

The 'I' (Aham) Is Brahman

(Discourse delivered on the occasion of Onam Festival – August 21, 2002)

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

*“All people aspire for pleasant life, positions of authority and prosperity.
But few aspire for good intellect, wisdom and good character.
What else is to be conveyed to this congregation of noble souls? “*

Embodiments of Love!

In this world everyone, right from a pauper to a millionaire, a *Pamara* (simpleton) to a *Paramahansa* (realized soul) uses the word 'I' while referring to himself. Had the birds and beasts been endowed with the power of speech, they too would have introduced themselves saying 'I'. The term 'I' is of great significance in spiritual literature and is explained in the Upanishads in detail. *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman) is an Upanishadic dictum. From this statement, it is evident that the term 'I' came into existence before the name Brahman. The names of Divine incarnations such as Rama and Krishna correspond only to their physical forms and not to their Divinity. *Aham* ('I') is their true and eternal name. In fact, 'I' is the first name of God. People address God by various names for their own satisfaction and happiness. However, '*Aham*' is the true name of God.

Mind is responsible for man's delusions. It is possible to grow a tree without any bend. A boulder can be carved into a beautiful statue. But it is very difficult to straighten and steady the mind. All our *Sadhana* is meant to direct the mind to the right path. People undertake various types of spiritual *Sadhana* which confer only

temporary satisfaction. It is only when one understands the principle of *Aham* that one can experience everlasting happiness. People attribute various names and forms to God as they are unable to understand the principle of Divinity.

“Is it possible to build a temple to the One who is all-pervasive? How can one hold a lamp to the One who is shining with the brilliance of a billion suns? How can one attribute a form to the One whom even Brahma, the creator, cannot comprehend? How can one give an appropriate name to the One who is present in all beings? How can one offer food to the One who has the entire cosmos in His belly?”

Embodiments of Love !

In this physical and ephemeral world, people worship God with various names and forms. But in reality *Aham* is the only true and eternal name of God. The four Vedas have declared this truth in the four *Mahavakyas* (profound statements): *Prajnanam Brahma* (*Brahman* is Supreme Consciousness); *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman); *Tattwamasi* (That Thou Art); and *Ayam Atma Brahma* (this Self is Brahman). The Veda has also declared: *Ekoham Bahusyam* (the One willed to become many). *Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti* (The Absolute is one. But the

wise call it by different names). Divinity is only one, and that is *Aham*.

Mind plays many tricks and makes man forget the reality. It is almost impossible for anyone to comprehend the nature of mind. Flies and mosquitoes land on every object but never do they go near fire. Likewise, the mind gets attracted by material objects and goes everywhere but always shies away from God. The mind should be made pure and selfless and it should always remain focused on God. That is true *Sadhana*. All the spiritual practices are meant to control the mind.

Sravanam (listening), *Kirtanam* (singing), *Vishnusmaranam* (contemplating on Vishnu), *Padasevanam* (serving His Lotus Feet), *Vandanam* (salutation), *Archanam* (worship), *Dasyam* (servitude), *Sneham* (friendship), *Atmanivedanam* (Self-surrender) are the nine forms of devotion. In each of these nine paths of devotion what is important is that the mind has to be totally surrendered to God. (Bhagawan showing His handkerchief asked) "What is this?" You say it is a piece of cloth. It is not merely that. It is a bundle of threads. Cotton is made into threads and threads are interwoven to make a cloth. Likewise, you are not one person but three: The one you think you are (physical body), the one others think you are (the mind), the one you really are (the *Atma*). Your true Self is 'I'. That is Brahma, God. He has no specific name and form. *Nirgunam*, *Niranjanam*, *Sanathanam*, *Niketanam*, *Nitya*, *Suddha*, *Buddha*, *Mukta*, *Nirmala* *Swarupinam* (attributeless, pure, everlasting, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, liberated and embodiment

of sacredness). Whatever names and forms man attributes to God are for his own satisfaction. Therefore, you should make efforts to see God in all forms.

The principle of 'I' is non-dual, eternal, full of effulgence and of supreme bliss. Everything is contained in this. When someone questions, when did you come, you say, "I came yesterday." Does this 'I' refer to you or your body? It is your body that came yesterday and not you. Since you identify yourself with the body, you think that you came yesterday. When you are walking on the road, suppose accidentally you have slipped and sustained a fracture. Then you say, "My leg is fractured." Just ponder over this statement. When you say, "My leg", it implies that you are different from your leg. It means that you are not the body. You say, it is "my body", "my mind", "my *Buddhi*", "my leg", etc., then, who are you? When you examine yourself in this manner, you will realize that none of these are your true Self. Your body corresponds to *Akara* (form), whereas your true Self (I) corresponds to *Ananda* (bliss). The principle of 'I' is different from the body. Day in and day out, people make use of this term 'I' without actually understanding its meaning. Be he a pauper or a millionaire, the principle of 'I' is common to all. *Isavasyam Idam Sarvam* (the entire universe is permeated by God). God is present in everybody in the form of 'I'. Where there is 'I', there is God. Have firm faith in this declaration. When you say, *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*), 'I' precedes Brahma. Hence, 'I' is the first name of God.

Bali was a noble king, one of selflessness and an ardent devotee. One who seeks alms is considered small. Hence, even Lord Narayana had to assume the form of a *Vamana* (dwarf) when He went to beg for alms from Bali. The *Pakshi Vahana* (the one who has Garuda as His vehicle) has Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth on His chest. Yet He became very small and sought *bhiksha* (alms) from Bali. He sought just three footsteps of land. Being small in stature, his feet were even smaller. Yet He could measure the three worlds with His three steps. Sage Sukracharya, the preceptor of Bali, cautioned him not to yield to Vamana's request. He revealed that He was no ordinary being but Lord Narayana Himself. But Bali did not pay heed to his counsel, saying it was not proper for one to go back on one's promise. Having given his word, he wanted to fulfill it, come what may. He even disobeyed his Guru and offered himself to God. God has infinite potentialities. Nothing is impossible for Him. Vamana occupied the three worlds with his footsteps. The three worlds are represented by *Bhur Bhuvah Suvah*. *Bhur* stands for material world. *Bhuvaha* represents the realm of thought, i.e., the mind. *Suvaha* is the principle of the *Atma*. All the three are contained in man.

Kerala is the birthplace of sacrifice and the center of devotion and surrender. No beggar is turned away empty-handed. Everyone does charity as per his capacity. It is this *Punya Bhumi* (land of merit) that gave birth to Bali. There are many in this world who perform *Bhudana*, *Godana*, *Annadana*, *Vastradana*, *Suvarnadana* (giving away

land, cows, food, clothes and gold in charity). But emperor Bali performed the supreme sacrifice by offering himself to God. With the passage of time, there might have been a few changes, but, nevertheless, Kerala continues to be the land famous for devotion and surrender. It is the birthplace of Prahlada, the great devotee of the Lord. Even as Bali disobeyed the command of his Guru for the sake of God, Prahlada, too, went against the wishes of his father and surrendered totally to the Lord. Many such noble souls have taken birth in the sacred land of Kerala.

Modern scientists deny the existence of God out of their ignorance. There is no place where God does not exist. *Sarvatah Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvatah Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). The same was stated by Prahlada, "Never doubt that God is here and not there. Wherever you search for Him, He is there." (Telugu Poem) He had unflinching faith. Hiranyakasipu was a great scientist. He could travel up to the sun; he could even reach the stars. When he touched the Polestar, the planet earth began to shake. He was one of such valor and courage. Till this day, no scientist has been able to accomplish what Hiranyakasipu could achieve. But, in spite of his valor and knowledge, Hiranyakasipu could not comprehend Divinity. One can understand Divinity only through love. There is no other path that can take you to God. It is only love that enables you surrender to God.

Embodiments of Love!

'I' and love are one and the same. Man cannot exist without love. Love shines forth as 'I' in everybody. Without the electric current, bulbs cannot glow. Likewise, without 'I', the body cannot function. It is because of 'I' that the eyes see, the ears listen, the tongue speaks, etc. It is not the eyes that see, it is 'I' that sees through the eyes. When you close your eyes, you do not see anything. The light present in the eyes is divinity. In fact, there is no place where divinity does not exist. All names and forms are the manifestations of divinity. Hence, it is said, *Sarva Jeeva Namaskarah Kesavam Prati-gachchati* (whomever you salute, it reaches God) and *Sarva Jeeva Tiraskarah Kesavam Pratigachchati* (whomever you denigrate, it also reaches God).

Embodiments of Love!

If you want to be respected by others, you should first respect others. Likewise, love all and all will love you. Love is the principle of 'I'. Keep this as your goal. In any house, there will be a switch in every room for the light to glow. All these switches are controlled by one main switch. Similarly, the eyes, the ears, the tongue, etc., are like various switches which are controlled by the main switch 'I'. Only when this main switch is turned on, will there be life in each of limbs in the body. This 'I' is verily the truth. Truth is God. God is truth. Love is God. Live in love. No other spiritual practice is needed if you understand this truth and put it into practice. God is the eternal witness of our thoughts, words and deeds. Each one worships God in the name and form of his choice. In fact, all forms are His. Hence, respect and love every-

body. Expansion of love is life. Do not give scope for narrow-mindedness. *Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham* (out of all the living beings, the human birth is the rarest). *Daivam Manusha Rupena* (God takes the form of man). You may not believe in these axioms if you take only the physical form into consideration. Inner reality ('I') is important, but not the physical form. When you go to the market, you find people selling sugar dolls of different moulds like cat, dog, deer, etc. Irrespective of the shape, each doll is priced at 2 annas. 'Cat' moulds attract some children and 'deer' moulds fascinate some others. Difference lies only in names and forms but the sugar content is the same in all of them. You pay 2 annas not for the form but for the sugar content therein. Only children are attracted by names and forms. Likewise, an ordinary person is deluded by names and forms, whereas a true *sadhaka* or a devotee keeps in view the fundamental principle. Do not get carried away by names and forms. Know the nature of the Self and develop love for it. This Self is known as *Aham* or *Atma* or I. Names and forms are different but the fundamental principle is one and the same. Man will be transformed into divine once he understands this truth. Man is all-powerful. In fact, he is God. That is why God is always picturised and portrayed in a human form. Every man is endowed with *Hridaya* (heart). That which is filled with *Daya* or *Karuna* (compassion) is *Hridaya*. When man fills his heart with *Karuna*, peace will reign supreme in the world. There will be no scope for jealousy, hatred or anger. One who has filled his heart with compassion will always remain in

peace. People mistake *Hridaya* for physical heart. *Hridaya* is nothing but the all-pervasive *Atmic* principle, i.e., *Aham*.

Nobody keeps valuables within the reach of a thief. But we are keeping the precious jewellery like compassion, forbearance, love, etc., under the custody of the mind which can be compared to a thief. When you leave precious jewellery in the hands of a thief, how can you get them back? It is impossible. The precious jewellery of virtues must be kept under the safe custody of *Hridaya*. Never keep them with the thief, i.e., the mind. But that exactly is what man is doing. He acts according to the dictates of his mind. He takes mind as the basis for all his activities. One who follows the mind is verily a thief. Instead, one should follow the intellect. Only then can one understand the principle of *Atma*. Thiruthonda Alwar said that one should worship God with *Chitta Shuddi* (purity of heart). Never follow the dictates of the mind for it is always unsteady. Every man is endowed with noble qualities and pure thoughts which are like precious diamonds. But he is keeping them under the care of the mind. Consequently, he is not able to progress on the spiritual path. Take truth and love as the basis. Truth is only one. It is not constrained by time and space. One can experience peace and bliss only when one considers the changeless and eternal principles of truth and love as the basis of one's life.

The two ministers, (who spoke earlier) prayed to Me to visit Kerala. This time I shall certainly come to Kerala. Not only this, from this year Kerala has

every chance to progress in the field of science and technology. People are under the impression that only Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have progressed in the field of science and technology, but Kerala is going to overtake them. Even the Prime Minister has promised that he would extend all necessary support in this regard. Kerala is bound to attain an exalted position. The culture of Bharat exhorts, *Sathyam Vada Dharmam Chara* (speak truth, practice righteousness). Kerala is the land of truth, love and righteousness. Hence, I will certainly visit Kerala this year. The people of Kerala are tenderhearted. They are full of love. In politics, people say something and do the opposite later on. Spirituality emphasizes on the unity of thought, word and deed. Very soon Kerala will develop into an ideal State. Kerala stands first in many respects. Even the monsoon sets in in the land of Kerala first, before spreading to the other States. Such a land is bound to be dear to God also. One can experience the presence of Divinity in the land of Kerala. Siddhashrama was the place where Emperor Bali, Lord Vamana and Jamadagni were born. The name Siddhashrama implies that it was the place of fulfillment and success. That is why Viswamitra decided to perform penance there. Siddhashrama attained eternal glory because of his penance. Not merely that, many saints and sages were born there and performed penance. Not many are aware of this. Viswamitra was initially a king. Later on, he renounced everything and performed penance. He was called a Rajarishi. On seeing Vasishtha who was called a Brahmarishi, Viswamitra

resolved to earn the same appellation. One could become a Brahmarishi only when one gave up hatred completely. As Vasishtha had no trace of hatred in him, he could attain the state of Brahmarishi. Viswamitra also became a Brahmarishi once he got rid of anger and hatred. He was responsible for the holy wedding of Sita and Rama. His desire for bringing together *Prakriti*

(Nature) and *Paramatma* (God) was fulfilled. After the wedding, he left for the forest at once.

Embodiments of Love! Love all. Do not hate anyone. Love even your enemies. If there is any trace of anger or hatred in you, transform them into love. Then you will also become a great *Rishi*.

