

## Pursue the Path of Truth and Wisdom

**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

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*Study of the Vedas and scriptures cannot pierce the veil of ignorance that covers the human mind. God is on one side of the veil while the individual soul (jiva) is on the other side. The cause is on one side, the effect on the other.*

(Telugu poem)

God created mountains, rivers, forests, hills and hillocks. Similarly, He created all living beings right from a tiny ant to a huge elephant. He also created all the objects that are necessary for the functioning of the creation. However, He was not satisfied.

### **God created humanity in His own image**

Having created all this, He wondered who there was in this creation who would derive happiness by seeing the majestic mountains, beautiful rivers and enchanting forests. What is the worth of the entire creation if there is no one to derive happiness from it? It was then that He decided to create people, who could use their power of intellect and discrimination to distinguish between the eternal and ephemeral and experience happiness from the objects of His creation. Only humans have the capacity to derive happiness from the creation and share happiness with others. Without human beings, the entire creation has no value.

Therefore, the One willed to become many (*Ekoham bahusyam*) and created humanity in His own image, investing them with secular

knowledge (*vijnana*), spiritual knowledge (*sujnana*), constant integrated awareness (*prajnana*), and the power of discrimination to enjoy His creation.

When people had the vision of the Creator, they declared to the world, I have visualised the Supreme Being, who shines with the effulgence of a billion suns and who is beyond the darkness of ignorance (*thamas*) (*Vedahametam Purusham Mahantam adityavarnam tamasa parastat*).

Initially, people thought they could have vision of God by the study of the *Vedas* and scriptures. They undertook various spiritual practices like chanting, penance, meditation, and worship to have the vision of God. But they were neither able to have the vision of God nor able to hear or experience Him.

People were disappointed when all this spiritual practice did not yield any result. Why could one not experience bliss by performing all these spiritual practices? In spite of doing penance and studying the *Vedas* and scriptures, one was unable to get rid of body attachment, which haunted like an evil spirit.

Then people started enquiring about the nature of the body and the reason for body attachment. They investigated into the truth in many ways. Ultimately, they came to the conclusion that the body was just a conglomeration of inert matter and was merely an instrument, and there was some divine Power that made it function. It is that divine Power that

makes man move, perform various tasks, and experience happiness. People further enquired where that divine Power was and wherefrom it came. Some became continuously engaged in this thought, wherever they went and whatever they did.

### **Divine power gives value to the human body**

Once, the Greek philosopher Socrates was walking on a footpath, lost in his enquiry of truth. At the same time, a retired officer was coming from the opposite direction. Socrates didn't see him, and he did not see Socrates. Both of them were lost in their own thoughts. Since neither saw the other coming, they collided with each other.

The retired officer angrily asked Socrates, "Who are you?" Socrates at once folded his hands in reverence and said, "Sir, that is precisely what I have been thinking about. Kindly tell me who I am."

When a person is sincere in his enquiry, God will provide him with the opportunity to know the truth. Socrates was happy that without going to any master or guru, the spiritual urge in him was awakened by the retired officer with the question, "Who are you?" He thought it was a very important question and started repeating, "Who am I?"

The retired officer thought Socrates to be a madcap and went his way without giving any reply to him.

Thinking in this manner, when Socrates was going in the bazaar, he saw a hunter carrying a dead rabbit in his hand, which he had killed. A meat eater asked him the price of the dead rabbit. The hunter quoted its price. The person paid the amount quoted by the hunter and took the dead rabbit with him. Seeing this, Socrates thought, "A dead rabbit has a price, but nobody would pay anything to buy a dead body of a human being. Nobody will even ask what the price of this body is."

An animal like rabbit has some value after its death, but not a human being. A man may be an emperor or a head of a religious establishment, but after his death, nobody will be prepared to keep his body even for a little time.

At that time, there was a heavy rain while a dead body was being carried to a cremation ground. Some people asked a shopkeeper on the way, "Sir, kindly permit us to keep the dead body in the verandah of your shop for some time." But the shopkeeper vehemently denied permission, saying, "No, no. Take it away." He did not even bother to ask whether it was the body of an emperor, a wealthy person, or head of a religious establishment.

Along the same road, a devotee was going to a temple and asked the same shopkeeper, "Sir, if I leave my sandals near the temple, they may be stolen away or taken away by dogs. Kindly allow me to keep my sandals in the verandah of your shop." The shopkeeper readily agreed to the request and said, "Come inside and leave them here. If you leave them in the verandah, someone may take them away."

Socrates witnessed all this. Here was the dead body of a wealthy person who had many servants to attend to him when he was alive. There were so many restrictions to be observed to get an audience with him. But now his body was not permitted to be kept even in the verandah of a shop. The skin of dead animals can be used to make chappals, whereas the human body is absolutely useless once life ebbs away from it.

Socrates thought this body is inert and is made up of flesh, blood, and bones. It produces foul smelling urine and fecal matter. What is so special in this body that one gets attracted and attached to it? Every moment it gives only foul smell and not fragrance. Then why does one develop attachment to this body? There is some hidden power in it that is the cause of man getting attracted to an otherwise worthless body, which is nothing but a bag of leather. Ultimately, Socrates realised, there

was some Divine Power in the body, which governed it. He resolved to enquire and know this truth.

### **Know Truth through Self-enquiry**

In a similar way, Bhrigu, the son of Varuna, also wanted to enquire into the truth of human life. What is the most important aspect of human life? What makes the body function? What is the principle of oneness that is the undercurrent of everything? He started thinking: “What a beautiful creation! Who is this Brahman who has created it? What is His form?” Soon his thinking grew so intense that it became verily impossible for him to bear it.

So, he went to his father Varuna. After prostrating at his feet, he asked, “Father, who is Brahman? What is His form?” Varuna could tell his son all about Brahman. But he thought everyone should make efforts to understand the principle of Brahman through self-experience. Not only that, when a father assumes the role of a guru, he should not remove the doubts of his disciple himself. This would dampen the spirit of self-effort in the disciple.

Therefore, Varuna told his son, “It is not possible to say that Brahman is this or that. It cannot be explained in words. You yourself have to enquire and know the truth. There is some unseen power that governs the body. The body has value as long as that unseen power is present in it. The presence of the divine power makes it auspicious (*sivam*) and its absence makes it a corpse (*savam*). What is the difference between *sivam* and *savam*? You have to perform penance to realise this truth.” Saying this, he blessed his son and sent him away.

As per his father’s command, Bhrigu went to a forest and started doing penance after selecting a suitable place in it. He became engrossed in self-enquiry. One day, he thought in this manner: “All sentients in this world depend only on food. Food is necessary for

every being. This body is nurtured by food. Therefore, food is Brahman.” Concluding thus, he went to his father and said, “Father, I have come to know what is Brahman. Food is Brahman.”

Varuna said calmly, “No, no, dear son! Do some more contemplation. Perform some more penance.”

After doing penance for some more time, one day Bhrigu resolved thus: “Nourished by food, this body attains growth. For this growth, energy is required to digest food. What is that? That is the energy of the life-breath (*prana*). Therefore, the life-breath is Brahman.” Coming to this conclusion, he went again to his father and said, “Father! I know that life-breath (*prana*) is Brahman.”

Varuna said, “Of course, people are endowed with the life-breath. But what is the use? If the mind has no will to eat food, can one eat it if it is served on a plate? Therefore, life-breath alone cannot sustain man. No, no, son! Do penance and contemplation for some more time.”

A doctor makes a person unconscious by administering anesthesia before performing an operation on the belly. Though the person has life-breath, they does not know what the doctor is doing to their belly during the course of the operation. In this way, the life-breath can be made blind or defunct.

After performing penance for some more time, one day Bhrigu thought in this manner: “No doubt, food is necessary and life-breath energy is important. However, it is thought that impels one to eat food. But thought is born in the mind. Hence, the mind is Brahman.” Bhrigu went to his father and said, “Father! Now I understand that the mind is Brahman.”

His father called him near and said, “People are endowed with mind. But what is the use if it lacks the power of thinking? Such a person may eat charcoal, cow dung, and dust. One

needs the power of discrimination. A mad man has also mind, but he does not know what to say to whom or where to go. Hence, the mind is not really Brahman. No, no. Contemplate more and do penance more.”

Without any demur whatsoever, Bhriḡu started performing penance once again. After some time, he thought: “What purpose can the mere thoughts of the mind serve? It is the power of discrimination that imparts purpose to the thoughts.” Resolving thus, he went again to his father and said, “Father, I know secular knowledge (*vijnana*) is Brahman.”

Varuna said to his son, “So many scholars are endowed with secular knowledge, spiritual knowledge (*sujnana*), and constant integrated awareness (*prajnana*). But what benefit does society get from them? In fact, there is ignorance (*ajnana*), which overshadows their awareness.” Bhriḡu once again told his son to do more contemplation and penance (*thapas*) and sent him back with his blessings.

After contemplating and performing penance for some more time, one day Bhriḡu thought in this way: “Food is the source of nourishment, and the life-breath gives energy. The mind generates desires. The intellect (*buddhi*) gives wisdom (*viveka*). There must be some result of all this. What is that? This must be found.”

Thinking thus, he started performing penance once again. One day, he had a unique experience. He felt that he was immersed in an ocean of bliss and continuously remained in that blissful state.

Varuna came in search of his son and found him in a certain part of the forest in the state of *samadhi* (superconscious state). He knew that he was experiencing pure and eternal bliss. Bliss is Brahman (*Anandam Brahma*). Thinking that his son needed nothing else, he went his way.

## Transcend the gross sheaths to experience bliss

Once Bhriḡu experienced the ultimate bliss, he had no desire for anything else. In fact, all spiritual practices are meant to attain this state of bliss. What people experience today is only momentary happiness but not eternal bliss, which is described as eternal bliss, spiritual bliss, supreme bliss, being-awareness-bliss, and the bliss of Self-realisation (*nithyananda*, *yogananda*, *paramanada*, *satchidananda*, and *Atmananda*). It is available only with God and none else.

God created people so that they would enquire into the nature of five sheaths and ultimately reach the bliss sheath (*anandamaya kosa*). Man has to transcend the

food sheath (*annamaya kosa*),  
life sheath (*pranamaya kosa*),  
mind sheath (*manomaya kosa*), and  
wisdom sheath (*vijnanamaya kosa*)

step by step and ultimately reach the

bliss sheath (*anandamaya kosa*).

The life sheath is subtler than the food sheath, the mind sheath is subtler than the life sheath, the wisdom sheath is subtler than the mind sheath, and the bliss sheath is the subtlest of all and is all-pervasive.

But, unfortunately, humanity today has forgotten its innate blissful nature and is going in the reverse direction, which means from the state of bliss, one has come to wisdom, from wisdom to mind, from mind to life, and ultimately from life one has reached the food sheath and has remained there. People give utmost importance to their bodies.

God created humans so that they could attain the highest state of Brahman. Contrary to the Will of God, people today have degenerated to the lowest state of existence.

Where is the need for education to know the nature of the body? Do you need a mirror to

see the bracelet on your arm? You need to perform spiritual practices to have the vision of God, but not to know the nature of body.

This body is like an instrument. But you focus all your attention on this instrument, forgetting the indweller.

How long do physical pleasures last? Here is a small example. You go to the canteen when you are hungry. You pay six rupees and eat three *chapatis*. You are happy and satisfied that your hunger is satiated. But how long will this happiness last? You will again feel hungry after two hours. How much 'oil' and 'petrol' does this machine of the human body consume! When you are using this body as merely a machine, why should you develop so much attachment to it? You should transcend body attachment.

### **Practise the teachings propounded in sacred texts**

The human mind is very powerful and at the same time highly fickle. The great warrior Arjuna himself was unable to withstand the vagaries of the mind. He said to Lord Krishna, "This mind is very unsteady, turbulent, and powerful (*Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramathi balavadrudham*). Oh Krishna! How can I describe the power and fickleness of the mind! It does not keep quiet even for a moment. Even a monkey may have steadiness, but not the mind."

The mind is most powerful, dangerous, and difficult to control. Such is the nature of the mind. It is due to the influence of the mind that man is undergoing difficulties, sorrow, trials, and tribulations. The fickleness of mind causes restlessness and makes the life of a person chaotic and ultimately lands them in a mental asylum.

Students keep on studying any number of books, but they should also know the purpose of their studies. If someone presents you the *Bhagavad Gita*, you reverentially receive it,

keep it on your head, and touch it to your heart. Every day you start doing ceremonial reading (*parayana*) of the *Gita* starting with the first verse:

Gathered on the holy plain of Kurukshetra,  
O Sanjaya, what did my sons and the sons  
of Pandu do

*Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre samaveta yuy-  
utsava,  
Mamaka pandavaschaiva kimakurvata san-  
jaya.*

After doing the ceremonial reading, you keep the book on your altar with all respect and place two flowers on it.

But what is the use of all this ritualistic worship unless you put into practice the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*? This is the sign of great ignorance of devotees, theists and educated people today. People offer worship to the paper and the words of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but they do not drink the nectar of bliss that results from the practice of its teachings.

Everyone must realise the truth that all the sacred texts like the *Bible*, the *Quran*, the *Vedas*, and the *Upanishads* are meant for practice and not merely for doing ceremonial reading.

These days, you find *Sai Satcharitra* in the hands of most of the devotees. They say they are doing ceremonial reading (*parayana*) every day. There is no greater foolishness than this. Is this book meant for only doing that? It is meant for practice. Put into practice what Shirdi Sai Baba taught in this book.

Here is a small example. A man was suffering from a severe cold and cough. When he approached a village doctor, he suggested to him to make a concoction of dry ginger, pepper, and ginger and drink it. Then the patient started repeating to himself, "I should drink the concoction of dry ginger, pepper, and ginger." But he did not get any relief.

How can he get any relief unless he prepares the concoction and drinks it? In the same

manner, you are merely repeating what is contained in the sacred texts without putting them into practice. You will derive benefit only when you practice.

### **The elements are under God's control**

All five elements are under the control of God. They obey the command of the Creator. But no one realises this truth.

When you realise this truth, you can get rid of all your troubles in a moment. You say that everything is in God's hands and pray to Him to come to your rescue. But you doubt whether God really has any control over everything. There was only one doubting Thomas and betrayer of his preceptor in the Bible, but today everyone has become a doubting Thomas.

Once there was a severe hailstorm in Shirdi and hailstones started hitting people like stones. All the workers and villagers ran helter-skelter out of fear. They took shelter in temples, inns, and wherever they could find place. Dwarakamai was a very small place. There, too, people gathered and occupied every inch of space —wherever they could find place to stand.

Everybody started praying, "Baba, kindly save us." Just as the cowherd maids and men (*gopikas* and *gopalas*) of the Dwapara Era (*Yuga*) prayed to Krishna to protect them from severe rain, the people of Shirdi prayed to Baba to come to their rescue.

Baba said to them, "Okay, okay, I will see, I will see (*Achchha, achchha, dekhega, dekhega*)." Baba then hit a pillar and said, "Look here, enough of your terror, cool down. Already you have exhibited too much anger, and all are fear-stricken and have come to know about your power. Once people have recognised your power, where is the need for you to continue this further? You are crossing your limits, cool down." That very moment, the storm came to a halt.

It is not for boasting that I am telling you this. You might have forgotten, but try to remember what happened here two days ago. When I was about to give My Discourse, there was a very heavy downpour with powerful wind. The rain and wind were so fierce that they started coming inside the hall. I started giving My Discourse and at once the rain stopped. There was not a drop of rain after that.

While Baba was in Shirdi, fire was always kept burning in the *dhuni* in Dwarakamai. (A *dhuni* is cleft in the ground where a fire is kept lit, for worshipping.) Devotees used to buy firewood from outside and offer it in the fire to keep it burning continuously. They wanted to have some satisfaction of offering wood in the sacred fire. They did not think of the pros and cons of their act.

Once, a foolish devotees came and offered a lot of wood in the fire without thinking to what height the flame would rise when they put so much of wood in it. Huge flames started rising after some time. Seeing this, Shyama came running and called out, "Baba, Baba."

Baba asked, "What, Shyama? What has happened?"

"See Baba, the god of fire has manifested before us," said Shyama.

Baba replied, "The fire god has manifested, but who is interested in seeing him here?" Then he addressed the fire god and said, "To whom are you trying to show your prowess here? You are behaving like this because there is no one to teach you a lesson. You should show your prowess when and where it is required. Why do you unnecessarily exhibit your power now?" Saying this, he hit the pillar with a stick. The raging flames subsided in a moment.

What is the meaning of this? Nothing should happen without a cause. Is there any such foolish person who will go to the banks of the Ganga river and call out to everyone, saying, "Come, come, I will give you water." Who is

he to give water when the river Ganga is flowing? Due to the influence of the Kali Age (the age we are in), people sometimes act in a foolish manner without any proper reason. This type of behaviour is seen even in scholars.

Some people take Ganga water in their hands and offer it back to the Ganga while chanting, *Keshavaya Namah, Madhavaya Namah, Govindaya Namah*, and so on. Here in this practice, whose water are you offering to whom? Are you offering the property of your father or grandfather or uncle to someone? No, you offer Ganga water to Ganga itself.

Today atheism is on the rise because such ritualistic practices are performed without understanding the reason behind them. You should understand the reason behind every act and be able to convince others and win their appreciation. In this modern age, even a small child wants a reason for everything.

Today people are overpowered by ignorance. What is the reason? Body attachment is the main cause. That one is blessed who can transform body attachment into love for God. Only then will humanness have value. As long as you don't develop love for God, your life will not have the value even of a dead rabbit.

### **Develop attachment to the Self**

Here is a small story. Students should not take it otherwise. Great truths can be explained through such small stories.

Narada roams in all the three worlds chanting the Name of the Lord, *Govinda Damodara, Narayana*. Once he went to Vaikuntha and offered his salutations to Lord Narayana. Lord Narayana told him to take a seat and asked him, "You roam the three worlds all the time. Have you come across anything bad in My creation?"

Narada said, "Forgive me, oh Lord! There is so much bad in Your creation."

Lord Narayana said, "What are you saying, Narada? In spite of being the son of Brahma, you are talking without any sense of discrimination. There is nothing bad in My creation."

Narada said, "Oh Lord! Every morning people excrete fecal matter. How bad it is!"

Lord Narayana was surprised to hear this. He said, "Oh Narada, you are mistaken to think that it is something bad. Maybe you are talking out of your mind. It is not bad, it is very good."

Narada said, "If Lord Narayana himself says like this, what am I to say? But how can you say it is not something bad but good?"

Lord Narayana replied, "Do not ask me about this. Go ask the human excreta itself directly."

What could poor Narada do when Lord Narayana said this? Obeying the command of the Lord, Narada approached human excreta.

When he was ten feet away from it, it said, "Oh Narada! Don't come near me, stay away."

Narada was astonished to hear this. He said, "In fact, it is I who should say this to you to keep away from me. Why are you saying this to me?"

The fecal matter replied, "Narada, last night I was in the form of sacred curd, milk, rice, and sweet pudding. I was good enough to be given as a food offering to God. But today I have come to this state because of my association with a human being once. Then what would be my fate if I come in contact with a human being again?"

Lord Narayana then explained to Narada, "What you perceive as bad in this creation is only the reaction, reflection, and resound of what humanity does. In fact, God has not created anything bad." Everything depends on your association. Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are. You become the type of person with whom you associate.

“If you keep mango or gongura pickle in a jar, it will remain good for more than a year. But if you put the same pickle in this ‘jar’ of the human body, it will get spoilt by evening.

“Not only that. You would have seen the flour mill. If you put wheat in it, wheat flour will come out of it. If you put rice, rice flour will come out of it. If you put pulses, pulses flour will come out of it. But if you put a sweet laddu in a human body, what comes out of it is foul-smelling excreta. Therefore, treat this human body with a sense of detachment. The human body is inferior to even a flour mill and a jar.

Such being the case, why should you give importance to the human body? It is because the *Atma* pervades this body from top to toe. The body is a temple, and the indweller is God (*Deho Devalaya proktho jivo Deva sanathana*). You should consider this body as the temple of God.

But why should you want a temple without God in it? Always think that God is present in this temple of body and that whatever you do is an offering to Him. Only when you develop such sacred feelings will your body, mind, intellect, consciousness (*chitta*), senses, and inner psyche (*antahkarana*) be sanctified. Therefore, transform your body attachment (*dehabhimana*) into attachment to the Self (*Daivabhimana*). This is the real spiritual discipline.

Without developing attachment to the *Atma*, there is no point in doing any other spiritual practice. People say, we are doing *bhajans*. Until you attain the state of attachment to the *Atma*, all such spiritual practices are essential.

You plant a sapling of good quality mango tree. After some time, it gives unripe mangoes. As long as the mangoes are not ripe, they taste sour. Only when they become ripe do they become sweet and tasty. Likewise, when you attain the ripe stage in your spiritu-

al practices (*sadhana*), you will develop *Atmic* feeling (*Atmabhava*).

Until you attain such state of blessedness, continue to discharge your duties without forgetting your goal. Always remind yourself that you have to reach this goal. Gradually, detach yourself from the body and develop attachment to the Self. Only then can you experience eternal bliss. Pursue this path of truth and wisdom and immerse yourself in divine bliss.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the *bhajan*, “*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma...*”)

—From Bhagavan’s Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 31 August 1996.