

Sacrifice leads to immortality

*Adored by the Muslims as Allah,
As Jehovah by the Christians,
As the lotus-eyed Lord Vishnu by the Vaishnavites,
And as Sambhu by the Saivites,
God is worshipped as the one Supreme Self,
Who confers health and wealth.
People may worship God in various names and forms,
But the very same God responds to the prayers of all.*
[Telugu Poem]

Embodiments of Love! Everyone is aware of the fact that human life is highly valuable, noble, and sacred. Keeping in view the welfare of society, the alumni of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Anantapur, calling themselves “Messengers of Sathya Sai”, are undertaking many service activities.

First and foremost, one has to understand the true meaning of the term “messenger”. Every human being is a messenger of

God. Everyone is born in this world by the Will of God. Only constant enquiry will reveal the reason behind God sending His messengers to the world.

*Man's foremost duty is to make the
stream of Divine Love flow to one and all.
Man is born not merely to live for himself.
Only by dedicating his life
to the service of the society will he
ennoble himself and achieve self-satisfaction.
God has sent man to this world
to practice and propagate this message.
Of what avail is human birth if man remains
like a lump of clay without serving the society?*

[Telugu Poem]

All are messengers of God

Having taken birth as a human being, one has to realise the divinity within. The primary duty of every individual, as a messenger of God, is to practice and propagate the principles of truth, love, and peace and to experience the bliss and share it with others. The one who propagates the worldly, fleeting, and ephemeral matters cannot be called a messenger of God.

When Jesus was born, three Arabian kings came to see Him. They were overjoyed on seeing the new-born babe. While returning, the first king said to Mother Mary, "Mother, you have given birth to a child who loves God."

The second king said, "Mother, you have given birth to a child who will be loved by God."

The third king said, "Mother Mary, your child is not different from God; both are one and the same."

Once we understand the inner meaning of these three statements, we will know the truth. The one who loves God is the Messenger of God. The one whom God loves is the Son of

God. The one who understands the principle of unity becomes one with God.

Today, there are only a few who are propagating the message of God, but the majority of the people are doing just the opposite. Having been the recipient of divine love, man should propagate the same principle to his fellow men. This is what Jesus proclaimed at the time of leaving his mortal coil, "All are one, my dear son! Be alike to everyone."

Give up body attachment. The body is bound to change and will ultimately perish. God is the embodiment of Truth. Truth is that which does not change in all the three periods of time. One has to follow the path of truth to propagate the Principle of Truth and Divine Love. God loves those who follow the path of truth. Jesus propagated the divine message of Love. He said, "Death is the dress of life." So, He said, one has to give up body attachment and develop attachment to the spirit. Body is like a water bubble. It is merely a vesture of the individual soul.

Every activity of man should reflect the divine message

The culture of Bharat (India) declares, "*Deho Devalaya Proktho Jeevo Deva Sanathana* (Body is the temple of God and the indwelling spirit is eternally divine)." The ancient and eternal Divinity assumes human form in order to show the Path of Truth to man. Just as the son is the rightful heir to the father's property, man has equal claim to God's property of love, truth, forbearance, peace, and empathy. The Principle of Love is supreme. Love is the underlying principle of all human values. Love is God, live in love.

Every human being is a messenger of God. Man should not waste his life in merely eating, drinking, and sleeping. In fact such a life is a blot on human nature itself. Every activity of man should reflect the divine message. Unfortunately, this is not the case today. Some people claim that they have dedicated

their lives to the mission of God. But in reality it is not so. They are wasting their precious time in materialistic pursuits. There is nothing wrong in studying, doing jobs, and earning money provided they are done in the right spirit, which is beneficial to one and all.

You see many people suffering. In what way are you helping them? Jesus opposed the practice of animal sacrifice in Jerusalem. As a result, he had to face strong opposition. People who help mankind are put to harm.

The dualities of life such as pain and pleasure go hand in hand.

Pain and pleasure coexist.

It is impossible to separate them.

Pleasure does not exist separately.

The fructification of pain is pleasure.

[Telugu Poem]

This message of truth must be taught to the entire world. Without pain, one does not realise the value of pleasure. The value of light can be realised only when there is darkness. This was the teaching of Jesus.

One has to overcome difficulties to be successful in life. Give happiness to those who are suffering. Consider every activity as God's work. Right from birth, man has been experiencing pain and pleasure. But, he is unable to realise that there is happiness in pain. What type of happiness? Is it related to the body or the mind? No. It is related to the *Atma*.

Peace is essential for man at all the three levels: body, mind, and spirit. This is the reason we chant *santhi* (peace) three times. Man can attain peace at these three levels only by developing love for God.

The one without love for God will never be peaceful. All worldly pleasures are fleeting momentary. The same sentiment was echoed by Sankaracharya:

*Ma kuru dhana jana yauvana garvam
Harathi nimeshath kalah sarvam.*

*Do not be proud of your wealth, progeny and youth.
The tide of time may destroy them in a moment.*

What is happiness? Is it sitting in an air-conditioned room or partaking of delicious food? These confer happiness only at the physical and mental levels, not at the level of the *Atma*. True happiness is that which is related to the *Atma*. You should not be afraid of difficulties; they are passing clouds. Do not waver. Follow the heart, which is steady and unwavering

Unity of head, heart, and hand is essential for man. This is the true significance behind the Christians making cross sign. Install God in your heart. Contemplate on Him and undertake good deeds. Consider every activity as God's work and act accordingly. Merely feeding the poor and distributing clothes to the needy do not constitute *seva* (selfless service). Along with this, one has to cultivate love, which is eternal. Right from dawn to dusk all our actions should be suffused with love.

*Start the day with Love,
Fill the day with Love,
Spend the day with Love,
End the day with Love.
This is the way to God.*

There are very few who publicise this message. It is not enough if you call yourself a messenger; you have to spread the divine message. Fortunate are those who pay heed to God's words. Whether people listen or not, discharge your duty of spreading His message.

Many people call themselves devotees without understanding the meaning and significance of the term devotion. Devotion does not mean performing rites and rituals. True devotion lies in obeying the command of the Lord and spreading

His message. In spite of innumerable difficulties, King Harischandra never swerved from the path of truth.

One has to worship God both in times of pain and pleasure. Unfortunately, due to the effect of the *Kali* Age, people worship Him when everything goes well but criticise Him in times of difficulties.

When it was ordered that all devotees of Jesus should be crucified along with Him, even His closest devotees, Peter, Matthew, and Paul, refused to identify themselves as His followers. Can these be called true devotees? One should be prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of God. Under any circumstances, do not disobey the command of God. That is determination. Determination gives rise to sacrifice, which leads to immortality.

Truth and divine love constitute one's wealth

“Na karmana na prajaya danena thyagenaike amrutathwa manasubu (It is only sacrifice, not wealth, progeny, and action, that confers immortality.)” If money and health are lost, they can be regained, but if character is lost everything is lost.

Today man is striving hard for wealth and happiness, while neglecting character. Truth and divine love constitute true wealth. If you earnestly follow the path of truth, you will not encounter any difficulties. How can you expect God to protect and confer His grace on you if you do not adhere to truth? True devotion lies in accepting both pleasure and pain with equal-mindedness. Such a divine message should be passed on to others.

The true message is the message of Love. Share love with everybody. There is no greater wealth than love.

Once, an angel appeared in the dream of John and handed him a book, asking him to read and digest its contents. Here, digestion means putting into practice the essence contained

therein. Valmiki described Ravana as a fool, though he had mastered sixty-four types of knowledge, because he did not practice what he had learned. Rama on the other hand practised what He learned.

Follow the ideals of Jesus

Vedanta says, “*Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi* (the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman himself.)” John resembled Jesus in all respects, because he constantly contemplated on Him. “As you think, so you become.” If you think of God incessantly, you will assume His form.

Prahlada never gave up the Lord’s name even in times of adversities. As he surrendered himself to Lord Narayana completely, he was protected. When he was thrown into the ocean, the waves assumed the form of Lord Narayana. When he was pushed from a mountain top, Lord Narayana held him in His arms, and when he was bitten by venomous snakes, the poison became nectar.

Never feel depressed when you are weighed down by difficulties. God will never impose on you ordeals that you cannot bear. He tests his devotees in various ways. Test is the taste of God. Never fear any test. Be ready to sacrifice even your life for the sake of God. Only then will God protect you.

Initially, Paul hated Jesus. One day Jesus appeared in his dream and asked him lovingly, “Paul, what harm have I done to you? Why do you criticise Me? All your travails are consequences of your own actions. I am not responsible for your suffering.”

Paul was transformed and attained sainthood. Thus, Jesus transformed many sinners into saints. Worship Jesus by following His ideals.

Jesus pointed to three stages. The first one is “I am the Messenger of God.” He wanted to propagate the message of

God. The second one is, "I am the Son of God." The son has a claim to father's property. What is the property of God? Truth, love, forbearance, peace, and righteousness are the properties of God. So, man has to strive to attain these qualities. He has to practice, experience, and propagate these virtues. Only then does man deserve to be called Son of God.

The third one is "I and My Father are one." This stage is attained when the principle of unity is realised. When Jesus reached this stage, He had no suffering at all. He was always blissful and was prepared for anything. Even at the time of crucifixion, he was smiling, because he realised that He was not the body. Body is bound to perish, but the indweller has no birth and death. Truly speaking, the indweller is God Himself. Jesus understood that the body was merely a vesture and He was the indweller.

Propagate Swami's message to the entire world

You should have the firm faith that you are the Messenger of God. Propagate Swami's message to the entire world. Some people may like it and some may not. Do not bother about what others say, be it 'yes' or 'no'. 'No' and 'yes' relate only to you, but for Sai everything is yes, yes, yes.

There are no defects in God. All words and deeds of God are perfect. You see the reflection, reaction and resound of your feelings. They are psychological in nature. God always gives good alone. Understand and experience this truth.

Matthew was a tax collector. He would meet fishermen regularly and enquire as to how they acquired faith in Jesus. Thomas used to doubt the divinity of Jesus. Such doubting Thomases are on the rise in this Age of *Kali*. Never be in the company of such people. God is like fire and you are like coal. When coal comes in contact with fire, coal becomes one with

fire. Similarly, when you come in contact with God you become one with Him. Have total faith in God.

Embodiments of Love! All are messengers of God. All are embodiments of love. There is nobody without love. But you are misusing it by diverting it to worldly relations. No doubt, you need to take care of your wife and children. But that is not all. God alone is important.

Zero gains value when one precedes it. Moon is zero, sun is zero, world is zero, only God is the Hero. Everything comes to nought in the absence of this Hero. A hero becomes zero if he forgets God. Have total faith in the Hero, God. Never give scope for any doubt. Then you are bound to be successful. Jesus experienced and propagated this truth.

Divine proximity, the greatest wealth

The term *Christmas* was derived from the Roman language. Truly speaking, Christmas falls in the month of March, not in December. Since it is very cold in December and people are confined to their homes, they utilise this time to celebrate Christmas. Actually, Jesus was born in the month of March. With the passage of time, this fact has been distorted and misrepresented in the Bible.

“Munde munde mathir bhinnah (Opinions vary from person to person).” Each one interpreted the Bible in their own way. Some wrote that Jesus was never born. Some wrote that it was the brother of Jesus who was crucified, not Jesus, and that He was in Japan at that time. This is all imagination. Jesus is Truth.

When Jesus was a small boy, His parents took Him to Jerusalem to attend a fair. After some time, Mother Mary, not finding her son Jesus by her side, believed that He had lost His way in the crowd and searched for Him frantically. Ultimately, she found Him listening with rapt attention to the sermon of

the priest in a temple. That scene reminded her of the prophetic words of one of the Arabian kings, who visited Jesus at the time of His birth, that He would love God. She hugged her son and shed tears of joy. Jesus said, “Mother, you can find Me in the company of God, but you have been searching for Me elsewhere. I consider divine proximity as My greatest wealth.”

How can you search for God, who is all-pervasive?

There is a profound message in this. Man is in search of God without realising that He is all-pervasive. He is the embodiment of love and can be attained only through love. When you realise that you are with God, for God, from God, you will find God everywhere. Strengthen the feeling that God is in you, with you, above you, below you and around you.

How can you search for God, who is all-pervasive? Saint Thyagaraja expressed the same feelings in a song, “*Nenendu Vedakudura Rama...* (O Lord Rama! Where am I to search You?)” “You are my only refuge. I cannot live without You,” so saying he jumped into a river.

To his joy, he found the idol of Lord Rama in the river. “O Rama! You are so great and compassionate; you are with me always. Not realising this truth I have spent my life in total ignorance.” He extolled Rama in manifold ways and expressed his feelings in a song, “*Raara Maa Intidaaka...* (O Lord! Please come to my residence).

Only an ardent devotee can understand and experience the bliss of oneness with God. Sugar tastes bitter to a person suffering from malaria. The defect lies in their tongue, not in the sugar. So is the case with a person immersed in worldly desires. He cannot experience the sweetness of Divinity. Have the firm conviction “God is in me, with me, around me, behind me.” When you think on these lines, you become divine. Never entertain the thought that you are separate from God.

Total surrender earns divine grace

When I distributed saris to the “messengers” yesterday, they expressed their gratitude by saying, “Thanks, Swami.” I exhorted them, Do not thank Me. I am not a third person. Do you thank your mother who serves you food every day? You may thank an outsider from whom you receive a favour, but I am not an outsider.” So, never say thanks to Swami.

Consider Swami as your own. Only then will you have the right to approach Swami. I do not desire anything from you for Myself, nor do I say or do anything for Myself. I do not want anything except one—your love. Even that is not your property; that also is My property.

Love cannot be earned by any means. It is a gift of God. Gift this gift of love to God. Only then you will have self-satisfaction. That is your duty. The ancients used to pray,

Oh Lord!

I offer you my heart, which is but your gift.

I offer you what you have bestowed on me.

What else can I offer you?

Kindly accept my humble and prayerful salutations.

[Telugu Poem]

A person with such noble feelings is a true devotee and the one of sacrifice.

Extolling one’s own devotion to the exclusion of others amounts to being egotistic. Never give scope for ego. Great devotees like Tukaram, Ramadas, and Thyagaraja had to face many ordeals before they could win God’s grace. Difficulties are part and parcel of lives of great devotees. God subjects His devotees to tests so that their faith in Him can be strengthened and their hearts are purified. It needs a great effort on your part

to cleanse a stained vessel. Difficulties are meant for cleansing the vessel of your heart.

When the idol of Rama was taken away from Thyagaraja, he was grief-stricken. He questioned the divinity of Lord Rama. “Don’t you have the power to solve my problems, or do I lack devotion? Definitely I have devotion, it is only you who lack power.” He continued in this vein extolling his devotion and in the process, he became egotistic.

When he sat in meditation, wisdom dawned on him. He realised his folly in doubting Rama’s divinity. He reflected, without the grace of Lord Rama, could a monkey cross the ocean? If Rama lacked power, would Lakshmana worship Him or for that matter Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, serve Him and the extremely intelligent Bharata offer his salutations? “Oh Rama! Certainly your power is immense. It is because of my ignorance and meanness that I doubted your Divinity.” He sought His pardon and surrendered himself to Lord Rama.

The power of devotion

When you purify your heart and surrender yourself completely to God, He manifests instantly. He does not delay even for a moment. This was proved in the case of Ramadas also. When Ramadas surrendered himself to the Lord completely, Rama and Lakshmana went to King Thaneesha in disguise and paid the tax on behalf of Ramadas. On being questioned as to who they were, they replied that they were the servants of Ramadas. Thus, we find that the Lord becomes the servant of His devotee, when there is total surrender. This is the power of devotion.

There are many obstacles along the path of devotion. Some people accuse, criticise, and censure God in times of difficulties. Each one has to bear the consequences of his own actions. God remains unaffected. God is pure, unsullied and sacred. Let people say anything, be cool and calm. Do not enter into un-

necessary arguments with them. It only breeds enmity. Speak softly and sweetly with a smiling face. That will silence the critic. Smile is the best answer to criticism.

When Paul went on accusing Jesus, He lovingly went up to him and gave a pleasing smile. The sweetness in the nectarine smile of Jesus transformed the poisonous heart of Paul. Be always cheerful, even in times of adversities. Always put up a smiling face, never a castor-oil face. “Happiness is union with God.”

True Christmas in Prashanthi Nilayam

Embodiments of Love! We have been celebrating Christmas every year here. True Christmas is celebrated only in Prashanthi Nilayam, where people of all religions join together to celebrate it. Generally, the Hindus celebrate Hindu festivals, the Muslims celebrate their festivals, the Christians celebrate their festivals, and so on and so forth. It is only in Prashanthi Nilayam that people of all religions —Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, etc.— come together to celebrate Christmas.

Prashanthi Nilayam symbolises the unity of all religions. Elsewhere people drink, eat non-vegetarian food, and make merry in the name of Christmas. But Christmas in Prashanthi Nilayam is celebrated in a holy atmosphere. Christmas in Prashanthi Nilayam is a “holy day”, not a “holiday”.

Practise whatever you have learnt here, even after you go back to your respective countries. Strengthen the feeling that you are the messenger of God and propagate the divine message far and wide. That is your primary duty. There is no greater service than this. Strive for the welfare of the whole world.

The world is like a big mansion. Countries may be compared to its different rooms. Do not have the narrow feeling that only your country should be happy. Be broad-minded. Pray for the welfare of all nations. On this basis, the ancients

prayed, “*Loka samastha sukhino bhavanthu* (Let the whole world be happy.)” Cultivate love. That is true *sadhana*.

Yesterday, children presented a magnificent drama, wherein the power of love was depicted. Love can transform even the wicked. It is only a matter of time before the wicked are transformed. Be patient. Develop love more and more. None can comprehend the divinity and sanctity of Swami. Twenty years ago, when Christmas was celebrated for the first time in Prashanthi Nilayam, I sang a song:

*Love is My form,
Truth is My breath,
Bliss is My food,
My life is My message, expansion is My life,
No reason for Love, no season for Love,
No birth, no death.*

If anyone asks you to tell about Sai Baba, sing this song. It will convey the whole message. Tell him, Love is His form and His life is His message. Develop the feeling of brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God.

25 December 1998
Christmas Discourse
Sai Kulwant Hall, Prashanthi Nilayam