your worldly possessions?

In addition to all this, try to attain divine grace. Only then will you find fulfillment in life. In the absence of divine grace, all your worldly achievements are meaningless.

When a person emerges from the womb of their mother, one does not find any garland around their neck.

There are no jewels made of pearls, nor are there glittering gold ornaments.

There are no necklaces studded with precious stones like emeralds and diamonds.

But there is one garland around the neck.

Brahma strings together the consequences of their past deeds into a heavy garland and puts it around their neck at the time of birth.

(Telugu poem)

This invisible garland of *karma* is around everyone's neck at the time of birth. One should see to it that they wear a good and fragrant garland and not a garland that gives out foul smells. Therefore, keep your worldly desires under check as far as possible.

Develop the sense of detachment. How is it possible? Many of our boys say, "Swami, there is always a desire in our mind to possess this and that. How to control it?" For this, it is essential to develop the spirit of detachment. Only when you have real knowledge, humaneness, and devotion to God can the spirit of detachment develop in you.

What is the true meaning of detachment? Do you feel like eating the food vomited by you? Just as you discard the food you vomited, you should give up worldly desires. If any worldly desire arises in you, at once discard it, telling yourself, this is the food you vomited. You don't even like to look at food you vomited, so how can you eat it again?

Thus, true detachment lies in giving up wicked thoughts and wicked feelings, just as you discard the vomited food. When a worldly desire enters your mind, be cautious. At this age, students have a tendency to look at bad things and entertain bad thoughts. When such a thought arises in your mind, remind yourself, "This is the food I vomited, I don't want this again. This is full of foul smell. It is very bad." What your stomach rejects, you vomit it out. How can you desire for it again?

To develop such firm resolve to discard worldly desires is the sign of true detachment.

Only then will you be able to take to the sacred path and become dear to God. God will be very pleased with you and make you sit close to Him.

There is no wealth greater than proximity to God. In fact, that is the purpose of human life. Having come to this world, you should attain divine proximity and earn a good name.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, “*Govinda Krishna Jai Gopala Krishna Jai...*”)

—From Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 22 August 1996.