

Spirituality is the Basis of All Types of Knowledge

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam

28 August 1996

Editor's note. This discourse does not appear in the *Sathya Sai Speaks* series. It appeared in *Santhana Sarathi*, May 2014.

Do not get deluded by thinking what appears to the naked eye as truth.

If you follow Me with steadfast faith, I will be happy to show you what is truth

(Telugu poem)

Annihilation of ignorance least to liberation

All the scriptures of Bharat (India) such as the *Vedas*, *Sastras*, and *Puranas* are written in Sanskrit. Therefore, if one wants to learn the culture of Bharat, one should develop understanding of Sanskrit. In ancient times, even in villages, people used to converse with each other in Sanskrit. Sanskrit was the language of even street plays in those days. Sanskrit is so sweet that one can enjoy listening to it even without knowing its meaning.

Never leave Truth and Righteousness

In a street play, when the actor playing the role of Dharmaraja (Yudhishtira, Arjuna's eldest brother) comes on the stage, the stage manager as per the tradition asks him, "Who are you? What brings you here?"

Dharmaraja replies, "My name is Yudhishtira; I am the one who adheres to truth at all times, under all circumstances, and in the face of all trials and tribulations. That is why I am called Dharmaraja."

Dharmaraja was the embodiment of *dharma*. He had the power to destroy *a-dharma* (ignorance, unrighteousness) and make people follow the path of *dharma*.

The main teaching of the *Vedas* is: "Speak the truth, practise righteousness (*Sathyam vada, dharmam chara*). The *Vedas* exhort people that they might leave anything in this world but never to leave Truth (*Sathya*) and Right conduct (*Dharma*). Hence, always speak truth and follow righteousness.

But how many follow the teachings of the *Vedas*, and how many put them into practice in their lives? Truth (*Sathya*) and *Dharma* are not the products of the mind. They emerge from a heart that is filled with compassion. But, unfortunately, people today follow the mind, forgetting the heart and ignoring the intellect, which is endowed with the power of discrimination.

One who follows the mind degenerates to the level of an animal and ruins his life.

One who follows the intellect will rise to the level of the Divine, says the Lord of Parthi.

(Telugu Poem)

Today, the moment a thought enters a person's mind, they act upon it. In this way, they follow their mind. This is an attribute of the mind—but in fact it is not an attribute but an evil tendency of the mind. When a thought arises in one's mind, one should not translate it into action immediately. Instead, examine

the nature of the thought with the power of the intellect (*buddhi*). Only when one investigates with the power of one's intellect can one know whether a particular thought is good or bad, right or wrong. The intellect has the ability to distinguish between the ephemeral and the eternal. Only when one enquires using the power of their intellect can one take to the right path.

All the elements are immanent in the ether (*akasha*). Sound is the attribute of ether. From where does the sound originate? Sound is Brahman (God), and everything originated from sound. *Atma* is another name of Brahman. The *Atma*, the mind, and speech all belong to the same *Atmic* family. People describe the mind in many ways. But, in fact, it should reflect the nature of the *Atma*.

Therefore, never put the mind to misuse. Do not allow the mind to act in an arbitrary manner. Though the mind has no specific form, it sees everything, it hears everything. In fact, it is responsible for all actions.

You may be under the wrong impression that when everything in this world is meant for our use, why should we give up anything? That is a great mistake.

All is a play of the mind

Everyone experiences three states of the soul, namely, the individual soul in the waking state, in the dream state, and in the deep sleep state (*viswa*, *taijasa*, and *praaajna*). In your dream, you go to Mumbai, see your parents, meet your friends, and go through many experiences. What created all these? It is your mind. It created you, your journey to Mumbai, your parents, your friends, and all the shops of Mumbai. It created everything, but it is not real.

As the proverb goes, "All the mansions and buildings that you see in your dream become non-existent when you open your eyes." You see Marine Drive, Shivaji Park, Dharmakshet-

ra, etc. in your dream, but when you wake up in the morning, you find yourself in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Who has seen and experienced all this, and who is responsible for this experience? It is only your mind. All this is a play of the mind. Similarly, whatever you see and do is only illusory. All that is not related to the heart (*hridaya*).

There are many students here. They study their textbooks, listen to their teachers, acquire degrees, and take up jobs. But how much of what they have studied do they put to use in their profession? Not much. What is all this study for? You should acquire the capability to use your education for the benefit of society. It is not enough that you secure a job, maintain a family, and lead a comfortable life in this world.

No one seems to enquire, "what have I studied, and what is the benefit of my education?" You should think how you can use your education to benefit society. You have prepared many delicious dishes in your kitchen, but what is the use if you do not bring them to the dining room and serve them to the guests? What a waste it is! All the good things that you have learnt should be imprinted in your heart and should be used to serve others. .

Intensity of the cowherd maidens love for Krishna

Uddhava was a great scholar of *yoga*, the *Upanishads*, and other scriptures. He was Krishna's dear friend. Once he told Krishna, "Swami, the cowherd maidens (*gopikas*) are illiterate and ignorant. They have not understood Your power. Therefore, I would like to go there and teach them *yoga*, by which they can have Your direct vision."

However, he knew that the cowherd maidens would not pay any heed to him unless he carried a message from Krishna. All the cowherders and maidens had treasured Krishna's

love in their heart. They knew no God other than Krishna.

Therefore, Uddhava asked Krishna, “Kindly write a letter to the cowherd maidens and give it to me. Unless I carry a message from You, they will not listen to me.”

Accordingly, Krishna wrote a letter and gave it to Uddhava. He wrote, “I am sending this letter through My dear friend Uddhava. Listen to his advice.”

Uddhava took the letter to Brindavan, in Krishna’s own chariot. This made the cowherd maidens think that Krishna Himself had arrived without any prior information. All of them ran toward the chariot looking for Krishna. All along they waited for Krishna day and night, foregoing even their food and sleep so much so that their eyes were swollen. They had not seen Krishna even for a moment after He went to Mathura.

Therefore, they were dejected and depressed. All their energy had drained out.

But once they saw Krishna’s chariot, they were overjoyed and ran toward it. Uddhava showed them Krishna’s letter and said, “This is the letter Krishna has sent you.”

One of the maidens said, “We are illiterate, since our parents never sent us to any school. We don’t know even the alphabet. How can we read your letter?”

Uddhava replied, “If there is anyone who knows how to read, please take this letter and read it.”

One cowherd maiden knew how to read, but she didn’t want to touch the letter. She said, “I offer my salutations to you. I know Krishna’s handwriting very well, but I cannot touch this letter.”

Uddhava asked, “Why can’t you touch it? You are all great devotees of Krishna. You worship Him with total faith. Then why don’t you even touch this letter?”

The maiden said, “You do not understand our devotion and sense of surrender to Krishna. Our body is burning from top to toe in the fire of our separation from Krishna. If we touch the letter, it may also get burnt. Whatever we touch is sure to get burnt. We do not want to reduce this sacred and golden letter of Krishna to ashes by our touch.”

See the intensity of devotion of the cowherd maidens! Someone else in their place would have felt, “I’m educated, and I can read this letter.” But the maidens did not do like that.

Uddhava then tried to give the letter to another cowherd maiden. She also said, “My salutations to you. I also know Krishna’s handwriting well. But I cannot control my tears if I try to read it. My tears are bound to fall on the letter and smudge His handwriting completely. How can one read a letter that is totally smudged? Therefore, I don’t want to take this letter and read.”

Ultimately, Uddhava himself had to read out the letter.

The moment he completed reading those two lines written by Krishna, the maidens started leaving the place. They didn’t even look at the face of Uddhava. They were not prepared to look at anyone else, having feasted their eyes on the divine form of Krishna. Such was their sense of devotion and surrender towards Krishna.

Oh Lord!

In spite of having eyes, people are verily blind, since they do not yearn to see Your auspicious form.

Though they are endowed with ears, they are deaf to Your teachings.

Though God is immanent in them, they have drowned themselves in worldly life.

How can one describe their misfortune?

(Telugu Poem)

When Uddhava noticed cowherd maidens leaving one by one, he pleaded with them, “At least, listen to my teaching of *yoga*.”

They replied, “We have not seen Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheswara. How can we focus our mind on some God whom we have not seen? We have seen Krishna and experienced His divine power. Therefore, we do not want anyone other than Krishna. You may have a number of minds, but we have only one mind, which has gone to Mathura along with Krishna. We do not have a second mind to listen to your teaching on *yoga*.”

This statement of the maidens was an eye-opener for Uddhava.

Acquire the education that liberates

What is all this learning for? Students are stuffing their head with all sorts of worldly information to such an extent that it is ready to burst any moment. They are filling their head with all sorts of useless information from various countries of the world. Is this the purpose for which God has endowed you with head?

*One can fill an empty head with anything,
but is it possible to put something into a
head that is already full?*

*How can it be filled with sacred feelings unless
it is emptied in the first instance?*

(Telugu Poem)

This is not what you are supposed to fill your head with. Study what you are supposed to study. Retain in your head only that which is necessary and discard all that is unnecessary and useless.

Once, a teacher was taking a class for village children under a thatched roof. He asked a student, “3+3+3-2 is equal to what?” But the absent-minded student was looking at something else. The teacher was angry. He asked, “Hey, what are you doing? Has everything I taught entered your head? Has it gone inside completely?”

As the proverb goes, “the body is in the temple but the mind is thinking about the sandals left outside.” The boy’s attention was totally

diverted onto something else. He absent-mindedly replied, “Yes, sir, it has gone inside completely except the tail.”

He was referring to a rat that had just entered a hole in a corner of the hut. The rat had entered the hole, but its tail was still outside.

The teacher was teaching something, and this boy was concentrating on something else. Is this the way to learn? No, no.

What is the purpose of all your studies? Students should become role models and serve society. What is meant by *vidya*? That which gives true knowledge is *vidya*. But modern education does not impart real knowledge to students.

Give first priority to dharma in life

Chanda and Amarka were the teachers appointed by Hiranyakasipu to teach his son, Prahlada. Once, when both of them went to a river to take a bath, Prahlada gathered all the students around him and started teaching the *bhajan*, “*Narayan Bhaja Narayan...*” Teachers should not think it otherwise.

Prahlada told his fellow students, “Look here, our teachers are really misguiding us. My father Hiranyakasipu has instructed them to teach us only about wealth and desire (*artha* and *kama*) and nothing about righteousness and liberation (*dharma* and *moksha*). What is this education for?”

“They are teaching us that education is meant for earning money. Should one go to school and study just to earn money? Even beggars and thieves earn money. What is the necessity of education if we have to only earn money? Our teachers are stressing only wealth and desire, so we should not pay heed to them.”

Prahlada pointed to a monkey and a dog and said, “They are also enjoying all the worldly and sensual pleasures. What is the use of this education if it promotes only wealth and desire? We need teachers who give us

knowledge of the Self. Why do we require a teacher who gives us only worldly knowledge? We should oppose this education, which is centred only on earning wealth and fulfilling our worldly desires.” All the students were inspired by what Prahlada taught them.

As the teachers returned from the river, the students started singing “*Narayan Bhaja Narayan...*” They were uttering the name of Narayana, which Hiranyakasipu had forbidden them from chanting. Not only did Prahlada chant the name of Narayana but he also taught the other children to chant the same, much against the wishes of his father.

Seeing this, the teachers started slapping their own heads in desperation. They understood that it was none other than Prahlada who had made the children chant the name of Narayana. They threatened to punish Prahlada, but he wasn't the least perturbed and said to them, “What you are teaching is wrong. *Dharma* should be the foundation of education. This is the main step in achieving the objective of human life. No doubt, money is required, and there is nothing wrong in having desires, but all this should be done on the principles of *dharma*. Only then can one attain liberation.”

Liberation does not drop down from the sky;

Nor does it emerge from the nether world.

It is not available on earth either.

Only when the veil of ignorance is removed from your heart can you attain the sacred state of liberation.

This is the truth propounded in the Smritis (texts composed by the sages).

(Sanskrit Verse)

Removal of attachment is liberation (*Mohakshaya* is *moksha*.) Annihilation of ignorance leads to liberation. When the ash that covers the fire is blown away, the fire becomes visible. Similarly, when the clouds that cover the sun move away, the sun becomes visible.

There is no need to make any special effort to drive the clouds away. In fact, the clouds are born out of the sun and cover the sun. Does the sun get angry when the clouds cover it? No. The clouds will anyway move away in a short period. Similarly, when the clouds of ignorance move away, one will have the vision of the Self.

What are teachers supposed to teach their students? They should teach them to give top priority to *dharma* in their life. They should pursue wealth and desire on the basis of *dharma*. Then they will reach the top level, liberation (*moksha*).

To reach the top of a building, you use a ladder. Unless you start from the lowest step of the ladder, you cannot reach the top. The lowest step is *dharma* and the top is liberation. Wealth and desire are in between.

Prahlada exhorted his fellow students to make their teachers understand the importance of *dharma* and asked them to become the teachers of teachers.

Scientists today have understood and declared that the atom is all-pervasive after doing research for thousands of years. But the same truth was proclaimed by Prahlada thousands of years ago when he told his father:

Never doubt that God is here and not there.

Wherever you search for Him, He is there.

(Telugu Poem)

Wherever you look, God is present in every atom and every particle. This all-pervasive Divinity is referred to as the atom by scientists. The same is described as energy by philosophers. They say this energy is God.

Scientists go in a round-about manner to understand this simple truth, whereas the same truth can be experienced directly by following the spiritual path. Unless you put your hand and mouth to work, how can the food served in the plate reach your stomach? But what are the scientists doing today to make the food reach the stomach? They don't put it in the

mouth directly; they do it in a round-about manner by taking the hand round the head. Whatever the method they adopt, ultimately they will reach the same truth.

Prahlada understood this truth by his intuitive intelligence. This is the type of intelligence that students should develop.

You may not be able to put everything into practice in daily life that you study in the classroom. Say, for example, when you go to a laboratory, you mix two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen to make water. You can do this only in a laboratory. But when you sit for eat, do you mix hydrogen and oxygen to get water?

Modern education leads only to agitation, whereas education in those days led to elevation. What we need today is elevation and not agitation. Elevation confers happiness on all. The system of education should be moulded in such a way that everyone in society is benefited by it.

Focus your Mind on Spirituality

Develop faith in God. Then He will take care of you wherever you are.

*God is your sole refuge wherever you may
be,
In a forest, in the sky, in a city or a village,
on the top of a mountain or in the middle
of deep sea.*

(Telugu Poem)

God knows you wherever you are.

Your head is on the top and the feet are at the bottom, but when an ant crawls on the feet, your hand automatically hits the ant without even the eyes seeing it. Just as the power of consciousness is present in your entire body, so God pervades the entire universe.

Body and universe (*deha* and *desha*) are mirror images of each other. Light and darkness do not exist separately —the absence of one implies the presence of the other. For in-

stance, when you switch on the light in a dark room, the darkness at once disappears. Where does it go? When you switch off the light, the darkness reappears immediately. Where does the darkness come from and where does the light go? They neither come nor go. The existence of one leads to the non-existence of the other.

There is only one aspect: truth. Truth remains unchanged in the three periods of time —past, present, and future (*Trikalabadhyam sathyam*). Wherever you go, whatever you do, never forget this transcendental truth.

Students!

You may acquire any type of knowledge, but always focus your mind on spirituality. What is the basis of all types of knowledge? It is spirituality. Lord Krishna declared in the *Bhagavad Gita*: Spiritual education is true education (*Adhyatma vidya vidyanam*).

Krishna said: “Out of all types of knowledge, I am spiritual knowledge.” Spiritual knowledge should be the basis of all types of knowledge.

Suppose you have a magnet and an iron piece. The magnet at once attracts the iron piece when it is brought close to it. However, a rusted iron piece is not attracted by the magnet. The rusted iron piece says, “Oh magnet! You do not have the power to attract.”

Hearing the words of the iron piece, the magnet laughs and says, “Oh mad iron! You have covered yourself with a great amount of rust and dust. How can I take you closer? First of all, clean your rust and dust. Then automatically you will be attracted by me.”

Human life is like an iron piece. It is not enough to clean yourself with soap and water by having a bath. You should be pure and clean inwardly as well as outwardly. When you make yourself pure in this way, the divine magnet will immediately attract you.

The magnet not only has the power to attract an iron piece, it can also transform the iron into a magnet. Students can perform this experiment. Take a pin and keep it in contact with a magnet for two days. On the third day, the pin itself will become a magnet. Due to its continuous contact and association with the magnet, the iron will turn into a magnet.

The knower of Brahman becomes verily Brahman Himself (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi*).

Just as a magnet imparts its power to an iron piece, noble souls impart their sacredness to all those who come in contact with them. Suppose you go to a forest and try to cut a sandalwood tree with an axe. Does the sandalwood tree curse the axe that cuts it? No. Instead, it imparts its fragrance to the axe also.

Similarly, good people will impart their goodness even to those who try to harm them.

When you do good to others, you will certainly receive good in return. Therefore, be prepared for any sacrifice to do good to others. Not only that, do good to even those who harm you. You will be richly rewarded.

The good you do to others will never go to waste. You may not get the result immediately, but in due course of time, you will certainly get the reward.

Students!

It is not enough to acquire knowledge; you should use it for the welfare of society in a proper way. You should take a vow to do good to others in every possible way according to your capacity. Your knowledge becomes useless if it is not put to proper use.

A book (*pustaka*) may contain a lot of knowledge, but what is the use if the head (*mastaka*) is filled with mud? Don't make your *mastaka* another *pustaka* by merely stuffing it with information. Rather, use the

knowledge acquired from *pustaka* for a good purpose. Make efforts to understand the essence of education.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, “*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho...*”)

—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 28 August 1996.