



SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

MAHA SHIVARATRI STUDY GUIDE 2024



Offered with love and gratitude at the Divine Lotus feet of

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri 2024



CONTENTS

Foreword - Sri Sathya Sai Scriptural Studies Committee	2
In This Universe There Is Nothing That is Not Atma	3
“I” Is The First Sound Emanating From Atma	4
From Bhrama to Brahma	5
Unity That Underlies the Apparent Diversity	6
Come Out of Egoistic Delusions	7
Believing <i>Mithya</i> , You Are Giving Up <i>Sathya</i>	8
The Cosmic Consciousness.....	9
Conscience Is A Part Of Consciousness.....	10
Understand The Atma First	11



Foreword

Loving Sairam!

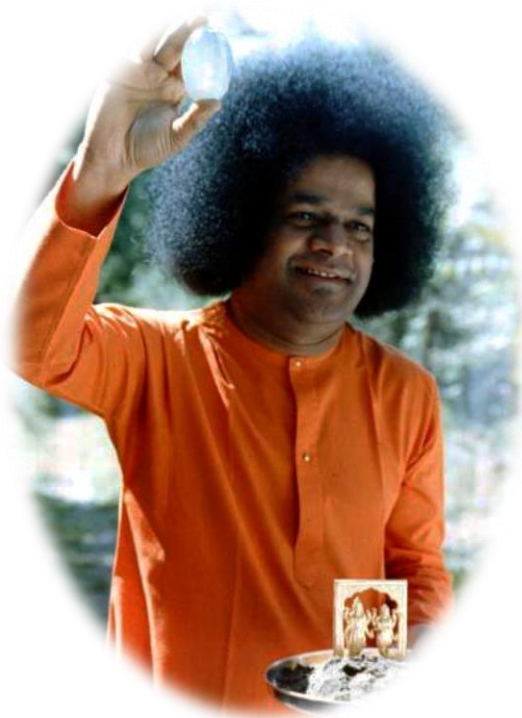
With the divine blessings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Sri Sathya Sai Scriptural Studies Committee is releasing a Study Guide to commemorate Maha Shivaratri 2024. The vigilance during this auspicious festival is for the purposes of reducing the identification with mind and intensifying the unity with God.

During the 1990 Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in Brindavan, Bangalore, Swami devoted an entire discourse emphasizing that dual purpose. The Summer Course was an intensive deep dive into spirituality, conducted by Swami Himself. In retrospect, it is so apt for our own deep inquiry and practice as well.

We pray and hope that by the reflective questions at the end of each section of the discourse, we can discover the gems and pearls of Swami's divine wisdom. May He bless us with our endeavor and bestow His grace on us so that we can all experience our inner heritage, the Atmic blissful reality.

With Love,

Sri Sathya Sai Scriptural Studies Committee



DIVINE DISCOURSE – BRINDAVAN, 29th MAY 1990

In This Universe There Is Nothing That Is Not Atma

Embodiments of Divine Love!

*“aham ātmā guḍ ākeśa sarva bhūtāsaya sthitah
aham ādiś cha madhyam cha bhūtānām anta eva cha”*

*“Oh Arjuna! I am the Atma that dwells in all living beings.
I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings.”*

So declares Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.¹

All that you see in the cosmos - the moving and stationary objects - is a manifestation of the Atma. In the spiritual realm, what you hear at every step is the Atma. What is seen is Atma. What is heard is Atma. What makes you forget is also Atma. That is why Krishna declared to Arjuna:

“In this universe there is nothing that is not Atma.” What man needs today is to take the resolve to realise the Atma. This is tantamount to realising one's true Self. This is called Atma-jñāna (Knowledge of the Self).

The first aim of human existence should be to experience *Atmānanda* (Atmic Bliss). Everyone should keep in mind the Principle of Atma. Atma is also called *Eruka* (Awareness). This Awareness produces in every being the sense of "I-ness". It is expressed in the term *Aham* ("I"). When this "I" identifies itself with the body, it takes the form of *ahamkāra* (the ego). This is the false "I", not the true "I".

QUESTIONS

1. In my everyday experiences, how can I realize a direct awareness of the all-encompassing presence of Atma?
2. How do I distinguish between "knowing about" the Atma in my mind vs. having this direct realization of Atmic Bliss?

¹ Bhagavad Gītā, chapter 10, verse 20.

"I" IS THE FIRST SOUND EMANATING FROM ATMA

It is the mind that continually interposes itself between Atma and oneself. Like the cloud, formed out of the water vapour produced by the sun, which hides the sun, the mind, which has arisen from the Atma, covers the Atma. As long as the mind exists, man cannot comprehend the nature of the Atma or realise the Atma. Only the person who is aware of the Atma in all the different states of consciousness can be said to have direct vision of the Self (*Atma sākshātkāra*). The first sound emanating from the Atma which one hears is "I". It is only after the emergence of "I" that the whole process of creation began. If there is no "I", there is no creation. The terms "I", "Atma" and "Brahma" are all synonymous. The "I" not associated with the mind is Atma. The "I" associated with the mind is pseudo-self (*mithyātma*). There is only one Atma. That is the real "I".

Man undertakes a variety of spiritual exercises to realise the One that subsumes the many. In fact, all the endeavours made in quest of Atma are born of ignorance. The realised person (*Jñāni*) makes no such endeavours. All the efforts made by man to realise the one "I" are only attempts to satisfy the mind. When what is required is the elimination of the mind for experiencing the One, it is futile to strengthen the mind for this purpose by so-called spiritual sadhanas.

If you seek to embark on sadhana, you must first get rid of the feeling of not being the Atma (*anātma bhāva*). To experience Atmic bliss, you have to turn your vision towards Atma. In reality, all efforts made for experiencing Atmic bliss are aberrations of the mind. Seeking liberation man adores a myriad deities. Of what avail is all this, when all the different religions have declared that there is only One God. These pursuits are products of a deluded mind. As long as the mind exists, desires will persist. When desires are present, likes and dislikes cannot be got rid of. And these sustain the ego. While the ego lasts, the Atma cannot be experienced. Atmic knowledge, Atmic bliss and Atmic vision can be obtained only by eliminating the mind, in no other way.

QUESTIONS

1. Every effort of man to seek oneness is born from ignorance. What does this imply?
2. How can we know when a Sadhana is our expression of being the Atma rather than a Sadhana is merely satisfying the mind?

FROM BHRAMA TO BRAHMA

From where did the *manas* (mind), the *buddhi* (intellect), the *chitta* (memory) and *ahamkāra* (ego) originate, how do they grow and where do they merge themselves? That is Brahma, that is Atma. That being the case, how can you discover your source or your true Self by searching for it elsewhere (than within you)?

Such a search is like that of a thief putting on the uniform of a policeman and searching for the thief. To know your own Self, why do you need any other sadhanas? There is a story which illustrates the absurdity of such a situation. Ten ignorant people who were on their way for a pilgrimage attempted to cross a river. After crossing the river, they wanted to assure themselves whether all the ten had crossed the river. One man started counting and noted that only nine had crossed the river and started wailing that the tenth man must have been swept away by the river. Each of them counted the others in the same manner, leaving out himself, and found one man missing. A passerby noticed their plight and enquired them the cause of their distress. They all said that one of the ten in their group had been lost in the river. The intelligent traveler found that while counting, each one had left out himself and counted only the remaining nine. Lining them up in a row, he counted all the ten and revealed to them that earlier at each count, the man doing the counting had left himself out.

This indicates that the individual who is not aware of himself cannot understand anything aright. When you are yourself the Atma, if you pray to someone outside, how can you recognise your own Self, the Atma?

QUESTIONS

1. How does a person undertake the sadhana of “discovering and knowing your own Self”?
2. What is the outlook of a person who is aware of him/herself? How does that person lead his/her life in the world?



UNITY THAT UNDERLIES THE APPARENT DIVERSITY

"The One willed to become the many"

Hence, you must realise the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. All the myriad forms you see are reflections in a mirror of your own image. You are ignoring the primary form and are concerned about the images. This is the delusion you are afflicted with. *Brahma* (the Divine) will elude the one caught up in *bhrama* (delusion). All the spiritual practices you do are of little use for realising the Atma. They may help to tranquillise the mind. But what you have to do is to eliminate the thought process of the mind altogether. Calming the mind is only a palliative. The mind will get agitated again. Only those spiritual practices which aim at eliminating the mind will be of use in the Atmic quest.

QUESTIONS

1. How can we eliminate the thought processes in the mind for the purposes of experiencing the Atma?
2. There is this reminder that we need to destroy the mirror that reflects the one which becomes many. What steps can we undertake in our sadhana to slowly remove this mirror?

COME OUT OF EGOISTIC DELUSIONS

It is the identification with the body that is causing the *aham* (ego) to flourish and grow. The feeling, "I am the doer", "I am the enjoyer", and "I am achieving success" is growing constantly in man. Students! You must realise that victory or defeat is not the result of your actions or spiritual practice. Immersed in your egoistic delusion, you are imagining that you are the architects of your fortunes. You can see in the world numerous instances of failure in spite of heroic efforts. You can also see examples of successes achieved through very little effort. Instead of courting failure, relying on your own efforts, and getting dispirited, put your trust in God and offer all your actions to Him. You have to realise that little depends on your efforts alone. You can have proofs of this in your own body.

For instance, what efforts are you making to see that your heart beats regularly? How far are you responsible for the breathing process that goes on continually? What is your contribution to the digestive process that goes on within you? Are these the results of human efforts? No. Can you continue to live merely by wishing that you should go on living? Are you able to end your life when you wish it? Are you responsible for your birth? Not at all. When you enquire into this problem, you will realise that it is your sense of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship which is causing all difficulties.

All actions done by man today are intended to satisfy the mind. But, however much you may try to satisfy the mind, it can never feel contented. What is this mind? It is *māyā* (delusion), desire, ignorance, *prakriti* (the phenomenal world) and *bhrānti* (illusion). Immersed in this mental illusion, if you wish to realise Brahma, how is it possible? You are afraid of your own shadow. Your thoughts frighten you. The truth is there is only the One. It is called by different names. It is the Atma. The pandits describe the Supreme as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). This is not correct. He is *Sat*, He is *Chit* and He is *Ananda*. These are not three different qualities of the Divine. He is the embodiment of each of them.

QUESTIONS

1. Mind is devoted to be maya (delusion), desire, ignorance, prakriti, illusion. Explain, in detail, each of these descriptions or nature and assess how we can transcend
2. Sense of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship – Reflect on how we can slowly lessen the intensity of their grip on us.

BELIEVING MITHYA, YOU ARE GIVING UP SATHYA

Some people resort to meditation in the belief that there is some power greater than themselves which they must experience. People also undertake arduous exercises to realise some secret, mysterious and marvellous power other than themselves. This is action born of ignorance. As long as you think that there is some power higher than yourself, you are steeped in ignorance. There is nothing higher in the world than yourself. But belief in the existence of such a power is a delusion of your mind. For example, in a dream we see all kinds of scenes and have various experiences. How far are these real? Only as long as you are in the dream state. When the dream ends, the scenes become unreal. Likewise, as long as you are in a state of mental delusion, the joys and sorrows, the gains and losses you experience are all real. When the delusion is removed, they all become unreal.

Hence, all the phenomenal experiences caused by the delusion of the mind are all untrue (*mithya*). Basing your life on this *mithya* you are giving up *Sathya*. Identifying yourself totally with the body you are causing the ego (*ahamkāra*) to grow. If you grasp this simple truth, you will develop a wide vision. There is nothing in the world other than the Self. All the diverse objects are reflections of the One. For all worldly things there is a *kartā* (a subject which acts), *karma* (the result of action) and *kriyā* (the action itself). In the sphere of the spiritual, however, there is only the *Kartā*, without *karma* or *kriyā*. He is the Doer, the action and the result which is done. The Atmic principle, which represents the unity of all these three, is the One Universal Consciousness (*Chaitanya*) that pervades the entire Cosmos. It is impossible for it to be present in some places and not in others.

QUESTIONS

1. How are we giving up Sathya? How do we realise that we are giving up Sathya for Mithya in our day to day living?
2. The worldly experience has three aspects i.e. Doer, causal action, and the end product. Whilst the spiritual world there is only the Doer. What is the implication of this fact to my every day sadhana?



THE COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS

It is this Cosmic Consciousness that has been presented to the common people as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* so that they can comprehend its nature. The philosophers of Vedanta, however, looked upon these three as different expressions of the same Truth. These three have also been called *Asti-Bhāti-Priyam* in Vedantic parlance. In fact, all three are one and the same. When one says, "Here is a tumbler," the is-ness is *Asti* or *Sat*. The fact of being perceivable is *Bhāti* or *Chit* (cognisability). Finally, the experience that "I am enjoying it" is *Priyam* or *Ananda*. *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* are one. It is one and the same thing which is (*Asti*), which is perceivable (*Bhāti*), and which gives Ananda (*Priyam*).

Though there is only One, because of our mental delusion, we are experiencing It as many. Hence *Atma-tattva* (the true nature of Atma) is to be experienced by recognising the unity underlying the diversity. Atma has no form, but It assumes all forms. It is like air that has no form but takes on many forms depending on the container it fills. When air is filled in a balloon, it has the form of the balloon. When it fills a football, it has the form of the football. When it fills a pneumatic pillow, it has the form of the pillow. Air, thus, has no form or no specific quality, but it is like the One that has only one quality, i.e. Consciousness (*Chaitanya*).

QUESTIONS

1. The above is one example Swami gave to reflect *Asti*, *Bhati*, and *Priyam* (*Ananda*). Draw from your everyday experiences how you can experience *Asti*, *Bhati*, and *Priyam*.
2. How does this knowledge help one in his/her journey to realize the Atma?

CONSCIENCE IS A PART OF CONSCIOUSNESS

It is not easy to understand the nature of Consciousness (*Chaitanya*). When you want to understand it, you have to understand one part of it, namely, Conscience. Conscience is a Witness. It is also known as Awareness. A witness requires a basis for its functioning. That basis is that of which you are "conscious" in the waking state. There are these three states: Conscious, Conscience and Consciousness. The first state is related to the senses. Conscience is related to the mind. Consciousness is related to Atma. The division of these three states has been made for the purpose of understanding worldly processes. This can be illustrated by an example:

A conference of doctors is held in a hall. There can be different specialists present in the hall. But the name "doctor" is only one and applies to all. Each one may have specialised in one part of the body like the heart, the ear, the brain, the kidney or any other part. The body is one and has been divided into many parts for the purpose of specialisation. But all specialists are doctors. Likewise, all are forms of the Atma (*Atma svarūpas*). But in terms of how people earn their living, one can be a labourer, a civil servant, a trader or a farmer. These different names are based on the occupations pursued by different persons, but they have no permanent status.

Similarly, although Atma is one and the same in everybody, distinctions are made among different persons on the basis of their physical and other characteristics and their relationships. For instance, if there is an accident to an aeroplane, one's interest in the fate of individual passengers is increased if one's kith and kin were travelling by that plane. Otherwise, people are interested to be informed about the details of the accident only out of curiosity. In the same manner, as long as the Atma is not considered as your own, your interest in the Atma is concerned with mere information. Once you know that Atma is the Self that is present in everyone, the process of transformation takes place. There is only One and nothing else (*unnadi okate, anyamu ledu*). But as long as the mind and body remain, it is difficult to experience this oneness. In spite, however, of the difficulty, everyone must strive to discover the true Self.

QUESTIONS

1. Finally, Swami said once that your conscience is your Guru. How do we reflect the contents of the above message and come to this conclusion?
2. Oneness can only truly be experienced from our Atmic self. Hence from your daily experiences involving body and mind assess how far or near we are to our Atmic reality.

UNDERSTAND THE ATMA FIRST

We have seen how the body is comparable to a chariot, the senses to horses, the mind to the reins and the Buddhi to the charioteer. But besides these, there is the Master of the chariot, the Atma residing in everyone. There is only One residing in all beings (*eko vaśī sarva bhūta antarātmā*).² Hence, in addition to knowing how the body, the senses, the mind and the buddhi function, you have to regard the understanding of the Atma as the primary goal. Giving up the sense of "I" and "mine", you have to do your duty as a spiritual discipline. The performance of one's duty is called yoga (*kartavyam yoga uchyate*).³ When you practise this yoga, you will experience the joy of Atmic bliss. It is the absence of this *yoga* which results in *roga* (disease). When you examine the activities of the mind, with a view to finding out whether they are leading you to bondage or to liberation, you will find that they are only leading you to bondage.

The primary cause for the chaos of divisions, conflicts, disorder and violence in the world today is the absence of the sense of oneness among men. There is an urgent need for cultivating the spirit of love which will serve to promote the feeling of unity. All education today is not real knowledge but a process of proceeding from ignorance to ignorance. If you seek to know where Atma is, it is the Consciousness (*Chaitanya*) present between one state of consciousness and another. This is not easily understandable by all. There is a state which is between waking and sleep. Few know what this state is. Only the yogis have realised it. That which is between the waking and sleeping states is the state of Atma. The waking state is governed by *Rajo guna*. Sleep is governed by *Tamo guna*. In between is the *Sattva guna* - that is the Atma itself.

QUESTIONS

1. Relate the analogy of the chariot to the four components of the human personality and recall experiences in the daily life where we allowed Buddhi to make the decisions.
2. What sadhanas must one do to allow our inner charioteer to exert greater influence in our decision making?

² Katha Upanishad, Part 2, Chapter 2, Verse 12.

³ Adaptation of Bhagavad Gītā's verse 2.48: *samatvam yoga uchyate* = equal-mindedness is called yoga. Performance of one's duty (*kartavyam*) without attachment to the results of action requires indifference or equal-mindedness (*samatvam*) to likes or dislikes, success or failure, praise or blame.



sathyasai.org

**SRI SATHYA SAI SCRIPTURAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
©2024 SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**