

## Devotion — the supreme yagna

*Like a stream of water that flows down from the hills,  
Courage emerges from the heart of a person who  
trusts in God  
O man, how do you expect to attain Divinity without  
understanding and experiencing the principle of  
love,  
Which is the very form of God?*

[Telugu Poem]

Since time immemorial, in this sacred land of Bharat (India), people experienced bliss in following the *Vedic* traditions and performing rituals and sacrifices. In the *Vedic* tradition, four types of worship have been prescribed. They are: *Sathyavathi*, *Angavathi*, *Anyavathi* and *Nidhaanavathi*.

*Sathyavathi* proclaims that Divinity pervades the entire cosmos, just as sweetness is present in every drop of syrup and butter in every drop of milk. The sages of yore had the vision

of Divinity in all the beings and in all the forms. Just as the screen is the basis for the pictures projected on it, Divinity is the fundamental basis for the entire creation but is itself unnoticed. The screen permeates all the pictures projected on it; likewise, Divinity pervades the entire creation.

### **God is the embodiment of truth**

Hence the *Sathyavathi* mode of worship is based on the omnipresence of Divinity. It demonstrates unity in diversity. It echoes the *Vedic* dictum: *Ekam sath viprah bahudha vadanthi* (God is one, but scholars refer to Him by many names).

God is the embodiment of truth. That is why the ancient *rishis* (sages) extolled him as *Sathya Swarupa. Trikalabadyam Sathyam* (Truth is changeless in all the three periods of time). Such truth shines forth in everybody as love. When you fill your heart with love, you will become love personified.

*Angavathi* refers to the worship of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether—considering them as manifestations of the Divine. The earth bears the burden of mighty mountains, vast oceans, dense forests, villages, towns, and cities. Likewise, the remaining four elements are also responsible for the sustenance of creation. The *Bharatiyas* (Indians) extol earth as *Bhudevi* (mother earth), water as *Gangadevi* (goddess of water), fire as *Agnideva* (god of fire), and air as *Vayudeva* (god of wind) and offer their salutations to them.

*Anyavathi* refers to picturing the many faceted Divinity in various names and forms and worshipping them. For example Siva is described as *Pinakapani* (wielder of the bow *Pinaka*) and Rama is described as *Kodandapani* (wielder of the bow *Kondanda*).

*Nidhanavathi* represents the nine paths of devotion, namely *sravanam* (listening), *kirtanam* (singing), *vishnusmaranam*

(contemplating on the Lord), *padasevanam* (service to the Lotus Feet), *vandanam* (salutation), *archanam* (worship), *dasyam* (to be a servant of the Lord), *sneham* (friendship), and *Atmanivedanam* (Self surrender). The ancient sages and seers attained supreme bliss by following these nine paths of devotion.

### **Only through total love can one please the Divine**

Once upon a time in Italy, there lived a person by name Anthony. He used to earn his livelihood by making violins, but being a perfectionist as he was, he used to take one full year to make a violin. His friends chided him saying, “O mad man, how do you expect to eke out your livelihood if you spend a whole year to make one violin?”

Anthony replied, “God is the embodiment of perfection. Whatever He does is absolutely perfect. He will be pleased only when we discharge our duty in the most perfect manner. All my work will be a utter waste, if God is not satisfied.”

In this context, the *Vedas* declare:

*Poornamadah Poornamidam*  
*Poornaath Poomamudachyathe*  
*Poornasya Poornamaadaaya*  
*Poornameva Vasishyathe*

The perfect whole is the basis. All that is here is the perfect whole. The whole emanates from the whole. When the whole is separated from the whole the perfect wholeness remains perfect as wholeness.

Only through total love can one please Divinity. Perfection arises out of love. There is nothing greater than love. No benefit accrues from chanting various names of the Lord without the spring of love in the heart. It is enough even if one name is

chanted wholeheartedly and with a feeling of love. All your work must be totally dedicated to God. It should be done with total love and pure heart. This is the essence of *Sathyavathi* mode of worship.

### **God values quality, not quantity**

Anthony's violins were very famous and highly valuable. The reason is that he used to make them with sacred feelings and total devotion. He never felt that he was wasting his time. He always had the feeling that he was sanctifying his time by doing his work perfectly and thus pleasing God.

You should follow the ideal of Anthony. It is quality that God values, not quantity. You may perform *narayana seva* (feeding the poor) on a large scale, but without purity of heart, you cannot please God. God will be pleased even with a morsel of food offered with sacred feelings. All that you do with purity of heart will find fulfillment. Do your work properly and perfectly, no matter even if more time is spent in the process. But do not be in haste and do a halfhearted work.

Since ancient times various types of *yagnas* (sacrifices) have been performed in this sacred land of Bharat. *Yagno vai Vishnuhu* (*yagna* is the very form of Vishnu). Some people are under the mistaken notion that they can please God by offering highly valuable items. What one has to offer God is the pure heart. *Yad bhavam tad bhavati* (as the feeling, so is the result). If you are aspiring for good results, offer only good feelings to God. There should be perfect harmony in your thought, word, and deed. *Manasyekam vachasyekam karmanyekarn mahatmanam* (he is a noble soul whose thought, word, and deed are in perfect harmony). *Adveshta sarva bhootanam* (Do not hate anybody).

On November 24, 1926, Aurobindo broke his prolonged

silence only to declare that God had incarnated the previous day. After making this significant statement, he continued with his vow of silence. Divinity can be recognized only by the pure hearted.

### **God is the Veda Purusha**

Once, during the performance of a *yagna* (sacrifice), an individual criticized the *Vedic* priests saying that they were wasting the valuable ghee by pouring it into the sacrificial fire. A *Vedic* scholar by name Aamnaya Vachaspathi gave a fitting reply thus, “You do not call it a waste if a farmer sows four bags of paddy in his field because after a few months he will reap 40 bags of rice. Similar is the case with *yagna* too. The sacred smoke arising from the sacrificial fire, fully charged with the divine name and the sacred *Vedic mantras*, purifies the pollution in the atmosphere. A program that is broadcast by the Delhi Radio Station can be heard throughout the country. The presence of electric waves in the atmosphere is responsible for this. Likewise, the *Vedic mantras* chanted by the priests will spread all over.”

The purpose of the *Veda Purusha Sapthaha Yagna* is to attain truth. God is the *Veda Purusha*. This *yagna* is performed for seven days. Seven is an auspicious number, for it corresponds to the number of *rishis* (*saptha rishis*), oceans (*saptha samudras*), colors (*saptha varnas*) and sounds (*saptha swaras*).

Valmiki, before he became a great sage, was known as Ratnakara. He was a hunter and used to rob the wayfarers of their belongings. One day, he came across the *saptha rishis*, who took pity on him and wanted to light the lamp of wisdom in him. They urged him to give up his wicked actions. Ratnakara said he could not do so, since it was the only way to feed his wife and children. Then the *saptha rishis* asked him to find

out from his wife and children whether they were prepared to share the sin he committed for their sake. Ratnakara went home and asked his wife and children, “Are you prepared to share my sin just as you share my booty every day?” They replied in the negative. His wife said that he was responsible for the merit or sin he committed.

This incident opened his eyes. He went back to the *saptha rishis*, fell at their feet, and prayed for guidance. They told him to contemplate on Lord Rama and chant His incessantly. Ratnakara did accordingly, and consequently, his face shone with the divine effulgence of Lord Rama. Your thoughts play a vital role in shaping your personality.

### **God’s grace will certainly alleviate your suffering**

*Embodiments of Love!* One who thinks of God constantly will never be put to hardships. You may argue that you continue to suffer though you think of God all the time. How can you say that thinking of God has not helped you at all? It certainly would have mitigated your suffering without your knowledge. God's grace will certainly alleviate your suffering. By chanting of the divine name, even mountains of sin will vanish like mist into thin air. *Sarvada Sarvakaleshu Sarvathra Harichinthanam*, you should think of God at all places, at all times, and under all circumstances with pure love and total faith. Your prayers will be answered only when there is sincerity in you.

When I returned to Puttaparthi from Uravakonda, two persons, Subbaiah Shetty and Kodanda Shetty, came from Anantapur. One of them was finding it difficult to get an alliance for his daughter. He said, “Sathya Sai Baba, I will believe that you are God only if I can find a suitable alliance for my daughter soon. I will build *chitikelamedu* (‘snapping mansion’) for You

if my daughter gets married within this month.” Everyone was curious to know as to what that would be.

His daughter got married within the same month. He came to the Old *Mandir* (temple) with a plate containing a coconut and some flowers. He said, “Swami, you fulfilled my desire. Now I have to keep up my word. Please permit me to build a *chitikelameda* for you.” Many others were watching with curiosity. Even Subbamma came there thinking that he was going to give a big mansion for Swami. I very well knew what he was up to. He gave *Aarati* and asked, “Swami, will you permit me to build *chitikelameda* now?”

In order to amuse the onlookers, “I said OK, go ahead.”

He started snapping his fingers around Me, saying, “This is the first wall, this is the second wall, this is the roof,” so on and so forth. In the end he said, “this is God,” fell at My feet, and broke the coconut. Likewise, some people resort to mean strategies and try to cheat even God! They certainly have to face the consequences of their actions.

### **The creation of God is most sacred and wonderful**

God neither favors nor hates anybody. Whatever one experiences is the result of one’s own actions. In this context, one devotee prayed to God thus, “O God, you appeared as Yama to Kamsa, who had developed hatred toward You. On the other hand, you appeared as Lord Narayana to Prahlada, who had immense faith in You, whereas you appeared as God of Death to Hiranyakasipu, who opposed you. To Vibhishana, who believed in you, you appeared as Rama. But to Ravana, who defied you, you became Yama.”

So, Yama and Rama are one and the same. Depending on the feelings, one saw Him as Rama, etc. Purandaradasa once said, “Who planted the tree on the mountain top and watered

it? Who gave the red beak to the green parrot? Who gave the wonderful colors to the feathers of the peacock and to the flowers of the entire world? Everything is God's creation." You may make a bunch of plastic grapes and plastic lotuses, but will any honeybee go near them? No. But they swarm around the natural lotus created by God and suck nectar from it. The creation of God is most sacred and wonderful. None can comprehend the mystery of God. Divine Will can accomplish anything and everything.

### **Time is the cause for birth and death**

Each *Vedic mantra* chanted during the *yagna* (sacrifice) has a deep inner meaning associated with it. Each *mantra* is dedicated to a particular deity. Any letter with the address properly mentioned on it can reach the neighboring street or a far away place. The *mantras* are like the addresses of the deities. When they are chanted with proper intonations, they will yield the desired results.

Time is God. That is why God is extolled as *Kalaya Namah, Kala Kalaya Namah, Kalatheethaya Namah...* Time is the cause for birth and death. None can conquer time except those who acquire divine grace. Here is a small example. Sage Mrukandu had a son by name Markandeya, who was given only 16 years of life span, but he was unaware of this. One night he found his parents full of sorrow. On enquiry, they revealed that his end had approached, and that was the cause of their sorrow. Hearing this, he went to the temple of Easwara, hugged the Siva Linga, and started chanting *Om Namah Sivaya* wholeheartedly.

At the appointed hour, Yama (God of Death) cast his noose around the neck of young Markandeya. Since Markandeya was hugging the *Linga*, the noose fell around the *Linga* also. Eas-

wara manifested there and remonstrated Yama, “How dare you cast the noose around Me?” He burnt Yama to ashes. Pleased with the devotion of Markandeya, he blessed him with the boon of immortality.

In fact, it was Easwara who had stipulated 16 years of life span for Markandeya. But on account of Markandeya’s intense devotion and total surrender Easwara, had to change His Will. There is none greater than a true devotee in this world.

### **God’s heart can be melted only through love**

Once, Lord Vishnu asked Narada which among the five elements was the greatest. Narada replied earth is the greatest.

Vishnu remarked, “Three-fourth of the earth is enveloped with water. In such a case, which among the two is greater?” Narada agreed that water was great.

Vishnu said, “But the sage Agastya drank up the ocean in a single gulp. So, is Agastya greater or water?” Narada replied, “You are right my Lord, Agastya is greater than water.”

Vishnu asked again, “But this Agastya is a tiny star in the sky (*akasa*). Now is this star greater or the sky?” Narada replied, “It is the sky that is greater.”

The Lord agreed and said, “Your understanding is correct. The sky indeed is greater. In His incarnation as Vamana, the Lord asked for three steps from king Bali. And in the course of taking the gift of three steps, Vamana assumed the form of Thrivikrama and covered the entire earth in one step, and the space from the earth to the sky in second, and there was no room for the third step. King Bali had to offer his head for the third step. So, now, is God great or the sky?” Narada replied, “Swami, when the mere foot of the Lord covers the entire sky, how much greater His full form would be? God indeed is greater.”

“God, who envelops the entire cosmos, dwells in the heart of His *bhakta* (devotee). So now, is the heart of the devotee greater or God?” asked Vishnu. Narada replied, “Indeed, the devotee is greater than God.”

God is *Bhakta Paradheena*, He is the servant of devotees. There is none superior to a devotee in this world. God’s heart can be melted only through love. So, develop total love. This is not the worldly love that exists between parents and children, husband and wife, friends, and relatives. Worldly love is tainted by selfishness, but divine love is absolutely selfless. Your life will be sanctified only when you attain divine love.

### **Take refuge in the Lord’s Feet**

Hurry up, hurry up, listen to the  
clarion call of Sai filled with nectarine love,  
Beckoning you to come near Him and  
exhorting you to attain Divinity.  
No need to undertake *yoga*  
or any spiritual *sadhana*.  
Hurry up, hurry up, hearken to  
the loving word of Sai.

[Telugu Song]

God is asking you to come near, but you are drifting away from Him. You might have seen in Tirupati —one hand of Lord Venkateswara is raised in *Abhaya Hastha* (blessing pose) and the other points to His feet. What does it mean? Take refuge in the Lord’s Feet and you shall be protected. Surrender to Him; He will make you fearless. Others pervert the meaning and say, “Hey! You want to go up or fall into the pit (*adhogathi*).”

**Laying the foundation for the Music University**

As you are all aware, this morning Swami laid the foundation stone for the Music University. Not only music, lyrics, and dance, even the traditional folk arts like *Hari Kathas* (musical exposition of the epics and the *Puranas*) and village dramas will be taught here. Apart from Carnatic and Hindustani music, all types of music in the world will blossom here. This University will be inaugurated next October. Whatever we undertake will be completed in a few months. You need not wait years for its completion.

This University will be built spending crores of rupees, and it will be a synthesis of ancient and modern art forms. Many renowned artistes will come here. A musicologist of world-wide reputation, Indira Chakravathi, will be the Vice Chancellor of this university. She has the experience of working in various music colleges all over the world. At present she is living in the city of Banaras. She will come here.

You all know that Ravi Shankar's elder brother (Late) Uday Shankar was a great dancer. His wife wants to donate all his instruments and equipment to our Institute of fine arts. Some of the equipment in this lot is not to be found anywhere else in the world.

The plans for the buildings are prepared. This building complex is going to be in the shape of several musical instruments such as the *mrudangam*, the *tanpura*, a conch in the middle, and a sitar. The mere sight of the building from outside would convey to the onlooker that it is a center of musical excellence. Similar marvels are going to happen in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Just think. Puttaparthi, a mere hamlet of a population of 106 people, has already grown to the size of a city housing

several lakhs of people. Not only that, just wait and see, in a very short while, Puttaparthi is going to be a landmark on the map of the world.

As our C. Srinivas has said, the architectural features of our Hospital have found the pride of place in the American manual of architectural features for medical institutions. Let alone America, Puttaparthi is going to be a name to be reckoned with in every major developed country in the world such as Japan, Germany, Italy, and France. Everywhere world maps are going to mark Puttaparthi as an important location. The students of Puttaparthi should realize their good fortune. Then only their life will acquire its real meaning and significance.

Students! Your holidays are commencing from tomorrow. You can go home to your parents and spend your time in a proper way and come back after acquiring your parents' approbation.

19 October 1999  
Prasanthi Nilayam

*Equip yourselves with a clear eye through detachment and love; sharpen your sense of discrimination so that it has no prejudice or predilection. Then, you can see God in you, around you, in all that you know and feel.*

—Baba