

Install God's Feet in your heart

*Whether one is a great scholar in the Vedas and sacred texts,
Or a hero who has won great victories,
Or a destitute grueling in poverty,
Without devotion he is worthless.
A servant with devotion in his heart
is worthier of veneration than a king bereft of devotion.*

[Telugu Poem]

Right from the beginning of creation, human life has been the rarest and most valuable of all living beings. Having taken such a noble birth, if one fails to know one's innate divinity, life becomes meaningless. When the diamond is cut repeatedly, it shines with added brilliance, and its value also increases. Similarly, in order to experience divinity within, one has to face many obstacles. So, devotees naturally face all types of trials and tribulations. But devotion should never diminish.

*Devotion alone bestows the supreme good;
 Devotion alone is the destroyer of the disease
 of the repeated cycles of birth and death;
 Devotion alone is the means of recognising divinity;
 Devotion alone is the means of liberation.*
 [Sanskrit sloka]

The Story of Manikavachagar

One may face problems, blames, and accusations of all types, but it is devotion that protects one from all these. Once upon a time, the Pandya kingdom in Tamil Nadu reigned supreme. The Pandya king was very fond of horses. Once, he sent his minister to buy horses. He gave him all the money and manpower required to procure the horses.

The minister reached a village named Perundurai. There he came across a holy man, Balayogeeswara. He did not want to waste that pleasant evening, so he joined the congregation and listened to the discourse of the holy man with rapt attention. He forgot himself as he listened to the discourse. He developed strong faith in that holy man. He forgot even the task assigned to him by the king, spent his time listening to the discourses, and got immersed in the contemplation of God. One day, he found a Siva temple in a dilapidated condition. He used the money given to him by the king for renovating the Siva temple.

The king came to know that the minister had used all the money given to him to buy horses, to renovate the Siiva temple. The king was also a devoted man. But since the minister disobeyed his command, he sent his soldiers to bring him back. The king summoned the minister to his presence and asked him what he had done with the money given to him for procuring horses. The minister said, "O king, I used the money for God. Everything is God's gift. What God had given, I gave it back to Him. Not only that I have offered myself to Him."

The king asked, whether he was justified in spending the money for a different purpose other than for which it was intended. The minister replied that he did not use the money for worldly purposes, but used it for a sacred purpose. The king became furious at the minister's audacious reply, had him arrested and put in prison.

The minister was unruffled. While in prison, he continued to recall the teachings of the holy man, Balayogeeswara, and started writing them down in the form of *slokas* (verses). He composed many *slokas* every day. He was immersed in bliss while composing hymns in praise of God and thus lost track of time.

Later, the king realised his mistake and summoned him. He was surprised to see the aura of radiance and brilliance around his face. How did he acquire such an aura? It was due to the constant contemplation of God. That minister was none other than Manikavachagar. Each *sloka* composed by him reflected the essence of the *Vedas* and the sacred texts. This work is known as *Thiruvachakam*, meaning sacred reading.

Since ancient times, many such great saints took birth in Tamil Nadu. Divinity that blossomed in sacred Tamil Nadu is not noticed elsewhere. Right from daybreak people go to temples, make sacred offerings, and divinise their lives. That is why there are more temples in Tamil Nadu than anywhere else in the country.

Thiruvalluvar reforms a young man

There was another great saint by the name Thiruvalluvar. Initially, he was a weaver. He used to weave just one sari per day, sell it in the bazaar, and earn money for his family. Good and bad exist together; it would be impossible to separate them. In the same village, there was the son of a rich man who was wasting his time wandering aimlessly.

Where there is money, there is ego. Ego gives rise to bad qualities. Once the money is lost, all bad qualities too disappear. One day, the rich man's son came to Thiruvalluvar and asked for the price of the sari. Thiruvalluvar said it cost four rupees. The boy was known for his arrogance and mischief. He picked up the sari, tore it into two pieces and asked for the price of one piece. Thiruvalluvar replied, it cost two rupees, since he had made the Sari into two halves. The boy tore it again into another piece and asked for the price. Thiruvalluvar replied that the price was one rupee.

This brought about a transformation in the mind of the boy. He wondered how the businessman was calm and composed even after he tore the sari into pieces. The boy fell at Thiruvalluvar's feet and repented for his behaviour. The boy said that due to his pride and arrogance, he made this mistake. Then he went to his father, got the required money for the sari and kept it at the feet of Thiruvalluvar.

Not the statues but the teachings of saints are important

Many such great saints lived in Tamil Nadu who set an ideal to society. Unfortunately, people do not follow the teachings of these saints. But their statues are installed and adored. It is not the statues of saints that are important, but their teachings. The best way to propagate their teachings is to practice them.

Just as hands, legs, ears, eyes, etc., form the limbs of the body, human being is a limb of society. Society is a limb of humanity. Humanity is a limb of Nature, and Nature is a limb of Divinity. Nature has been sustaining humanity.

Humanity is based on the twin principles of Truth and Righteousness. Without the individual, there is no society, and without society the country does not exist. So, the individual is important in society. For an individual, the limbs are very important. So, the limbs have to be used in a sacred way.

*See no evil; see what is good,
Hear no evil; hear what is good,
Talk no evil; talk what is good,
Think no evil; think what is good,
Do no evil; do what is good.
This is the way to God.*

Here lies the sanctity of human life. “*Sareeramadhyam khalu dharma sadhanam* (body is gifted to undertake righteous actions.)” Manikavachagar prayed, “O Lord, accept my heart, which You have given. The working of the heart is also Your gift. I cannot offer anything other than this. I offer whatever You have given me.”

Only truth and good name are permanent

Kerala is the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, where Adi Sankara was born. He said:

*Asthiram Jeevanam Loke,
Asthiram Yauvanam Dhanam,
Asthiram Dara Puthradi,
Sathyam Keerthi DwayamSthiram.*

*Life in the world is impermanent.
So are youth and wealth.
Wife and children are also not permanent.
Only truth and good name are permanent.*

So, earn a good name, always speak the truth, and follow the path of truth.

*Truth is God.
The entire creation has emerged from Truth and
merges in it.
Is there any place where this non-dual Principle
of Truth does not pervade? [Telugu Poem]*

Just as the water bubble originates in water, is sustained in it, and ultimately merges in it, the entire world has originated from Truth, is sustained by Truth, and ultimately merges in Truth.

Body should not be used for fleeting pleasures

Man is born out of *amrita* (immortality) but is merging in *anrita* (falsehood). What is the use of leading such a life? Today, man is highly intelligent and acquires all types of education. He should set an ideal to society. Man should understand that education is for sharing and serving and not for earning money. Education is meant for *dharmacharana* (practice of righteousness) and not for *dhanarjana* (acquiring wealth). “*Dharmamoolam idam jagath*” (This world is based on *dharma*).

Body should not be used for fleeting pleasures. The *Bhagavad Gita* declares, “*Anithyam asukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva maam* (having taken birth in this impermanent and sorrowful world, worship the Lord.)” Many people think that there is happiness in this world, but it is temporary. “*Ma kuru dhana jana yauvana garvam, harathi nimeshath kalah sarvam* (O man, do not be proud of wealth, relations or youth. All these may be taken away in a moment by the tide of time.)”

It is the feet that help us to move. It is said, “*Pada darshana papa nashanam* (Vision of the Lord’s feet destroys all sins.)” Feet are so sacred. Feet carry the body, which is the temple of God. The Lord’s Lotus Feet have to be installed in your heart. No doubt, external worship of feet is also important. As you continue to worship the Lotus Feet, they will naturally get installed in your heart.

Once Narada went to Lord Narayana and said, “Narayana, I come for Your *darshan* whenever I have any problem. But I do not know where exactly You reside. Where can I find You? In *Kailasa*, *Vaikunta*, or *Swarga*?”

Narayana said, “*Mad bhaktha yathra gayanthi tathra thishtami Narada* (wherever My devotees sing My glory, I install Myself there.) *Kailasa, Vaikunta, and Swarga* are My branch offices.”

God is not present in foreign land, He is present in our heart. Heart does not mean physical heart. It means spiritual heart. It should be full compassion.

Man should have a strong will

Man has all comforts and conveniences. He has good intellect. Yet, he is not able to reach his destination. Man should have a strong will. For example, a small ant can travel any number of miles if it has the will to do so; whereas an eagle cannot move an inch if it does not have the will to move.

Thyagaraja said, “O Rama, you are present in all right from an ant to Brahma. You are present in Siva and Kesava. You are everywhere. There is no place where you are not there; there is no name that is not yours.”

But, today, man is carried away by delusions and does not realise this truth. If Brahma were to manifest in front of him, he would offer his salutations with reverence and devotion. But if the same Brahma comes in the form of an ant and bites him, he will immediately kill it.

The evil one is he who does not observe the unity of thought, word, and deed. You say God is present even in an ant; then why do you kill it? You are so weak that you are not able to bear the pain of an ant bite or a mosquito bite. In this modern age, man is becoming weaker and weaker.

All our ancient *rishis* (sages) did penance for years together. They were unmindful of the movement of snakes and scorpions on their body. But modern man has developed body attachment. He is not attached to the *Atma*.

Today, there is no steadiness of mind in man. Some people think of their footwear when they sit for *bhajans* inside. Once,

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was giving a discourse in a temple. Rani Rasamani, the owner of the temple, was sitting in the front row. All were listening to Ramakrishna's discourse with rapt attention.

All of a sudden, Ramakrishna got up, went to Rani Rasamani, and slapped on her cheek. Everyone was surprised. They thought Ramakrishna had become mad. Ramakrishna told the public, "O people, you may think it is a great mistake on my part to have slapped her. What for have you come? You are here to listen to my teachings. Whether you practice or not, at least you should listen to what is being said. If you do not like to listen to the discourse, you had better stay back at home. This Rani Rasamani is thinking of her legal disputes. Why should she come all the way to think of the court affairs?"

She accepted her mistake and promised not to repeat it. In the modern age, many people attend spiritual discourses and get impressed by them. But they do not put them into practice.

Education should confer humility

Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all forms of knowledge. But Valmiki described Ravana as *moorkha* (fool) since he did not practice what he learnt. Rama followed Truth. He put his knowledge into practice. He is therefore an ideal to be followed by everyone. Ravana merely accumulated knowledge without practising it. He could not digest all that he learnt. As a result, he suffered from 'indigestion'.

He is a fool who does not practice what he learns. One who practices is a truly educated one. Education should confer humility.

In society, there are agitations and disturbances. Students, you should join society and see that everyone follows *sathya* and *dharma*. You should become ideal citizens. That is what I desire. I do not expect anything from you. I expect only one

thing: that you put into practice what you have studied and be an ideal to everyone in the society.

“*Sarveloka hithe rathah* (One who delights in the welfare of all people.)” You should aspire for the welfare of all. Do not hate anybody. “*Sarve samudhitha gunaihi* (You should have all good qualities.)” Today, man does bad deeds but is not prepared to face the consequences. If you want to earn merit, you should do good deeds. Do good, be happy, and share your happiness with others; this is your duty. With such sacred feelings, contemplate on the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Gopikas’ love for Krishna

Uddhava has described the Gopikas’ (cowherd maids) devotion for Krishna in the following words. “Though their mothers-in-law were not happy with them and their husbands were against Krishna, they neither uttered a single word nor got angry.” They bore it all with patience. They were never afraid of anybody. Just as a picture is imprinted on a paper, Krishna’s form was imprinted in their hearts. The *gopikas* had no other thought than that of Krishna.

Once, the *gopikas* came to Krishna’s house; Krishna pretended to be asleep. They tried to wake him up by catching His feet, but Krishna turned the other side and continued to snore.

Then they sang, “It is possible to wake up someone who is in deep sleep, but it is impossible to wake up someone who pretends to be asleep. Krishna, You don’t sleep at all. If You sleep, the whole world will sleep. We know that in this world there is none who can understand Your mystery. You are smaller than an atom and mightier than the mightiest. You are present in all the 84 lakh species. Right from the atom to the entire cosmos. You are present everywhere. How can we know You, Krishna? Please put an end to Your pranks and make us happy. We cannot be separate from You any longer.”

Every incarnation upheld the principle of Truth

Before giving up her mortal coil, Radha was sitting on the bank of river Yamuna and feeling very sad that Krishna was not with her. She intensely prayed to Him to grant her His Divine Darshan.

She sang, “O Krishna, speak to me and fill my heart with bliss. Distill the essence of the *Vedas* and make it flow into the eternal music of your flute, O Krishna.”

When she sang like this, Krishna appeared and fulfilled her desire by playing on His flute. While listening to this Divine Melody, she breathed her last. Her *Jeevan Jyothi* (life principle) merged in Krishna. Krishna threw the flute away and He never touched it again.

In films, you would find Krishna with a flute, but, truly speaking, after Radha’s departure, Krishna never touched the flute again. This was the promise given by Krishna. Every incarnation upheld the Principle of Truth. Anyone may forget, but God never forgets to keep up His promise.

Who is Radha? People consider her to be an ordinary woman and distort the facts. She had no attachment to her body. She had attachment to Krishna alone. This *dhara* (nature) itself took birth as Radha. This *dhara* is the *adhar* (basis) for the creation.

In the name Radha, R stands for Radha, A stands for *Adhar*, D stands for *dhara* (continuous), and A stands for *aradhana*. It means that *dhara aradhana* (continuous worship) is the *adhar* (basis) for Radha. She was in constant contemplation of Krishna. Even in her sleep, she would chant Krishna’s name.

In order to please God, follow His footprints

Krishna always eluded the *gopikas* after playing His mischief. One day, they all lay in wait to catch Krishna. Krishna, out of compassion for them, wanted to provide a clue by which they could trace Him. Krishna went into a house stealthily, broke a pot of milk, and dipped His feet in it. When the *gopikas* came to catch Him, He ran away. He just vanished in a trice.

The *gopikas* followed His footprints, which revealed to them His hideout. Krishna revealed to them the spiritual truth that if they clung to the feet of the Lord, they could win His grace.

In order to please God, follow His footprints. Those who take refuge at the feet of the Lord, will neither sin nor be miserable. With sincere devotion, when you take refuge at the feet of the Lord and contemplate on them, you will not have desires.

Yesterday, Dr. Gadhia in his speech said that by worshipping *padukas*, marriages were settled and the childless begot children. These are all worldly results. Is this to be expected from *paduka* worship? No. You should not worship *padukas* for worldly gains. You should worship them for gains in the inward path. When you can get mighty results, why are you concerned about worldly gains? Why do you go after small pebbles? Aim at the *meru* (gold) Mountain itself, that is, the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Once upon a time, Jaya and Vijaya (doorkeepers of *Vaikunta*) approached Lord Vishnu and asked Him, “Swami, why have you created the gold mountain?”

Vishnu replied, “One who is desireless will be unmindful of its existence. But the one full of desires will never be satisfied even if a hundred such gold mountains are given to him. Who is the richest man in this world? One who has much satis-

faction is the richest man. Who is the poorest man? He who has much desire is the poorest man. So, I have created this Meru Mountain in order to make people desireless.”

God does not have any desire. His only *chinthana* (thought) is His devotee. Devotees should be good and develop society and should consider the welfare of the society as their own welfare. They should not get immersed in selfishness and self-interest. Their mind should be as broad as the ocean. You can never surrender completely to God if you are narrow-minded. Do not give scope for worldly desires. Develop divine thoughts.

What is required is total surrender, not worship

Though there are many devotees, so why there are difficulties in this world? It is because devotion is not proper. The devotees are immersed in *archana* (worship), but what is required is *arpitham* (total surrender). *Arpitham* is greater than *archana*. When *arpitham* takes place, you and God become one. The fulfilment of worship of the Lotus Feet lies in the unification of the individual with the Divine.

Students, you should always have the welfare of the society and the world in view. You should not have the feeling that education is for a job. Always question yourself, “What is it that I can do for the society?” Enquire what is it that society expects from you. This should be your constant endeavour. Only then you can work for the progress of the nation.

Devotees, Embodiments of Love!

Many people from different countries have come here and celebrated their functions. For example, last year the Chinese came and celebrated their New Year. Devotees from Andhra Pradesh conducted *Paduka Puja*. Devotees from different States came here to celebrate their festivals. But one thing that made Me happy is that the devotees from Madurai have celebrated this function in the most systematic manner. Their dis-

cipline has been exemplary. Others should learn from their example. Subrahmaniam Chettiar is very old. Yet everyone followed his word. Each one followed the discipline on their own. The Paduka Trust, Madurai, adheres to the principle of discipline. Not only here, wherever you go observe this discipline.

The three D's: Devotion, Duty, Discipline

The three important principles of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations are Devotion, Duty, and Discipline. These three D's are to be followed sincerely. Do your duty. See that your devotion is steady, and observe discipline. When you follow these three D's you will always be happy.

Let this culture and tradition be passed on to your progeny. This culture and tradition should not end with you, it should continue. Under any circumstances, do not give up the chanting of God's name. You should have fear of sin, love for God and morality in society. Sanctify your life by leading an ideal life and experiencing the divine *Atmic* Principle.

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Sixth Anniversary of *Paduka Prathishta Mahotsav*
Prasanthi Nilayam