

1. Know Thyself! You Will Know Everything

The sun appears serene and peaceful
The days have become shorter and
The cool wind is blowing,
The fields are ripe with golden crops,
Marigold flowers are blossoming like
Garlands of pearls on the banks of rivers.
The farmers are rejoicing and singing;
The sweet festival of *Sankranthi* has come in the
Pushya month, filling the granaries in our homes with the freshly harvested grain.
(Telugu song)

Embodiments of Love!

This is the *Sankranthi* festival time. *Sankranthi* is a great festival. It is a day on which the farmers bring home the harvested crops consisting of all varieties of food grains and pulses needed for the household. The farmers, having finished a hectic schedule of harvesting the crops and becoming free from agricultural operations, enjoy good food and rest in their homes. They spend a leisure time, happily with their family and friends indulging in fun and frolic. They invite the newly married sons-in-law to their houses, present them with new clothes and the entire house abounds with joy. In this context, there is a folk song in Telugu depicting the festival atmosphere in the villages:

As *Sankranthi* is the festival of festivals,
Oh, newly wedded bridegroom,
Visit your in-laws house;
Come, spend your time in fun and frolic with
Your brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law,
The entire household and the neighbourhood
Will honour you with love and affection.

In the earlier days, the means of transportation were not much developed. The sons-in-law used to visit their in-laws' houses by walk or on bullock carts. Hence, the entire village used to shower a lot of affection on them and respect them by attending to their needs. They used to be fed with a variety of tasty dishes.

The *Sankranthi* festival is also an occasion when the bullocks are decorated elaborately and taken to various houses in the village. The bullocks are worshipped and fed sumptuously as an expression of gratitude for all the hard work they have done in the fields. Even the bovine members of the household are feted. A symbolic marriage is performed between a pair of bull and cow, naming them as Rama and Sita. They are taken along the streets and made to dance to the delight of everyone. The cow named Sita is asked, "Rama is black. Do you like him?" Sita would swing her head in disagreement. Then, she is counseled, "Please do not say no; Rama is great. He is handsome and respectable!" Then, Sita would nod her head in agreement. An elder brother watching this beautiful show invites his younger brother to witness this symbolic marriage and offer gifts to the 'couple', thus:

Oh, my dear brother,
Here comes the *Gangireddudasu*.
Come, let us go and see him.
He wears a silver medallion and a waist belt.
He carries a decorated staff and
He wears special marks on his forehead.
He brings with him richly caparisoned
Sacred cow and bull and performs their marriage.
Let us see the marriage and offer our gifts.
(Telugu folk song)

Thus, the *Sankranthi* festival is celebrated in the villages with a lot of religious fervour and fun. The festivals like *Sankranthi* and Sivarathri are meant to contemplate upon and realise one's innate Divinity.

People say, "This is my body (*idi na dehamu*)," very casually, but people well-versed in Sanskrit language would interpret the expression *na dehamu* (my body) in a different way. They explain that 'na' means 'not' based upon the literal meaning and conclude *na dehamu* means "I am not the body." Similarly the Telugu expression *na manasu* (my mind) can be interpreted as "I am not the mind." Same is the case with intellect (*buddhi*). The sum and substance of all these expressions is "I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the intellect," etc. In the same logic, one has to maintain a state of perfect equanimity unaffected by pain and pleasure at all times affirming, 'These sorrows and difficulties as well as happiness and pleasure are not mine. I am beyond these dualities.'

The need for ceiling on desires

"It is my body" means "I am different from the body." When you consider yourself as separate from your body, why should you feel the pain out of it? The situation, however, is that you are unable to bear the pain caused to the body. Hence, you remain at the level of a human being only. You are unable to come out of the delusion of body attachment. As long as you are attached to the body, these sorrows and difficulties as well as pain will haunt you. These are all your own making.

Suppose you get angry. From where did this anger come? This has come from you only. Similarly, jealousy is a quality that manifested from your mind. Thus, each one of these bad qualities are the result of your own thoughts. Hence, only if you are able to control your thoughts properly will you be able to achieve anything in life. The mind, intellect, and consciousness are reflections of *Atma*. The mind has no stability. It is the repository of thoughts and desires. It is said, "The mind is the root cause of either bondage or liberation (*Manayeva manushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh*)." Hence, one has to keep the mind under proper control by putting some ceiling on desires.

Attachment of oneself with the body results in ego

Both the body and mind undergo change constantly. However, there is one entity inside, which is changeless, that is *Atma*. It has no form, but it has a name: *Atma*. Self and *Atma* mean the same. *Atma* is also called *Aham*. One should not confuse oneself in this context that this *Aham* is ego (*ahamkara*), which is identified with the body. God has no name and form, and He is always referred to as Brahman. If God were to reveal His true nature, He would say, "I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)." The same Brahman Principle (*Brahma Thathwa*) permeates all

beings as *Atma* Principle (*Atma Thathwa*).

We say, “So and so is my wife; so and so is my son; so and so is my daughter-in-law;” etc. These are all illusory and bodily relationships. They are acquired by us and are not God-given. Similarly, God is not granting you either pleasure or pain. All are only your own making. They are due to your body attachment. As long as you are attached to the physical body, you will experience pain. Once this physical body is consigned to flames, nothing comes along with you.

Atma, Self, I — these are different names given to the same. The identification of One (Self) with the body is done by the individual, thereby resulting in ego (*ahamkara*). That is why Jesus advised people to cross the little I (ego), so that they may become God themselves.

Who are you?

Your own Self (*Atma*) directs all your activities from within. This Self has no birth and death, just as Brahman has no birth and death. It is eternal, true, and changeless. We have to attach ourselves to such an everlasting principle; not to the constantly changing and ephemeral objects. Suppose you marry a girl; you call her your wife. Prior to the marriage who was she? Who were you? There was absolutely no relationship between you. Only with your marriage did you become husband and wife and acquire a marital relationship. The relationship is acquired by you. God has nothing to do with these worldly relationships. Yet, He is the eternal witness to all that goes on in this world.

Meditation (*dhyana*), constant repetition of God’s name (*japa*), and yoga are of no help in realising the *Atmic* principle. Nor are the nine forms of devotion like listening, singing, contemplating on Vishnu, serving His Lotus Feet, salutation, worship, servitude, friendship, and self-surrender (*sravanam, kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, Padasevanam, vandanam, archanam, dasyam, sneham, Atmanivedanam*) of any help. They are different forms of spiritual exercise, which we ourselves have taken up. They are not God-given. How many ascetics in this world do severe penance? How many people constantly do constant repetition of God’s name? Even when they are sleeping, the rosary beads (*japamala*) rotates in their hand. Do all these spiritual exercises confer liberation (*moksha*)? Never!

One has therefore to constantly contemplate on the *Atma* Principle. If someone asks who you are, you should be able to reply ‘I am God!’ with all the faith and confidence at your command. The *Atma* embodied in all human beings is one and the same. It is eternal and changeless.

I have told you several times about the story of Alexander the Great. Though he conquered large parts of the world, he could not take with him even an iota of property that he accumulated. He had to leave this world with empty hands. In order to demonstrate this truth to the world, he instructed his ministers to take his dead body in a procession through the streets of his capital keeping both his hands in a raised position pointing the sky. When the ministers were curious to know the reason for this strange request from the Emperor, Alexander replied, “I have conquered several countries and accumulated great wealth. There is a vast army under my control. Yet, none will accompany me at the time of my leaving this mortal body. I will be going with empty hands. This truth has to be demonstrated to all people.”

Have pure resolve to attain Atmic wisdom

We may acquire a lot of wealth and deposit in the banks or lend it to others for interest. Yet, we cannot take even a handful of earth along with us at the time of leaving our body. Nothing of this world comes along with us. We are unnecessarily struggling and planning several schemes constantly thinking about them day and night. In spite of all our struggle, what has to go out of our hands will go.

The body is like a water bubble. The mind is like a mad monkey. If you follow this mad monkey, you will get into trouble. If you believe in the body, you do not know when this body, which is like a water bubble, will burst. Nothing is permanent. Only the *Atma* is eternal and immortal. That is God. The 'I', 'Self', 'God' are all the different names by which Divinity is referred to. The *Atma* that is referred to as 'I' is donning different names and forms.

God incarnated as Rama, Krishna, etc. Rama underwent several difficulties and demonstrated greatest ideals. Krishna demonstrated several divine plays (*leelas*) and attracted several people. Finally, He left His mortal coil. The physical bodies of the *Avatars* undergo changes, but the divine *Atma* in their bodies remains the same. The *Atma* is omnipresent. However, in order to attain *Atmic* wisdom (*Atma jnana*), your resolves have to be pure. You have to constantly contemplate upon the divine *Atma*. Your thoughts and actions may change, the methods of your repetition of God's name, austerities, and yoga may change, but Divinity will not undergo any change. That is why Divinity has been described as attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free, and embodiment of sacredness (*nirgunam, niranjanam, sanatana nikanam, nitya, suddha, buddha, mukta, nirmala swarupinam*).

Good character is very essential

People pray, "Oh! God! Grant me your divine vision (*darshan*)."

 Even if He grants you His divine vision, it is only momentary. It comes and goes like a flash. In fact, God is very much immanent in your own heart. He is hearing all your prayers. He is answering your prayers. Even when your physical body ceases to exist, the *Atma* remains. That *Atma* (Self) is eternal. It assumes different forms. We witness several objects in this universe, like the stars, the sun, and the moon. Though they appear to be static, even they undergo changes. Only Divinity, which is the basis of all these, remains changeless and eternal.

One should always maintain purity. In fact, this land of Bharat (India) has earned great name and fame for purity and character:

This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women, like
Savithri, who brought her dead husband back to life;
Chandramati, who extinguished wild fire with the power of truth;
Sita, who proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed, and
Damayanti, who reduced an evil-minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity.
This land of piety and nobility attained plenty and prosperity and
Became the teacher of all the nations of the world because of such women of chastity.
(Telugu poem)

Good character is very essential not only for ladies but for gents too! If only one has character, you can call them a man or a chaste woman. Today, we find boys and girls moving very close and behaving as though they are husband and wife. But for how long? Only for a short period. Thereafter, the situation changes. Once they

are married, the boy will be somewhere and the girl will go somewhere else. However, there will be no change at all in the divine nature. It is customary to exchange diamond rings between a boy and girl when they marry. The diamond ring, which is a permanent object, is symbolic of Divinity, which is changeless and is available to people at all times. We should safeguard our character like a diamond. It is the custom of even overseas people to exchange diamond rings at the time of marriage. Thus, there is a meaning in every custom and tradition not only in India but in all countries.

What is educare?

As I have already mentioned above, you say that this is “my body (*na dehamu*)”. Here “*na*” refers to self in Telugu language. But in Sanskrit language, “*na*” refers to “no”. Hence, it means “I am not the body.” Thus, there is a lot of meaning in every expression. God is described by “The Cosmic Being has thousands of heads, eyes, and feet (*Sahasra seersha Purushah sahasrakshah sahasra pad*).” You have only one head, whereas God has thousands of heads. What does it mean? All heads in the entire creation are His! Likewise, it is not correct to say that Swami has seen a thousand full moons (*Sahasra chandra darshan*). I have seen not just one thousand full moons but crores and crores of full moons. As the *Veda* declares, “The moon is the presiding deity of our mind (*Chandrama manaso jatah*).” You all have a mind each. I have been seeing all your minds. I have been seeing the minds of crores of people all over the world. Thus, it amounts to seeing not merely one thousand moons but crores and crores of moons.

The boys sang a song a few minutes ago:

Neeku maku unnadi oke bandhamu, Ade Prema Bandhamu.

The only bond that unites us with You is the bond of love.

You should ensure that this bond of love lasts forever. Outwardly, we may display several qualities. But the inner thoughts or values are only five: truth (*sathya*), righteousness (*dharmam*), peace (*santhi*), love (*prema*), and nonviolence (*ahimsa*). These are innate qualities, not super-imposed from outside. They cannot be purchased from any shop. They are very much ingrained in the core of our personality. Our duty is to manifest those qualities and reflect them in our daily life. That is “educare”. On the other hand, education refers to acquiring knowledge relating to the physical and secular world.

Love your neighbours

Truth is eternal. It has to manifest from within. Same is the case with righteousness. It is said, “*Dharma* forms the basis of the world (*Dharmamoolam idam jagat*).” In fact, it is, “Truth forms the basis of the world (*Sathyamoolam idam jagat*).” Truth is righteousness. All other values are contained in and originate from truth. Love is another quality that is innate in human beings. It should be manifested and shared with one and all. Where there is love, there cannot be hatred. Love transforms itself into nonviolence. A person is suffused with love cannot indulge in any kind of violence. Where there is no love, people cause harm to one another. From truth emerges righteousness. When these two qualities go together, peace is the result. Peace manifests as calm and serene behaviour. A person in that state says “I am peaceful.”

Several people, when asked about the purpose of their spiritual practises, reply “to attain peace of mind”. But where is peace? There are only pieces in the outside world. A mother loves her child. She will not forsake her child under any circumstances, even when provoked to get angry. Love drives it away. If nonviolence is to reign

supreme in the world, the quality of love must be cultivated by all.

It is not enough if you love yourself. You should love your neighbours too. You must develop the feeling that everyone belongs to you and the same *Atma* resides as the indweller in all people. For example, there is only one moon in the sky. The same moon is reflected in a thousand pots. You will see the moon reflected in each of the thousand pots separately. Can you therefore say there are thousand moons? No! Similarly, there are no separate suns in different countries like India, USA, Japan, etc. Only one sun illuminates the entire world. However, the time at which the sun rises in different parts of the world differs. Now it is 6 o'clock in the evening for us, whereas it is 6 o'clock in the morning in America. In Japan, it is 12:00 noon. On the basis of this difference in time, you cannot say that there are more than one sun in the sky. Only one sun illuminates the entire world. Similarly, only one God resides as the indweller in different people. Each one worships Him in their own way ascribing a particular name and form to Divinity.

Several people are trying to ascertain from Me the birth place of Lord Rama. During the past several years a number of people approached Me and pleaded with Me, "Swami! Please tell us where exactly Rama was born." I told them, "Rama was born in the womb of mother Kausalya." In fact, do you search for yourself in the outside world? No! Your true nature is to be found in yourself only. You are you only. Similarly, it is futile to search for God, enquiring 'Where can I find God?' God is omnipresent.

With hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth, and ears pervading everything,
He permeates the entire universe.

*Sarvatah Panipadam Tat Sarvatokshi Siromukham,
Sarvatah Srutimalloke Sarvamavrutya Tishtati.*

Hence, there is no use asking, "Where is God?" Try to know about yourself, in the first instance. Then you will know everything. Unfortunately today people are trying to know about everything in the outside world, without first knowing about themselves. No purpose will be served by such an exercise. Know thyself! Then you will know everything. Remind yourself, "I am the embodiment of divine *Atma*; the *Atma* is immanent in me."

People often say "This is my....; this is my..." But, who is that 'my?' To whom does it refer? The feeling of 'my' is illusion (*maya*). However, people do not make any effort to understand this. Since you are an individual, you say 'My....' But God is not confined to a particular name and form. He is the principle of 'I', which is all-pervading. Several names and forms are ascribed to Him, but He is one and only one! "Truth is one the wise say it in different ways (*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*)." The different expressions like 'I', 'I am God', 'I am Brahma', 'I am Vishnu', etc. refer to only one God. Unfortunately today people are 'dividing' the 'Divine'. You should treat Divinity as only one.

Do not differentiate between people, saying, "This man is my brother, this person is my son-in-law etc." All are brothers and sisters only. When you consider all people as your brothers and sisters, where is the feeling of difference between individuals? Spirituality teaches exactly this feeling of oneness among human beings. People say that they could realise God by doing repetition of God's name, meditation, and such other spiritual exercises. But when and where? How? They will not be able to see even the person standing right in front of them when they close their eyes. How then can they see God in meditation? All these spiritual practices are meant to control the mind.

The mind is very unsteady. It is always affected by bumps and jumps. How then can you control such an

unsteady mind? It is not possible. There is only one way the mind can be controlled, that is by constant contemplation on God. We often see people changing the names and forms of God for contemplation, frequently. One day they contemplate on Rama; the next day on Krishna, and yet another day on Venkateswara, etc. Mind control is not possible by such contemplation. If you consider Rama as the God of your liking, then stick to that name and form till your last breath. Then, surely, you will have the vision (*sakshatkara*) of Rama.

Install the form of God in your heart; develop oneness with Him

Great painters like Ravi Varma portrayed Rama in a particular form. But, Rama and Krishna are not confined to such forms only. In fact, God has no particular form. He assumes a particular form at a particular time, for the sake of devotees. Thereafter, even that form vanishes. Several pictures and paintings of God in a particular form are sold in the market. They are done by painters like Ravi Varma. Did Ravi Varma actually see Rama or Krishna? No; he only heard stories about Rama and Krishna and painted their forms based upon his imagination. These pictures and paintings only remind you about Divinity. Neither Ravi Varma nor any other person actually saw God. You are God, verily! Do not think that God is somewhere in a distant place. You yourself are God. Develop that confidence. However, when you consider yourself as God, you must develop divine qualities. Then only are you entitled to consider yourself as God. Since no one has ever explained the nature of Divinity in this manner, people have fallen into dogmatic theories.

Spirituality will reveal your true nature

God is immanent in every human being, nay, all living beings. There is no place where God is not present. Wherever you look, God is present there. In fact, you need not come over here to see God. He is very much present in the place where you reside. Without realising this truth, people are spending a lot of money and going on pilgrimages. That is not what you are expected to do. Develop the quality of love in you and share it with all. Then all people can become one. All are one, be alike to everyone. No living being can ever live without love. Living is possible only with love. Hence, develop a loving nature. When you go home, close your eyes and contemplate upon God. You are sure to find Him in your own heart. When you open your eyes to the outside world, you see all and sundry. What do you think is the purpose for which you are endowed with eyes? It is only to see God.

If you go to a doctor complaining about some problem in your body, he will take an X-ray of your heart, liver, kidney, etc. and decide about the particular malady from which you are suffering. Spirituality is like an X-ray photo that will reveal your true nature. Install the form of God in your heart and contemplate on Him incessantly. Never change that form for any reason. You are sure to realise God. You need not search for Him elsewhere. If you wish to see Swami, install the form of Swami in the altar of your heart. You can surely visualise Swami there. If you develop a feeling of oneness with Him, everything will turn out to be good for you. This is what you have to realise today. Festivals come and go. Sunday, Monday, Tuesday — days roll on like that. Saturday lapses into Sunday. But God will never change. He is eternal. Realise this truth.

New Year Message, Prasanthi Nilayam, 2009-01-01

You can win the Grace of the Lord only by *dharma*. *Dharma* induces the spirit of self-surrender and develops it. Without the training that the practice of *dharma* gives to your senses, your feelings and emotions, you cannot have steady faith and

steady detachment. The Lord is *Dharma* conceived as a personality. Rama is known as Righteousness personified (*Vigrahavan Dharma*). If you step across the bounds of *dharma* and play foul, you cannot win the game of life.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba