

## Knowing the Self is Real Freedom Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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23 August 1996

Editor's note. This discourse does not appear in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series. It was published in *Sanathana Sarathi*, January 2014.

People strive to acquire education that will  
provide them a livelihood,  
But they do not come forward to acquire  
education that will grant them liberation.  
How can such people realise Divinity?  
Listen, oh valiant sons of Bharat!  
(Telugu poem)

Even as they start acquiring education, many students today are filled from top to toe with evil qualities like ego, pomp, and attachment. Not merely that, evil thoughts, evil intentions, and evil notions develop in them fast, like ant-hills.

### Evil qualities cover up Divinity

Sixteen evil qualities make people forget their humanness. Eight of these evil traits are pride of wealth, physical strength, intelligence, youth, high education, position, clan, and physical beauty. Besides, people are beset with six internal enemies, viz. desire, anger, greed, delusion, pride, and jealousy (*kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, and *matsarya*).

With the addition of passion (*rajoguna*) and sloth (*thamoguna*), the number of evil qualities from which people suffer today becomes sixteen. As a result, the sixteen divine attributes present in people become invisible.

God is the embodiment of sixteen splendours (*kalas*). Only when people get rid of the sixteen evil traits will they shine forth with sixteen divine splendours.

Desire, anger, greed, etc., are not human qualities; they are the qualities of animals and

beasts. Truth, righteousness, forbearance, empathy, and sacrifice are the true human qualities and values. But these human values have become invisible today because people give room to animal qualities. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce human values in the present system of education.

Youth is temporary, like passing clouds. How is it that young boys and girls forget the eternal Divinity being enamoured of the ephemeral youth? Every young boy and girl should develop divine feelings.

Money comes and goes. One may be proud of one's enormous wealth, but it cannot give one even an iota of peace. One may be proud of one's education, but that also cannot give peace. What is the point in acquiring money and education when they cannot grant you peace?

What is real property? It is knowledge. What is real wealth? Health is real wealth. What is real freedom? Knowing the Self is real freedom. The end of wisdom is freedom.

The educated today think freedom means to speak, act, move about, and behave in an arbitrary manner. But that is not real freedom. Self-control is real freedom, *Atmic* bliss is real freedom, knowledge of the Self is real freedom, and blossoming of the Self is real freedom.

How can you define *swechchha* (freedom)? *Swa* + *ichchha* = *swechchha*. *Swa* means *Atma*, *ichchha* means desire. Therefore, desire for the Self is the real freedom. But the youth

today want to enjoy freedom only at the physical level and not at the *Atmic* level.

### **Earn God's grace by total surrender**

Lord Krishna taught the principles of *swadharma* and *paradharm*a in the *Bhagavad Gita*. People misinterpret *swadharma* as if it is related to race, religion, or caste. They say *brahmins*, warriors, business people, and laborers should follow the *dharma* of their respective caste. But this is not *swadharma*.

*Swadharma* means *Atma dharma* and *paradharm*a means body (*deha*) *dharma*. The body is inert. It is the mind that makes the body perform various tasks.

Body *dharma* does not constitute true freedom. Control of the mind and knowledge of the Self is real freedom. Sage Patanjali said, "Control of the modifications of the mind is yoga (*Yoga chitta vritti nirodha*)."

Yoga confers real blessedness on those who practise it. God Himself will come and show His love on such blessed souls.

You don't need to go to God. God Himself will come to you. You don't need to pray to God to come to you.

Thyagaraja sang:

Come to our house, oh valorous one of the  
Raghu clan, and  
Oh tender one, I offer my salutations to  
You.  
Oh son of Dasaratha, come to my rescue.  
I cannot bear separation from You any  
longer.

*Raara maa intidaaka,  
Raghuveera sukumara,  
Neeku mrokkeda,  
Raara Dasaratha kumara  
Nannelukora, ne taalalera.*

(Telugu song)

But a devotee need not call God to come. He Himself will come to the devotee, saying, "Come on, my dear." But when will God call

you? He will call you only when you totally surrender to Him and obey His command, just like Arjuna did, saying, "I will obey Thy command (*Karishye vachanam thava*)."

Pleased with his sense of surrender, Lord Krishna said to Arjuna:

Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, offer obeisance to Me, and worship Me.  
Truly, I promise that you will come to Me, for you are dear to Me.

*Manmana bhava madbhakto  
Madyaji maam namaskuru,  
Maam evaishyasi satyam  
Te pratijane priyo asi mey.*

"Now you are Mine," said Lord Krishna. When you surrender to God completely, He will take you closer to Him the very next moment. God will then become closest to you.

Though many sacred qualities are present in them, people are not aware of them. Therefore, people should have awareness of their sacred qualities and develop them.

If any evil thoughts arise, discard them at once, saying, "These are not mine; these relate to animal qualities. I am a human being. I have come from God."

Why do such animal qualities arise in people when people are of divine origin? Bad company is responsible for this. Therefore, run away from bad company. Don't wait even for a moment; run away immediately. Only then can you develop sacred, pure and selfless feelings.

Here is an example. You should understand this clearly.

### **Make proper use of the gifts of God**

God created everything, right from the smallest atom to infinite cosmos. It is not possible to comprehend God. You should have faith that what is present in the smallest atom pervades the entire cosmos and vice-versa. God is present in every atom.

Why did He create this world? He says, “Oh human beings! Oh divine beings! I created everything in this universe. I created all the objects that you require to lead your life on earth. I gave you water to drink, air to breathe, sun to give you warmth, and ether to enable you to hear. I created five elements only for your sake. Enjoy them as much as you like.

I have given you all the freedom. I don't have any objection. You don't need to pay any tax for this. But I have laid down one condition. You will have to bear the consequences for way in which you use these five elements. If you do good, you will have good results. If you do bad, the result is bound to be bad. Be prepared to accept both. I don't interfere in this. You reap the consequences of your actions.”

The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches the same principle.

God gave you light to drive away darkness. To protect you from the intensity of heat, God gave you cool breeze. People have freedom to use these gifts of God for their benefit.

But the same wind has the power to extinguish the flame of the lamp. When the wind blows and extinguishes the lamp, people blame God. They think God has done this injustice.

God replies, “My dear, you have to make some effort to protect the flame. I gave you air to breathe and sustain your life. I gave you light to save yourself from darkness and its resulting dangers.

“I gave to the wind the power to blow and to the lamp the power to give light. If the wind does not extinguish the lamp, it means there is something lacking in divine power. Wind has the power to extinguish the lamp. That is the law of nature. Wind has to blow, and at the same time the lamp has to give light.

“It is your duty to cover the lamp with a glass shield to protect it from the wind. That is the self-effort expected of you.”

Without making such effort, if you leave the lamp in the open and pray to the wind not to extinguish the lamp, isn't it a mistake on your part? That is against the law of nature and the laws that govern God's creation. God does not accept any blame for this.

However, at times, when the suffering of devotees becomes unbearable and devotees pray to God with a pure mind from the depths of their heart, God Himself will manifest and remove their suffering.

### **Do not get deluded by the physical form of the divine Incarnation**

You might have read this in the *Bhagavata*. Once upon a time, Indra, the king of heaven, caused heavy rain in Gokul. The cow maidens and cowherders (*gopikas* and *gopalas*) surrounded Krishna and prayed, “Oh Krishna, please save us, protect our cows. We are unable to bear this torrential downpour.”

Krishna replied, “Rain is a natural phenomenon. It isn't possible to stop the rain because it is also My creation. If it has to rain, it has to rain. However, through prayer you can save yourself from suffering.

“I should not stop the rain just because I have the power to do so. In that case, I would be transgressing the laws I Myself made. Therefore, come, I will lift this Govardhana mountain.” Saying so, Krishna went to lift the Govardhana mountain.

The human mind is highly fickle. The herders who prayed to Krishna to protect them from the rain started entertaining all sorts of doubts. They thought, “How can this small boy Krishna lift the mighty mountain?”

When the doubting cow herders were thinking like this, Krishna lifted the Govardhana mountain on His little finger. Everybody took

shelter under the mountain. They also brought their cows under it.

Krishna's parents, Yashoda and Nanda, were fear-stricken as they thought, "He has somehow lifted the mountain. But how is He going to put it down?" They feared that Krishna might get crushed underneath the mountain in the process of putting it down.

Then Krishna told the cow herders and maidens, "All of you obey My command. Those who obey will be protected; those who disobey will be destroyed. All of you, close your eyes when I chant *Omkara*."

Accordingly, all of them closed their eyes as Krishna chanted *Om*. When they opened their eyes, the Govardhana mountain was at its original position and Krishna was in their midst.

This is the divine sport of Krishna. How did He put the mountain down? He can do anything in a moment.

Not even a blade of grass will move without  
divine Will,  
Why to say this or that?  
God pervades everything from an ant to  
Brahma.  
People who do not realise this truth get carried  
away by their pride of intelligence and  
knowledge.  
But no one, however great they may be,  
knows what lies ahead in the future.  
(Telugu poem)

This is the mystery of God. People get deluded when they look at the physical form of the divine incarnation with external vision and start comparing Him with themselves. They think that He is also a human being like us. This is how they get deluded. They make a fool of themselves by such delusion. He may have a physical form like you, eat like you, and move about like you, but God is God. One who understands this truth is truly educated.

Education confers humility, humility confers deservedness, which in turn gives you wealth.

Wealth will bring you material and spiritual satisfaction when you utilise it to perform charity and righteous deeds.

(Telugu poem)

### **Shirdi Sai Baba manifests his Divinity**

First of all, understand that education is not meant only to earn money. Education confers humility (*Vidya dadati vinayam*). A student who acquires education to earn money is not a student in the real sense of the term. He is not a student (*vidyarthi*) but a seeker of worldly pleasures (*vishayarthi*).

It is difficult to understand Divinity. Only those who obey the divine command implicitly can experience Divinity in its fullness.

Mhalsapathi used to sleep in Shirdi Sai Baba's room every night. A small wooden plank hung from the ceiling, and Sai Baba slept on it. Since there was not enough place in the room, Mhalsapathi used to sleep directly underneath the wooden plank.

Initially, Mhalsapathi was very afraid, wondering what his fate would be if the old *dhoti* that was used to hold the wooden plank gave way and the plank fell on him. Due to this fear, he would not sleep properly at night.

One day Sai Baba decided to dispel his fear and demonstrate his Divinity to Mhalsapathi. He called Mhalsapathi and asked him to get up. When Mhalsapathi got up, he saw Shirdi Baba lying on the plank, which was floating in the air without even the support of the old *dhoti*.

Baba told him, "Oh simpleton, do you think those old *dhotis* are bearing my weight? No, no. It is my power that is bearing my weight."

Then he revealed a divine secret to Mhalsapathi. He said, "Don't tell this to anyone. Some people think I am a *Brahmin*, some others think I am a *Patel*, while a few others

think I am a Muslim. In fact, I was born to the Brahmin couple Devagiramma and Ganga-bhavadia in the village of Pathri.”

Mhalsapathi’s doubt was removed, and he offered his salutations to Baba thus:

I offer my salutations to Lord Sainatha,  
Who is born in the village Pathri,  
Resides in Dwarakamayi, and  
Grants the prayer of his devotees.

*Pathri gram samudbhutam,  
Dwarakamayivasinam,  
Bhaktabhishtapradam devam,  
Sai natham namamyaham.*

(Sanskrit verse)

Baba commanded Mhalsapathi not to reveal this secret to anyone.

In those days, there was infighting between different sects of Hindus and Muslims, resulting in great violence. With a desire to bring about unity between Hindus and Muslims, Baba told Mhalsapathi, “I am a Mohammeden among Mohammedans and a Hindu among Hindus. Therefore, do not call me either a Hindu or a Muslim.” He told Mhalsapathi to keep this as a secret.

### **Develop constant integrated awareness**

Similarly, all incarnations of God share divine secrets with one or two individuals who are very close to them. Lord Rama shared many secrets only with Lakshmana and with no one else because Lakshmana followed Him like a shadow.

None can describe the greatness of Lakshmana’s sacrifice. He could have enjoyed all the comforts of the palace, but he gave up the kingdom and also his wife and followed Rama. He told his mother, Sumitra, “I want only Rama, and I am prepared to sacrifice anything to go with Him to forest.”

True to her name Sumitra, she was a good friend of everyone. When Lakshmana came to take leave of her and offered his salutations to

her, she said to him, “My dear son, the forest (*aranya*) is verily Ayodhya when Rama is with you, whereas Ayodhya is verily the *aranya* for us in the absence of Rama. Conduct yourself in such a manner that Rama is not put to any inconvenience whatsoever. Make sure that you don’t hurt Rama in any way. Rama is God and pervades the entire world, so if you cause even a little suffering to Rama, the whole world will suffer.”

What a wonderful teaching she imparted to her son!

During Krishna Avatar, Balarama (Krishna’s brother) was always with Krishna. But it was Uddhava who was Krishna’s closest friend. Sometimes, even Balarama was not by Krishna’s side, but Uddhava followed Krishna like His shadow wherever He went.

Krishna revealed only to Uddhava that the Yadava clan would be destroyed and that He had decided to leave His body. Uddhava was very sad to know that. He held Krishna’s feet and prayed, “I will be with You till You are there and will come with You when You go. I cannot bear separation from You.”

Subtle, divine mysteries are not revealed to all. Divine incarnations reveal them only to their most intimate friends. It isn’t possible to tell everyone. How is it possible for everyone to understand Divinity?

When devotees see a divine miracle, they say, “Ah! Swami is God!” However, they forget it after two days and think Swami is like any other ordinary person.

Devotees should not have such fickleness. They should have Constant Integrated Awareness. Mere awareness is not enough; there should be Constant Integrated Awareness.

### **Become equal-minded and experience bliss**

A true devotee is equal-minded (*sthitaprajna*). The devotee has a steady mind without any wavering.

Commentators of the *Bhagavad Gita* have interpreted the word *sthitaprajna* in various ways. Some of them say, “When it is day for ordinary people, it is night for *sthitaprajna* and vice-versa.”

Oh simpleton! Is this the attribute of a *sthitaprajna*? The railway station masters and night watchmen keep awake the whole night and sleep during the day. Can we call them *sthitaprajna*? No, no.

A *sthitaprajna* is one who is always awake in matters relating to God and asleep regarding worldly affairs. Normally, people are very alert in worldly matters. But a *sthitaprajna* is always immersed in bliss, completely oblivious to all that is worldly. This is the attribute of a *sthitaprajna*.

One who is devoid of worldly tendencies and totally immersed in the contemplation of the Supreme Being (*Visweswara*) is a *sthitaprajna*. The *Bhagavad Gita* exhorts man to become a *sthitaprajna*.

Many things keep happening in this world. However, all that is related to God is full of bliss. There is nothing bad in the world. How can there be anything bad in God’s creation? If you say something is bad, it is the defect of your vision. Can there be anything bad in God’s creation?

You may judge something as good and something else as bad in accordance with your position and intelligence. But when you transcend your senses and mind, everything will appear to be good to you. You should treasure this feeling in your heart. However, till you reach such a high state, strive to follow the sacred path befitting your humanness.

I want to tell you one more thing. Some people practise meditation. While practising, your body should not touch any other body. When bodies touch each other, good or bad currents from one body will pass on to the other body.

If people sit close to each other and meditate, it cannot be called meditation at all. Instead, sit separately as far as it is possible. That is why sages of yore used to go to the forest to do meditation. It is necessary that you live in solitude without having contact with the world as far as possible. Treasure this divine knowledge in your heart.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajans*, “*Madhava Murahara Madhura Manohara...*” and “*Subrahmanyam Subrahmanyam ...*”.)

—From Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 23 August 1996.