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A new way of life

Embodiments of Love!

You cannot find in the entire cosmos any place or object in which God is not present. The Divine is present on the mountains. The Divine permeates the oceans. The Divine dwells in villages and cities. The Divine is omnipresent.

Only those who recognize this truth can redeem their lives; they alone can achieve the goal of human existence. The powers of the Divine are limitless. Every living being in the world is governed by some limitations. Birds, beasts, and insects are all taken care of by the Divine in respect of their essential needs like food and drink. Among all living beings, however, the life of human being is supreme, since it is governed by morality and good conduct. The Divine has placed some limitations on the physical powers of man but has set no limits on his mental powers. Man can achieve whatever he resolves to achieve. He can even realise God. This divine power is given only to human beings.

Ignorant of his limitless divine potentialities, man suffers from various disabilities by considering himself as a human being. Man today is soaring in the sky like a bird and moving in the ocean like a fish. He has been able to land on the moon. But unfortunately he is not able to live like a true human being on earth. This is indeed a matter for shame.

The power of surrender

Man can accomplish anything if he surrenders to God. When he submits himself to the will of the Divine, there is no task he cannot accomplish.

Kuchela, a boyhood friend of Krishna, approached Krishna for help on the basis of his old friendship. How did Krishna help him? The *Bhagavatha* bears testimony to what Krishna did for Kuchela. The *Ramayana* tells the story of what Rama did for Sugriva after the latter became a friend of Rama and sought His help. Sugriva was able to regain his kingdom. What did Vibhishana get after his constant remembrance of Rama and the ordeals he experienced in Lanka? Relieving him of his troubles, Rama crowned Vibhishana the ruler of Lanka.

Once a devotee totally surrenders to the Lord, the Divine goes to any extent to help the devotee. An insignificant little stick, by association with fire, burns brilliantly. A drop of water held in your palm evaporates in a trice. But when it is cast into the ocean, it becomes one with it. If man wants to achieve highest human potentialities, he has to achieve proximity to God. He has to merge in the Divine. Then he can manifest his true nature.

Not realizing the true nature of the Divine Principle, man wastes his time on rituals and religious practices of various kinds. God cannot be realized through such practices. It is only by loving God and getting close to Him that one can realize one's aspirations. Swami does not disapprove of *sadhana*

(spiritual practices). They are good activities for using time sacredly. But without service to Godly persons, they are of no use for realizing freedom from the cycle of mundane existence.

The significance of devotees' offerings to the Lord

In the field of devotion, there is room for making certain offerings to God. God utilizes the acceptance of such offerings to reward the devotee a hundred-fold. Devotees should recognize the significance of such acceptance by the Divine.

For instance, the Lord asked Kuchela what he had brought for Him. The Lord as Vamana asked for three feet of land from Emperor Bali. In the Rama Avatar, He went to Sabari and asked her to appease His hunger. All that Sabari could offer to Rama were a few sweet berries collected from the jungle. In the Krishna Avatar, the Divine child went to the *gopis* (cowherd maids) saying He was hungry. All that they could offer Him was some watery buttermilk. During the difficult days of their exile in the forest, Krishna went to the Pandavas and asked Draupadi for food. That day, all the food had been consumed and barely a leaf remained in one of the vessels. Krishna was more than satisfied with that one leaf and saved the Pandavas from the wrath of Durvasa, who had been sent by Duryodhana to subject the Pandavas to the ordeal of feeding Durvasa and his numerous disciples. When Krishna's appetite was satisfied, Durvasa and his disciples felt fully appeased and did not turn up at Pandavas' hermitage.

It is to shower His grace on the devotees that the Lord seeks small offerings from them. What does He need from any one when the whole cosmos is contained in Him?

It is the Lord who protects one and all in innumerable ways. There is a simple way to secure the grace of God. You must get near to God. Surrender yourself to Him. Become one

with Him. Instead of following this easy path, man today immerses himself in petty desires and keeps away from God.

Sanjay Sahani and Ruchir Desai (faculty members who addressed the gathering earlier) spoke about God's love for the devotees. There is no trace of selfishness in it. But, because of their own selfish natures, they attribute selfishness even to God's love. This is merely a reflection of their own nature. God's love is not a reflected love. It is love pure and simple. A reflected love carries the taint of the original. That is not the case with the Divine love, which is pure and unsullied.

The story of pure and unselfish love

The nature of pure and unselfish love may be illustrated by the story of Laila and Majnu. Laila was the daughter of a very wealthy person. She fell in love with Majnu, but her parents did not approve of her marrying a poor young man like Majnu. Laila did not wish to displease her parents. She was a girl of noble character. She prayed to God to find out whether Majnu loved her. She sent two of her maids to Majnu to ask him whether he could offer his blood to save Laila from a grievous ailment. Majnu immediately cut an artery and sent a glassful of blood to Laila. Moreover, he sent word through the maids that he was prepared to give his entire life to save Laila. His only wish was that she should survive. When the maids conveyed this message to Laila she realized how much Majnu loved her. She observed, "I was thinking only about my love for him. I did not realise how much he loved me."

Devotees should realise that God also likes to test the depth and sincerity of the devotee's love. He seeks to find out whether the devotee is filled with love of God, how intense is that love and so on. He tests the devotee's love in various ways.

One should not be content with making offerings to God. One should love God intensely. One should pine for Him. One should lose one's self in the love of God.

The ultimate sense of liberation

People aspire for liberation (*mukti*). They have no idea what constitutes liberation. Man seeks liberation from the ills of the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect, and the *An-tahkarana* (internal motivator). All these are no doubt necessary.

But liberation in the ultimate sense consists in liberation from the cycle of birth and death. This means that one should redeem one's present life so that one is free from rebirth.

Most of the people's diseases today have their origin in the mind. Desires and worries are the cause of many ailments of the heart, the kidney etc. You can test the truth of this statement in a simple way. I have no diseases of any kind. I am hale and hearty. Lead a life of courage and you will be all right. The moment you start feeling your pulse out of suspicion that it is weak, you will find it weak. It is your mind that is the cause of the weakness of the pulse. Many diseases are allowed to grow entirely due to mental factors. Men should pray to God for freedom from rebirth so that they will not have bodies that are bound to be afflicted with diseases.

There is no need for rigorous spiritual exercises to secure freedom from rebirth. Pure love of God is enough. This is exemplified by the *gopis* (cowherd maids). Immersed always in the love of Krishna, they were always happy and contented.

We are today celebrating *Yugadi*, the beginning of yet another New Year. Many new-year days have come and gone. Do you expect the New Year to bring you new happiness? Are you imagining what New Year portends for you? New years do not offer you prosperity and pleasure. This New Year day will

be like any other day. Many people eagerly expect something to turn up on this day. This is utterly futile. The calendar merely tells you that a New Year has begun.

What we should be concerned about is not a New Year but a new way of life. We must seek to secure a new source of joy. But unfortunately we do not think about this. We speculate on what the new year signifies. We have to look to ourselves and not to the succession of years for changes in our lives. Think within yourself about your condition. Turn your thoughts to God. Then you will realize what you desire.

The way to surrender to God

No one tries to find out how to surrender to God. The whole world belongs to you. You must declare to God, "I am yours". This is the truth you have to understand. You must be ready to offer to God whatever He asks of you. What does God ask from you? First of all, He says, "Give up your desires." You must give them up immediately. He calls upon you not to immerse yourself in worldly pleasures. Cultivate love for all. That will redeem your life. That is the sacred path you have to follow. That is the essence of the four goals of life. People have no clear idea of what *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha* (the four goals) mean? They think that *moksha* (liberation) is something that you attain after death. But, in fact, liberation can be attained here and now. *Moksha* means *moha-kshayam*, the elimination of *moha* (attachment). People are not ready to give up attachment to wife, children, property, etc. You have a duty to protect your family. But you must not be immersed in concerns about them.

What is *dharma*? Not the obligations relating to the various stages in life or the various vocations. *Dharma* means harmony in thought, word, and deed. People equate charity with

dharma. That is not correct. *Dharma* calls for sacrificing your bad thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Understand Swami's life and message

Embodiments of love! Realize that love is the most important quality in human life. It is not love for kith and kin that is precious. It is love for God that is most valuable.

Swami's life and message are not properly understood. Swami has no worldly desires. Whether you believe it or not, I am always "positive" from head to foot. There is nothing "negative" in me.

Devotees suggested to me that they should be allowed to organize "poor feeding" on *Yugadi*. Should this be done only on one day in a year? You must feed the poor on all days. You must have the broad outlook. With a broad heart you can do many superhuman things. Strive to get close to God and surrender your all to Him.

The name of the New Year is *Bahudhanya*. This name suggests that the year will witness an abundance of food grains. There may be an abundance of food grains. But are you consuming them properly? No. Are the food-grains distributed to the poor and the needy? No.

Our ancients gave the different years good names such as *Prabhava*, *Vibhava*, *Sukla*, and so on. [Swami went on reciting almost all the 60 names in quick succession]. Sometimes, the priests predict bad developments in a year. This is intended only to make the people undertake propitiatory ceremonies that will bring in income to the priests. Can the mere expenditure of money ward off evils? No. Your troubles will go when the heart is purified. Your sincere prayers will help to relieve your troubles.

There must be a transformation in the hearts of the devotees. They should not continue to remain in the same rut for years. They must benefit from the grace of God's love.

Happiness is union with God

People talk about the new year but do not care to develop new feelings and new attitudes. They must develop new ideas and new enthusiasm. If they are all the time depressed, when will they learn to express the joy of good living? They must exude happiness. That is the mark of the Divine within. Happiness is union with God. God is eternal bliss. Get rid of your evil tendencies and fill your hearts with love of God. You will become one with God.

I am ready to give you all happiness. Are you prepared to receive what I wish to offer? Banish all worries. They are temporary like passing clouds. Do not allow any one –whether it is the father, the mother or the preceptor– to come between you and your duty to God. This is the lesson taught by Prahlada, Bharata, and Emperor Bali. Their allegiance to the Lord transcended all other obligations. God takes care of such devotees. Surrender yourselves to God and dedicate yourselves to the service of mankind. You have my blessings. Foster love and serve society.

29 March 1998
Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan