

Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

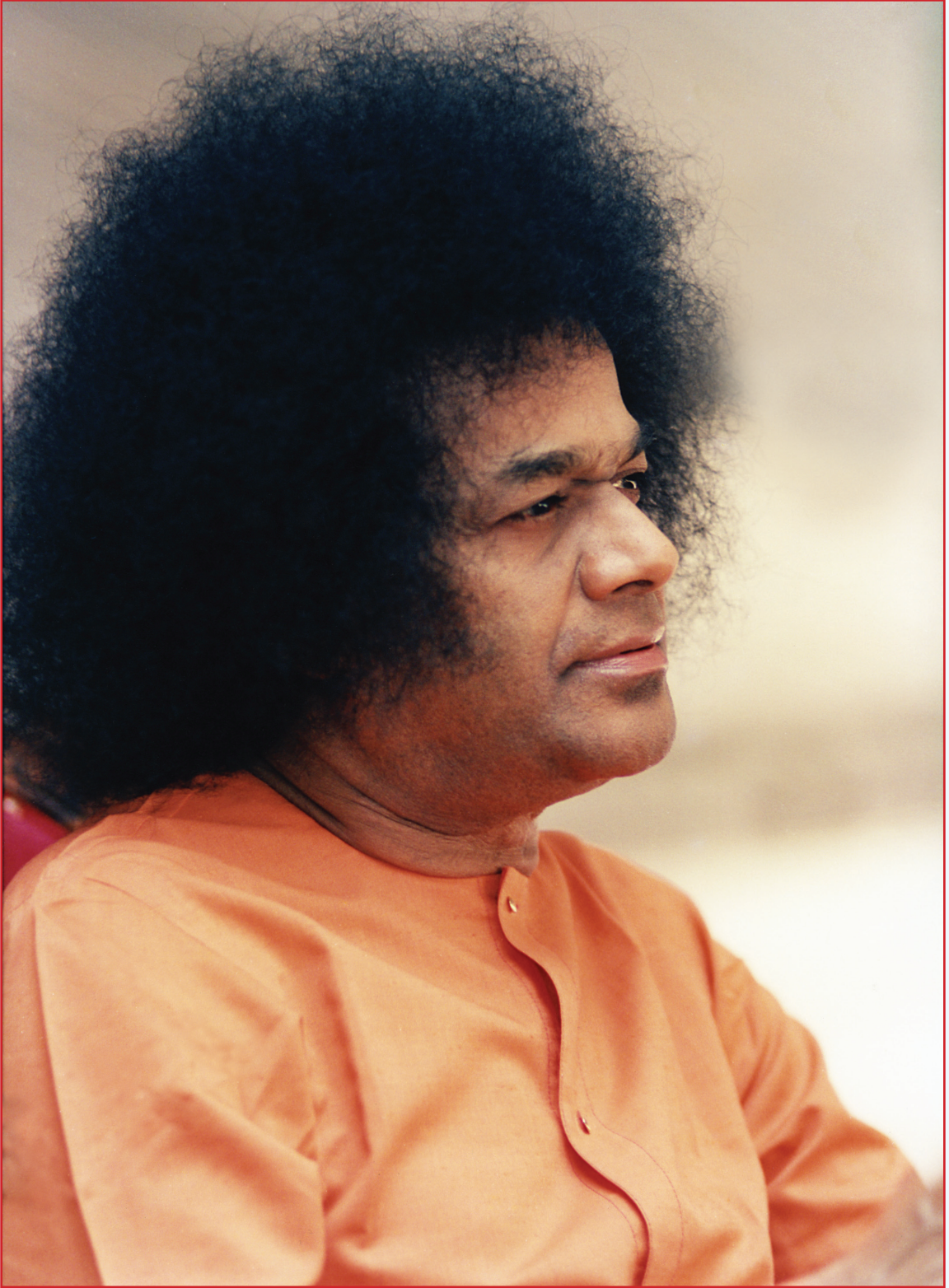
Volume 1



Ceiling on Desires

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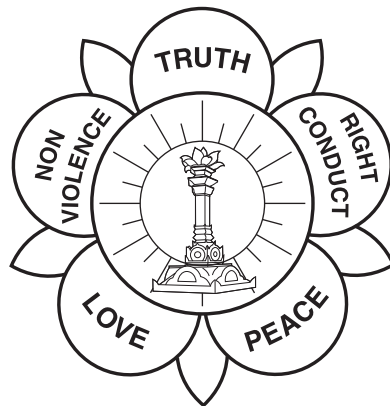
Eight Flowers of Worship



Dedicated with love and reverence to

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



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Reproduced below are thirteen divine discourses delivered by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in which He explains the "Ceiling on Desires Programme."
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Desires Are a Prison

What is the meaning of "Ceiling on Desires"? Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness. That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. We are spending too much money. Instead of inordinate spending for our own pleasure, we should be spending for the relief of the poor and needy. This is the real meaning of "Ceiling on Desires."

Do not make the mistake of thinking that giving money is all that is needed, however. Do not give to others while allowing your own desires to continue to multiply. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life's bare necessities.

How Can You Reduce Desires?

First, food. Eat only what you need to eat. Don't be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food. Food is the main source of man's life, body, mind, and character.

The gross part of the food, which is the major portion of the food consumed by the body, is thrown out as waste matter. A minute amount of the food, which is the subtle part, is assimilated by the body and flows as blood. And a minuscule amount, which is the subtlest part of the food, makes up the mind. Therefore the mind is the reflection of the food consumed. The reason for the present beastly and demonic tendencies in our minds is because of the food we consume.

Instead of kindness, compassion, love, and patience, only bad qualities such as hatred and attachment are being perpetrated. Therefore the quality of the food that we eat should be very pure, very clean, very sanctified, and *satwic*. Man receives real nourishment from such food.

A large part of the water we drink is expelled as urine. A minute part of the water consumed becomes the life force. Therefore the nature of the food and water that we take in decides our character. Only by controlling the quality of our food and water can we attain Divinity. That is why food is said to be God. Hence to waste food is to waste God. Do not waste food. Eat only what you need, and be sure that what you eat is *satwic*. Give any surplus food to those in need.

Second, money. Indians consider money or wealth as the Goddess Lakshmi. Do not misuse money. By doing so you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas, and bad habits. Use your

money wisely for good deeds. Do not waste money, as misuse of money is evil. It will lead you along the wrong path.

Third, time. The most important, the most needed factor is time. One should not waste time. Time should be spent in a useful manner. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time. Even our scriptures say that God is referred to as time and as non-time. God is not limited by time. He is beyond time; He is time; He restricts time. Time is the embodiment of God. Everything depends on time.

The main reason for man's birth and death is time. Time is the main factor in our growth. If we waste time, our lives will be wasted. Therefore time is an essential part of our life. Do not degrade time by spending it participating in unnecessary conversations, or by getting involved in others' personal matters. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way.

Fourth, energy. Our physical, mental, and spiritual energies should never be wasted. You might ask me, "How are we wasting our energies?" If you see bad things, your energy is wasted. Hearing bad things, speaking evil, thinking evil thoughts, and doing evil deeds wastes your energy. Conserve your energy in all these five areas, and make your life more meaningful.

*See no evil—see what is good.
Hear no evil—hear what is good.
Speak no evil—speak what is good.
Think no evil—think what is good.
Do no evil—do what is good.
This is the way to God.*

The path of Divinity is not seeing, listening, speaking, thinking, or doing anything bad. If we are not following this path, we are wasting our energy. On account of this waste of energy, we are losing our memory power, intelligence, power of discrimination, and power of justice.

Today's man is not capable of discriminating between good and bad. Then how can he enter the

path of right action? You might be wondering how this is possible; how are we wasting time? For example, when you turn on the radio to listen to a certain programme, whether you raise or lower the volume of the sound, as long as the radio is on, the current is being used.

Our mind is like the radio. Whether you talk with others or only think within yourself, you are consuming energy. Your mind is working all the time. Since it is always turned on, you are consuming a lot of energy. Instead of wasting that power, energy, or force in mental meandering, isn't it better to spend your time in thinking good thoughts?

The Ceiling on Desires Programme has been proposed so that man does not waste anything in the areas of food, money, time, or energy.

Main Goal of the Sathya Sai Organisation

Today, however, some service-oriented people and workers in the Sri Sathya Sai World Organisation have not fully realised this. Instead they are giving money, thinking that it is service. They are cleverly getting out of serving, while their desires are growing out of bounds. We should gradually try to change these attitudes. The main goal of the Sai Organisation is to enable members, workers, and officers to lead ideal, perfect, and happy lives. Therefore we must live up to the high ideals of the organisation and transform ourselves into ideal beings, thus helping others to follow our example.

Sathya Sai Newsletter (USA), Volume 13, Number 3 (Spring 1989). Divine Discourse on Service and the Sai Organisation, November 21, 1988.

Easiest Way of Achieving Control of the Mind

You should be established in the awareness that the Lord is ever present. You must also be prompted by the feeling that you are performing deeds for the pleasure of the Lord. This is the easiest way of achieving control of the mind.

If you are prompted by feelings that your body belongs to the Lord, you will not sin with your body. On the other hand, all your efforts and endeavours will proceed towards Divinity. If you are saturated with the conviction that your energy belongs to God, you will not misuse it. It is in light of this that we have prescribed the principle of ceiling on desires in the Sri Sathya Sai Centres.

Fourfold Programme

The first ceiling on desires is “Don’t waste food. Food is God.” Your body is made of food, and you are the result of the food eaten by your parents. Food is God. Eat as much as it is necessary to eat. But do not throw away food by taking too much on your plate. By wasting food you will be wasting the energy divine.

The second instruction is “Don’t waste money. God is wealth.” Since God is wealth, misuse of money is evil. Practice charity by gifting away money, food, clothes, houses, etc., instead of misusing money in extravagance. Misuse of money is not only evil but a sin as well. The third instruction is “Don’t waste time. Time waste is life waste.”

God is exalted as time. He is beyond time, transcends time and is the embodiment of time. Spend the time by using sanctifying words. Do not waste time. Wasting time is wasting God.

The fourth instruction is “Don’t waste energy.” People waste their energy by indulging in bad

thoughts, seeing bad things, hearing bad things, and taking bad actions.

The right royal road is the following:

See no evil—see what is good.

Hear no evil—hear what is good.

Speak no evil—speak what is good.

Think no evil—think what is good.

Do no evil—do what is good.

By translating the above instructions into practice, you will be sanctifying your time. This is the spiritual practice and the service that you have to undertake. A time will come when the mind will be extinguished and merger with the divine will be achieved.

Summer Showers in Brindavan 1993;
Chapter 6: The Conquest of the Mind.



Light the Lamp of Love Within

Man is making every attempt today to be happy, blissful. Where do you get bliss? Is it in the material things, in the world, in individuals, in books? No, not at all. Bliss is within one's own Self. You have forgotten your true Self, the source of bliss. You are struggling hard for artificial happiness outside. You are not aware of the reality that lies in the heart. In fact, all the bliss is there. The principle of love originates from the heart, not from the world.

Everyone should develop love more and more. But today there is hatred and anger everywhere. Wherever you look, there is desire, enmity, and fear. How do you expect to be at peace? How do you expect to be blissful? Light the lamp of love within. Then fear and illusion can be removed, and you can have the vision of the Self. Otherwise you are bound to suffer.

You have to exercise a ceiling on your desires. There are rules for a ceiling with regard to land and property. But you have no ceiling on your desires. Ceiling on desires means exercising control over them. You can be happy once the desires are controlled.

Less Luggage, More Comfort, Makes Travel a Pleasure

Your life is a long journey. You should have less luggage (desires) in this long journey of life. Therefore it is said, "Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure." So, ceiling on desires is what you have to adopt today. You have to cut short your desires day by day. You are under the mistaken notion that happiness lies in the fulfillment of desires. But, in fact, happiness begins to dawn when desires are totally eradicated.

When you reduce your desires, you advance towards the state of renunciation. You have many desires. What do you get out of them? You are

bound to face the consequences when you claim something as yours. When you claim a piece of land as yours, then you will have to reap the harvest. This instinct of ego and attachment will put you to suffering. You will be blissful the moment you give up ego and attachment.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 32, Part 1,
Chapter 6: Put a Ceiling on Your Desires.



Nothing Accompanies You When You Leave the World

Wherever you look today, there are only desires, desires, and more desires. Put a ceiling on these desires! Only then will your mind become steady. You say, “I want this, I want that,” etc. Thus you develop many wants. They are like passing clouds. Why should you multiply your wants, these passing clouds? Ultimately, nothing accompanies you at the time of your leaving this mortal body.

Great kings and emperors ruled over this world. They conquered many countries and accumulated boundless wealth. Even Alexander the Great, who conquered several parts of the world, could not take with him even a miniscule part of the wealth he accumulated. He had to leave this world with empty hands.

To demonstrate this truth, 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 towards the sky. The ministers were curious to know the reason for this strange request. He said, “I have conquered many countries and accumulated so much wealth. There is a vast army under my control. Yet none is accompanying me at the time of my leaving this body. I am going with empty hands. This has to be demonstrated to all people.”

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 41,
Chapter 19: Contemplate on God, the Real Hero, for
Victory.



Excessive Desire Causes Imbalance in Nature

Man should put a ceiling on his desires. As man's conduct is perverted, today we find natural calamities taking place. You are aware of the devastation caused by the earthquake in Gujarat. Thousands of people lost their lives. The reason for this is that man is entertaining excessive desires. God maintains perfect balance in His creation. In God's creation, the Earth and the oceans are endowed with balance. But man is indiscriminately exploiting the Earth for extracting oil.

Every day tonnes of fish are caught from the oceans. This indiscriminate exploitation of Nature results in imbalance in Earth, which is playing havoc with human lives. Only when man is free from unsteadiness within, will he not be troubled by earthquake.

Do Not Rob Nature of Its Resources to Satisfy Your Greed

Not only the people of India but also the people of the entire world should strive to maintain balance. The five elements are nothing but manifestations of the divine. Man's life will be secure only when he realises this truth and acts accordingly. A few days ago, I sent lorry loads of rice, grams, etc., to the earthquake victims of Gujarat.

Some people asked, "Swami, why should you take the trouble to spend so much money for sending relief material to Gujarat? You could have instead averted the earthquake." I replied, "My dear, man has to blame himself for the earthquakes. Due to excessive greed for wealth, he is disturbing the balance of the Earth. Hence the earthquake. That is the law of Nature."

You have to express your love for man by helping the needy. Love is your nature. Just as balance is very much essential for Nature, so also love is very much needed for man. Know that whatever

er God has created is for your own welfare. You should enjoy Nature according to your need. You should not rob Nature of its resources to satisfy your greed.

Science Should Be Utilised Only to the Extent Needed

Here is an example. Once a greedy person owned a duck, which used to lay a golden egg every day. One day, he ripped open the stomach of the duck thinking that he would get many golden eggs at a time. Today man also is indulging in such foolish and greedy acts. Instead of being satisfied with what Nature is giving him, he aspires for more and more, and in the process, he is creating imbalance in Nature.

Today scientists are interested in new inventions. The advancement in science and technology has also led to imbalance in Nature. As a result, there are earthquakes and no timely rains. Science should be utilised only to the extent needed. Science has its limitations, and crossing those limits leads to danger.

You have a long way to go. Adhere to truth and righteousness. Our ancient sages said, "Speak truth, speak pleasantly, and do not speak unpleasant truth." Make proper use of natural resources, and do not put them to misuse. Help everybody, and make them happy. Share all the good things you have learnt with others. This is your foremost duty.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 34,
Chapter 3: Vision of the *Atma*.

Desires Are the Root Cause of Man's Disturbance

All the spiritual practices that man performs aims at making his mind steady. There is no use in constantly repeating God's name, meditating, and practising spiritual austerities if the mind is not steady. Once you have the five senses under control, you can experience God. He is not far away from you. He is in you, below you, above you, and all around you. God, in fact, is the indweller of man. Yet man is not able to see Him. What is the reason? Man's limitless and wayward desires prevent him from seeing God.

Desires are the root cause of man's disturbance. Sense control and ceiling on desires will help him to see God all around and experience bliss. So, we have to keep our desires in check. We should not be worried by the evil talk that others indulge in. We should not be affected by calumny and criticism.

Control the Five Senses

Buddha wanted to control the five senses. He decided, first and foremost, to acquire right vision. Man today is not able to control his vision because of the fickleness of his mind. Cinema, video, TV, etc., have polluted the mind of man. He does not see good and hear good. Man is the cause of his own restlessness.

Besides right vision, Buddha emphasised the need for right hearing, right speech, right feeling, and right thinking. Due to lack of these, humanness is fast giving way to devilishness and beastliness. Animal qualities are fast increasing in man. Animals have a season and a reason, but man has none. Man today has become worse than animals. Human qualities like compassion, kindness, love, and forbearance are absent in him. He should be free from evil thoughts, which are the root cause of his worries. This requires constant and sustained practice.

Master the Mind, and Be a Mastermind

Man can control the mind and attain peace by constant and sustained practice. It is only in a peaceful mind that noble thoughts arise. The mind should be under the control of man. *Master the mind, and be a mastermind.* Unfortunately, instead of controlling the mind, man has become the slave of his senses. That is the main cause of his unsteadiness. Moreover, he has body attachment. This is the reason he gets easily disturbed if people find fault with him. Why should he worry about the body when the body is like a water bubble? You should get rid of body attachment.

Summer Showers in Brindavan 2002;
Chapter 11: Sense Control Is the Highest *Sadhana*.



Learn a Lesson from Nature

There are four components in the term “Ceiling on Desires.” They are curb on excessive talk, curb on excessive desires and expenditure, control of consumption of food, and check on waste of energy. Man needs some essential commodities for his sustenance, and he should not aspire for more.

We can learn a lesson in this respect from Nature. Only if air is available in sufficient quantity will it be comfortable and good. If it is excessive and there is a gale, you will feel uncomfortable. When you are thirsty, you can consume only a limited quantity of water. You can't consume the entire water of the River Ganga! We take only as much as is needed for the sustenance of the body.

Doctors know that the body temperature is normally 98.6 degrees. If this goes up to 99 degrees, they say fever has set in due to some disorder in the body. We inhale and exhale at a normal rate. If there is a slight increase or decrease in the rate, it indicates disorder in the body. Changes in the pulse rate or blood pressure also indicate disorder. So you find that if you exceed the limits even to a little extent it is dangerous or harmful to the body.

There is a limit for everything to function in a normal way. When your eyes happen to see a flash of lightning or a flash of light while taking photographs, they automatically close because they can't withstand such high illumination. Eardrums also cannot tolerate hearing beyond a certain volume, and we cover our ears or keep cotton inside the ears. From these we see that our life is a *limited company!*

Our Desires Should Be Limited

Similarly our desires also should be limited. Women are usually desirous of adding to their wardrobe any number of *saris* (long traditional dress worn by Indian women) when they go to a shop or an exhibition. You should have a reason-

able number of *saris*, but not a huge collection for pomp or show. Misuse of money is a great evil. Even men will have to do their own bit in controlling the expenditure on unwanted and unnecessary things.

Money is the embodiment of Divinity. When you talk of wealth, you should be careful to avoid avaricious accumulation and extravagant expenditure. Even in the preparation of food, you should be careful in avoiding wastage. We are only doing a disservice by consuming more food than what is necessary for the body.

Thirdly, you should be careful about “time,” which is the yardstick of life. Seconds become hours, hours become years, years make ages, and so on. You should not waste this most valuable “time.” Time lost in wasteful pursuits can't be got back by any means. All our activities should be planned for utilising the available time to maximum advantage. So, we should not waste food, money, time, and energy.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 16,
Chapter 3: Ceiling on Desires-I.

Aims of the “Ceiling on Desires Programme”

There is a programme connected with “Ceiling on Desires.” You must realise that this programme has not been launched to raise funds. The object of the programme is to prevent waste of money, time, food, or other resources and to use all these for the welfare of the people. The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sathya Sai Organisations. It may be used in the best way you choose for the benefit of others. Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking service activities in a pure and unselfish spirit.

Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, in indulging in unnecessary talk and doing meaningless actions. In all these actions we are sacrificing the body to time. Instead we should try to make time our servant. It means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds. Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions: “How am I utilising time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?”

Likewise, with regard to food you must ask, “Am I just eating what I need, or more? Am I wasting food?” So also with regard to money: “Am I using this money for my own selfish needs or for boosting my name and fame or to satisfy my ego and vanity?” Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater spiritual practice.

These are the aims of the “Ceiling on Desires Programme.” It was never the purpose of this programme to collect money for the Sathya Sai Organisations. The object was to encourage you to share your money with others, to give you an opportunity to utilise your surplus resources for some good and noble purpose that will sanctify your life.

Make Your Lives Sacred and Worthwhile

Three types of strength are given to a person: physical strength, mental strength, and the power of money. It has been said that all these should be offered as *yajna* (sacrifice). This sacrifice is not offered to God. God, who has given you your body and your mind, does not need them for Himself. God is also the source of all wealth. What does He want with your wealth?

Use it for sacred purposes. The service programme is intended only to provide you with opportunities to make your lives sacred and worthwhile. It is to develop the spirit of sacrifice.

This Endeavour Is Not for the Sake of Sai

Was it beyond the power of Rama to discover Sita in Lanka Himself? What need was there for Him to send Hanuman? Rama wanted Hanuman to go on the search so that He could show to the world the devotion and steadfastness and faith of Hanuman. It is a case of grace on the part of Rama.

In the same manner, if Sai wants to do so many things Himself, He can do anything. This endeavour is not for the sake of Sai. It is done through these service organisations so that members of the organisation get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand the basic truth that these avenues of service have been provided so that you will get a good name for yourself and not for the sake of Sai.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 17,
Chapter 16: Ceiling on Desires-II.

Always Be Happy

Whatever trouble you may face, you must learn to feel happy in any circumstance. If you are stung by a scorpion, you must console yourself that you were not bitten by a snake, and when you are bitten by a snake, you must console yourself that it has not proved fatal. Even if you are not able to own a vehicle, be happy that your legs are intact to enable you to walk. Even if you are not a millionaire, be happy that you have enough resources to feed yourself and your family. This is the way to experience joy even in adverse circumstances.

Turn Your Effort to Realise the Reality Within

Ceiling on desires is a must for leading a peaceful and meaningful life. You must curb the desire to seek more and more wealth and turn your effort to realise the Reality within. In pursuing this effort, you must avoid waste of food, money, time, energy, and knowledge as all these are forms of God. Unnecessary talk should be avoided as this results in waste of energy and reduction of memory power.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 27,
Chapter 20: Spiritual Orientation to Education.

Peace Can Be Attained Only by God's Grace

In the modern world, every person tries hard to attain peace. Peace cannot be attained by spiritual precepts, nor can it be obtained from a market as a commodity. It cannot be acquired even by knowledge of the texts, or a high position in life. Peace can be attained only by God's grace.

Though man is eager to attain peace, he confronts many obstacles in the path. Those who travel by train may be well acquainted with the slogan "Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure." Now, man is burdening himself with limitless desires. Because of this extra heavy luggage of desires, he finds it extremely difficult to carry on the journey of life. By such proliferation of desires, he loses his balance, moves far away from his goal, and even tends to go mad.

It is for this reason that I have been stressing the need for ceiling on desires. By limiting your desires, you can attain peace to a certain extent. You have to exercise a check on your desires and make efforts to get the grace of the divine.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 31,
Chapter 19: Faith, Love, and Grace.

Bad Qualities Are the Result of Your Own Thoughts

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 is the result of your own thoughts. Hence if only you are able to control your thoughts properly, you will be able to achieve anything in life.

The mind, intellect, and awareness are the reflections of the *Atma*. The mind has no stability. It is the repository of thoughts and desires. It is said, "The mind alone is the cause of bondage or liberation." Hence one has to keep the mind under proper control by putting some ceiling on desires.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 42,
Chapter 1: Know Thyself! You Will Know Everything.

Do Not Trigger the Negative Aspect of Nature

Man has to consider himself as a limb of society and help in the welfare of society, just as the organs of one's body are used for one's well-being. Again society is a limb of Nature, and Nature is a limb of the Supreme Lord. Thus there is a close relationship between man and God.

Nature is more progressive than man, and to protect Nature, man has to exploit it within limits. When man tampers with Nature recklessly, it reacts adversely and trouble arises. In order to protect Nature, man has to practise ceiling on desires. He should not trigger the negative aspect of Nature.

In this respect, scientists have no concern for the harmful effects that may accrue to society by their inventions. They do not care for the welfare of mankind and go on making use of intelligence to produce their weapons of destruction. Care should be exercised in providing comforts, as excessive comforts may spoil man's mind and cause misery instead of happiness. Nothing good can be achieved without restraints.

Because of the advancement of technology and provision of excessive comforts, life has become mechanical and spirituality has declined. Science fragments everything to pieces, whereas spirituality builds up unity in diversity. Today man is not making efforts to cultivate the feeling of oneness among humanity.

Intimate Relationship of Man, God, and Nature

For example, the ozone layer in the atmosphere protects the people on Earth from the evil effects of solar radiation. Because of the advance of technology, several factories have sprung up, causing emission of harmful gases in the atmosphere. As a result, the ozone layer has become thinner, and if this goes on unchecked, it may have disas-

trous consequences. Scientists are trying to stop the breakup of the ozone layer, but they are unable to find a remedy.

The actual cause for this situation is that more carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere. Normally carbon dioxide is absorbed by plants and trees, which can assimilate the gas and supply oxygen by the natural process of photosynthesis. But, because there is deforestation to an alarming extent, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has considerably increased. Therefore the remedy for this situation is intensive afforestation, growing more trees everywhere and protecting the existing trees without destroying them for other purposes. Thus the relationship of man, Nature, and God is very intimate, which scientists may not be able to realise.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 26,
Chapter 3: The Predicament of Man Today.



Cultivate Four Desirable Practices

The Sai Organisations have been enjoined to carry out a programme of ceiling on desires. Everyone should try to control desires as much as possible. The promotion of human values is another item in the programme. These human values are inherent in every person. All that is needed is for everyone to manifest them in his daily life. Truth, righteousness, and peace are all in you.

You are the embodiment of truth, peace, love, and God. Recognise this fact. Members of Sai Organisations should cultivate certain desirable practices. For instance, they should regulate their diet, because one’s food influences one’s thoughts. Smoking and intoxicating drinks have to be given up. They are ruinous for the health. Meat eating should also be given up because eating animal food promotes animal tendencies. The fourth evil that has to be eliminated is gambling.

Those who take to the spiritual path should avoid as much as possible these four bad practices. It is sinful to slaughter poor animals for one’s food. Sai members should follow the motto “Help ever; hurt never.”

There is no meaning in professing to respect human values without observing the rule that you should cause no harm to others in any form whatsoever. God loves those who serve others because He is in all of them. Whomever you may serve, consider it as service to God. Divinise all your actions. Treat every action you perform as God’s work.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 28,
Chapter 34: Spiritual Significance of Loving Service.



Eight Flowers of Worship

Non-violence

Control of Senses

Compassion for All Living Beings

Forebearance

Peace

Penance

Meditation

Truth

It is the experience and practice of the citizens of India that they generally worship God with flowers, offer ritual adoration, and make obeisance to God. But there is something that is more sacred than this. There is a distinctive type of devotion by which you worship God with a good, clean mind and good conduct. This has been given the name of *para bhakthi* (supreme devotion). By always worshipping God with ritual worship and flowers, the spiritual aspirant will remain stationary in his place. This is good in a way, but to remain in one place all the time and failing to rise to a higher position is not good.

There is a superior type of worship — to worship God through good qualities, good conduct, good thoughts, and good company. The scriptures have described this kind of worship as worship through good qualities. By offering what kind of good qualities can we please God?

Eight Flowers of Worship

The first flower with which we can worship God is non-violence. The second flower is control of senses. The third flower is compassion. The fourth one is forbearance. The fifth flower is peace. The sixth flower is penance. The seventh one is the flower of meditation. The eighth is the flower of truth. The inner meaning of this statement is that God will shower grace on you if you worship him through these eight flowers.

The flowers in nature always fade, drop down, lose fragrance, and also develop an odour that is not pleasant. Instead of worshipping with such worldly flowers, which are impermanent and receiving impermanent rewards from God,

we should worship Him with what is truthful and thereby attain a stage that is higher.

The flowers that you are using for worship have not been created by you. You are bringing flowers that have been created by the Will of God on some tree or in some garden and are offering them back to the Creator Himself. What is the greatness in using the flowers created by God and giving them back to God Himself? Many people bathe in the Ganges River, take the water from the Ganges into their palms, and offer it back to the Ganges itself. This is not what you have created. This is not what you have the right to offer.

From the tree of your life, picking such fruits that you have protected and that you have grown in the form of good qualities and offering them to God, there is some distinctiveness in that. In order to promote good qualities, you have to undergo several troubles. So it is through these good qualities that your mind can also acquire a divine concentration. Without good qualities and without good thoughts, how can you fix your mind in meditation?¹

FIRST FLOWER

The first flower is the flower of non-violence. We regard the word non-violence to mean not causing harm and hurt to other living things. The true meaning of the word is not to cause hurt and harm to any other living being through your thought, word, or deed. Cleansing and purifying these three—thought, word, and deed—has been called a *Thriputi* (summit of three) in spiritual parlance. All of them should be harmonised and brought together as one unit of flower.¹

We find doctors performing surgeries on patients to cure them of their ailments. In the process of surgery, the doctors cut the body with a knife. You cannot call it an act of violence because it is beneficial to the patient. Some people may argue that even cutting vegetables is an act of violence because vegetables and trees have life in them. No doubt, vegetables and trees have life, but they do not have the mind. Consequently, they do not suffer any pain.

Only man has got five sheaths, namely, food sheath, life sheath, mind sheath, wisdom sheath, and bliss sheath. One with the mind experiences pain and pleasure. Men, animals, birds, and insects are endowed with the mind, not trees and vegetables. In some trees, you find the sap oozing out when you pluck their fruit. Oozing of sap from a tree is a natural phenomenon, but some people mistake it for the tears of suffering. The trees do not suffer any pain because they do not have the faculty of mind.²

SECOND FLOWER

The second flower is the control of sensory organs. Our senses run without any control. If running horses or animals are not controlled, they pose a danger. God has created each organ of the human body for a specific purpose. It is only when we use these sensory organs along the right path for which they have been created that we will be entitled to God's grace. God has given us a nose. We should make an attempt to breathe in and breathe out through the nose and only accept fragrance through the nose. If we use such a nose to take snuff, the purpose will become useless. In the same manner, He has given us the mouth and a tongue in order that we may take in pure food. If we use the mouth to take in unholy food or intoxicating drinks, then we will be using the mouth for a wrong purpose.

In the same manner, we should understand under what conditions and in what times and in what manner we should use each of these organs and put them under control. Our inner strength will become less and less on account of excitement or unnecessary sorrow. The body will become ill by mental agitations and distractions. Man ages very quickly through excitement and sorrow. The reason for your not preserving this sacred instrument in sound condition is lack of control over these sensory organs. The second flower of sensory control should be used for worshipping God.¹

Lack of Sense Control Is the Main Cause of Unrest and Agitation

All spiritual practices will prove futile if one lacks sense control. Control of the senses is very essential for one and all. Lack of sense control is the main cause of all the unrest and agitation that you find in the world today. How can one control the senses? First of all, one should exercise control over the tongue.

You must control your tongue as it always craves a variety of delicacies. You must ask this question, “O tongue, how many bags of rice, wheat, and vegetables have you devoured! How many delicacies have you consumed! Fie on you if you are still not satisfied.” A morsel of food is enough to sustain the body. You should eat for the sake of satisfying your hunger and sustaining the body. Do not give undue importance to taste. Likewise, tell your eyes to see God instead of watching unsacred things on television or video. Teach your ears to listen to the stories of the Lord instead of listening to vain gossip.

O ears, you are interested in listening to vain gossip and tales about others, but you pay least attention when the wonderful stories of the Lord are narrated.

(Telugu Song)

Think for a while how you benefit by listening to unsacred things. In fact, you are polluting your heart in the process. All that you see and hear gets imprinted on your heart. Once your heart is polluted, your life will become meaningless. The human heart is like a pen. The colour of the words that you write will be the same as the colour of the ink in the pen. Likewise, when you fill your heart with love, all that you think, say, and do will be suffused with love. God expects you to fill your heart with love and lead a sacred life.²

THIRD FLOWER

The third flower is compassion for all living things. Looking merely and superficially at human nature, which has diverse aspects, we are forgetting God in this field. From the seed of Divinity the tree of creation has grown. On this tree of creation the fruits are the human beings that are the individual souls. In each of these human fruits, there

is Divinity in the form of seed. That is why in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna has said, “I am the seed in all the living beings.” Recognising the truth that God is present in the form of the *Atma* in all living beings, we say compassion for all living beings is the next flower.¹

The Story of About Ben Adhem

Students might have heard the story of About Ben Adhem who always offered compassion towards all beings as a form of service to the Lord. Every day he traveled the streets to serve the destitute and the handicapped and returned home late in the night. One night when he returned home, he found in his bedroom an angel writing something. When he asked her what she was writing, she replied that she was making a list of those who loved God. She replied in the negative when he asked her if his name was on that list.

The following night when he returned home, he again found the angel writing something. He queried, “Mother, what is it that you are writing now?” She said, “Son, I am writing the names of those who are dear to God.” He again wanted to know if his name was on the list. She replied that his name was at the top of this list.

The sum and substance of this story is that God is pleased when you serve your fellow human beings. The scriptures have prescribed nine paths of devotion, namely, listening to the Lord’s stories, singing His glories, remembrance of the Lord’s name, service to the Lord’s Lotus Feet, worship, salutation, servitude, friendship, and offering oneself to the Lord, i.e., complete self-surrender. But the path of service is the greatest of all.

Neither by penance nor by pilgrimages, nor by going through the sacred texts, can one cross the ocean of worldly life;

One can redeem one’s life only through service.

(Sanskrit Verse)

About Ben Adhem became the recipient of God’s love because he spent all his time in the service of his fellow men. God loves all, for He is the embodiment of love. But He will give Himself to those who show compassion for all beings.²

Have Compassion towards All as God Resides in All

Among all the flowers, compassion for all creatures is most important. Man alone is endowed with this virtue of compassion. This is the flower that you should offer to God. God is the indweller of all beings. Names and forms may vary, but the same God is present in all. Therefore you should have compassion towards all beings with the broad feeling that God is present in all. Only then can you understand how expansive and fragrant this quality of compassion for all creatures is.

You need not waste your time gathering the flowers that fade away and wither away in no time. The flower of your heart is eternal, ever fresh, and ever fragrant, for which you need not spend even a penny. That is the real flower. One who understands the secret of this flower is one of supreme wisdom.³

FOURTH FLOWER

The fourth one is the flower of forbearance. Forbearance truly is the highest quality of a human being. But in human life, because he develops narrow ideas, man wants to live in a constricted place. He thinks “I” and “my family” are what matters; others are all different from “me.” It is not possible for us to develop the flower of forbearance as long as these ideas are in us. It is only when we love that we can have patience and forbearance. One’s love should encompass all living beings. That will fructify as forbearance.

Here is a brief example. In our home there are our children. Along with our children, there is also a servant. In the house, a son may be pilfering something or other and developing bad habits. In many ways we will try and control that son by beating, scolding, and persuading him to return to good ways, but we will never take him and hand him over to the police. In the same house, if the servant steals a small spoon, at once we will take him and hand him over to the police.

What is the inner meaning of the situation in which we do not punish a son, even if he steals day after day, but we hand over a servant immediately to the police when he steals even a small thing?

The reason for this is the narrow idea that “this boy is my son.” Because the servant does not belong to you, there is no place for forbearance and patience. So you see that when you have the broad idea that “everyone is mine” there is room for patience and forbearance. It is only then that our love will also grow.¹

Forbearance Promotes Divine Qualities

Forbearance is identified by the scriptures with truth, righteousness, knowledge, sacrifice, and joy. Without forbearance, man cannot be happy for even a moment. It promotes divine qualities. It reveals inner Divinity. One has to undertake spiritual practices to earn it and establish oneself in it. Nourish the idea that God is equally present in all, in spite of ridicule from the ignorant and sarcastic criticism from the blind or even praise from admirers. Do not mind them.⁴

Forbearance Is Very Dear to the Lord

The Pandavas suffered a lot at the hands of the Kauravas. But never did Dharmaraja lose forbearance, even when Droupadi was being humiliated by the Kauravas. It was the virtue of forbearance that protected the Pandavas and made them an ideal for the rest of the world. This flower of forbearance is very dear to the Lord. God will be pleased with you and confer boons on you only when you offer Him the “flowers” which are dear to Him. No benefit accrues from offering the flowers that fade away and decay. The ever-blooming flowers of non-violence, sense control, compassion for all living beings, and forbearance are liked by God.²

FIFTH FLOWER

The fifth is the flower of peace. This flower of peace should not be interpreted to mean that you should be silent no matter who is attacking you, or who is blaming you. It is not that. If you are unmoved and unperturbed in spite of anyone finding faults with you, this can be called real peace. If you can fill your heart with love, then peace will come into you from outside. Through bad qualities, to some extent, we lose peace. With truthful thoughts, a man will have peace. With untruthful

thoughts, a man will not have peace. If you can get rid of all thoughts, you will become a saint. It is only when you can be free from all thoughts that you can have peace.

Your own bad thoughts are responsible for all your pain and sorrow. By good thoughts and by good ideas, you will become a holy man. Holy man does not mean one who merely wears an orange robe, shaves the head, and wears holy beads. He who has good thoughts and good ideas is a holy man. A holy man is one who is the embodiment of truthful thoughts.¹

Peace Has Detachment as the Basic Quality

Peace does not mean that a person should not react at all, whatever others may say or however they may abuse him. It does not mean that he must be silent as a rock. It involves mastery of all the senses and all the passions; inner peace must become one's nature. Peace has detachment as the basic quality. The sea, which likes to gather and possess, lies low; the cloud that likes to renounce and give up is high in the sky. Peace endows man with an unruffled mind and steady vision.

The prayer for *shanthi* (peace) is usually repeated thrice. "Om, *shanthi, shanthi, shanthihi,*" since peace is prayed for in the physical, mental, and spiritual planes. Man should not bring his blood to boil, nor should he yield to fear. Spiritual calm is exemplified by Emperor Janaka of the Upanishadic texts. He was known as *vidbeha* (without body attachment), not because he was disembodied, but because he lived in utter forgetfulness of the body and its needs. He saw, heard, and spoke only from the *Atmic* plane of consciousness.⁴

Bear All Sufferings With Fortitude and Patience

One should remain peaceful through all the vicissitudes of life. Only then can one attain divine grace. Great devotees like Thyagaraja, Tukaram, and Droupadi underwent many hardships. They bore all sufferings with patience. Thyagaraja said, "One cannot attain happiness without inner peace." Man needs peace at the physical, mental,

and spiritual levels. Peace is not present in the external world. It is present within.

You are the embodiment of peace. In the worldly life, there are bound to be many hardships, but one should not be perturbed. One should bear all sufferings with fortitude and patience. Human life is given not merely to enjoy the worldly pleasures like birds and beasts. Life becomes meaningful only when one experiences the peace that originates from the heart.²

SIXTH FLOWER

The sixth one is the flower of penance. Penance is not to give up your wife and children, go to a forest, put your head down and feet up; that is not penance. When we think of real penance we should eliminate bad thoughts from our minds. The co-ordination of thought, word, and deed is penance. Whatever thoughts sprout in your mind, to utter them as word and to put them in practice as your work, that is penance. It is in this context that it is said, "A great soul practises harmony of thought, word, and deed." Giving up bad thoughts in your mind will become a sacrifice. That sacrifice will become *yoga* (spiritual practice leading to union with God). But giving up one's property and one's wife and going to the forest is not *yoga*.¹

Be Even-Minded in Happiness or Sorrow

One should contemplate on God at all times and achieve harmony of thought, word, and deed. He is a noble one whose thoughts, words, and deeds are in complete harmony. Do not be carried away by pain or pleasure. The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches, "One should be even-minded in happiness or sorrow, gain or loss, victory or defeat." One should discharge one's duty and serve society without any expectation of reward. Such even-mindedness and desireless state is true penance.²

SEVENTH FLOWER

The seventh flower is the flower of meditation. Today, meditation is taking many forms. Many types of meditation that people are adopting today are against the culture and tradition of India. To sit in a lotus posture and to make the *kundalini shakti* (*kundalini* power) rise from basal plexus to the cra-

nium is not meditation. True meditation consists in recognising the presence of God in all types of work. God is the indweller of all and is all pervading. To make an attempt in your meditation to confine Him (God) to one place that you choose, cannot be meditation.

When you are driving a car, the car is your God. When you are doing business in a market, the market is your God. According to the culture of India, we first make obeisance to the work that we have to do. Before we undertake to do any work, we should regard that work as God. The *Upanishads* are teaching us: “The work I have to do, I regard as God and make obeisance to God in that form.”

Let us consider the person who plays the drums. Before he begins to play on them, he pays obeisance to the drums. The harmonium player will make obeisance to the harmonium before he starts. A dancer before she begins her dance will make obeisance to her anklets. Even a driver who is going to drive a lifeless car, before he holds the steering wheel, makes salutations to the steering wheel. You do not have to go so far. While driving, if the car hits another person, immediately we make salutations to that person. The significance of all this is the faith and belief that God is present in all things. Thus to regard the entire creation as the form of God and to perform your duty in that spirit is meditation.¹

Contemplate On God at All Times

Meditation does not mean sitting in lotus posture with eyes closed in contemplation on God. This is physical, worldly activity. No doubt, this is also needed, but true meditation lies in unifying the mind with God. Just as milk and water cannot be separated, likewise, the mind, once merged with God, cannot be separated. An iron ball cast in fire will become one with it. Likewise, your love should become one with divine love. This truth is contained in the Vedic dictum, “The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Himself.”

Some people contemplate on God for a limited period in the morning and evening. This can-

not be called meditation. Contemplate on God at all times, at all places, and under all circumstances. Perform all tasks with your mind firmly fixed on God. That is true meditation. Thinking of God for a limited period cannot be termed meditation. That is only part-time devotion. Part-time devotion confers only part-time grace. You should have full-time devotion in order to attain full-time grace.²

EIGHTH FLOWER

The next flower is the flower of truth. If you simply speak what you feel and tell what you have done, this can be called worldly truth — statement of facts. This cannot be called truth. Truth is that which does not change at any time. What you have seen is truth at that moment. At the next moment, it becomes untruth. All material things that you see in this creation are things that will decay, that are bound to change. In this transient changing world, how can what you see and what you hear become truth? Truth is God. This truth is the eighth flower. This truth is the form of Divinity. In the world, we experience truths of a relative nature.

Let us take chemistry as an example. You take some chemicals and mix them together. They change, and you get some other chemical. If you mix turmeric in lime, you get red colour. This is chemistry. Another example is physics. If you take a 3-inch needle and put it in fire, it will become a longer needle. This is the truth of physics. How long do these truths of chemistry and physics remain? These are temporary, worldly, scientific truths. But spiritual truths are such that they will remain unchanged whatever you may do to them, whatever fire you may use on them and howsoever you may change the circumstances.

So, what does not change at all is truth. Cruelty and harshness are predominant in the world today because we are not attempting to promote such sacred qualities. Today, among believers, non-believers and the believing, the same kind of attitude is developing. That day when we can promote such good qualities in the minds of believers, the non-believers will disappear from this world.¹

Truth is changeless in all the three periods of time, i.e., past, present, and future. Everything may disappear, but truth remains forever. So, truth is God; live in truth.²

Win God's Grace by Worshipping Eight Flowers

Worship the Lord, and offer Him these flowers. Now, when other flowers are used, devotion does not last after one comes out of the worship room! When one crosses that door-step, anger, hatred, and anxiety possess him and degrade him. Without developing the qualities indicated by the eight flowers, how can anyone win the grace of God? Engaged in wrong worship on all 364 days, what good do you derive by doing true worship on the 365th day of the year. When you claim to be Sai devotees, justify the claim by cultivating these flowers of virtue and offering them to God.⁴

Serve Society to Your Utmost Capacity

God will be pleased only when you worship Him with these eight types of flowers. The priests in temples worship God with various types of flowers. But God does not want these flowers. He says, "O priest, is this what you have learnt all these years? You are worshipping Me with lorry loads of roses and jasmynes, which fade away in a short time. These are not the flowers that I expect from you. Worship Me with the flowers of peace, love, non-violence, etc., which will never fade."

Embodiments of Love!

People worship God with devotion and sincerity, but God is not satisfied with external worship. You should serve society. Only service can confer bliss on you. By rendering service to society, not only can you alleviate the sufferings of the people, but you can also bring about transformation in their lives. As is the feeling, so is the result. If you serve with sacred feelings, it is bound to yield sacred results. Serve society to your utmost capacity. You are singing devotional songs in the morning and evening. The satisfaction that you get by participating in singing devotional songs is temporary, whereas service confers permanent satisfaction.

The *Vedas* say, the objective of actions is to purify the mind. Service alone is undertaken to purify the mind. Today people waste a lot of time, wealth, and energy in performing activities that do not foster purity of the mind. That is why they are unable to experience peace of mind. The peace that one gets out of worldly activities comes and goes like a passing cloud. One should aspire for the true and eternal peace, which originates from the heart.²

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Glossary

Atma/Atmic

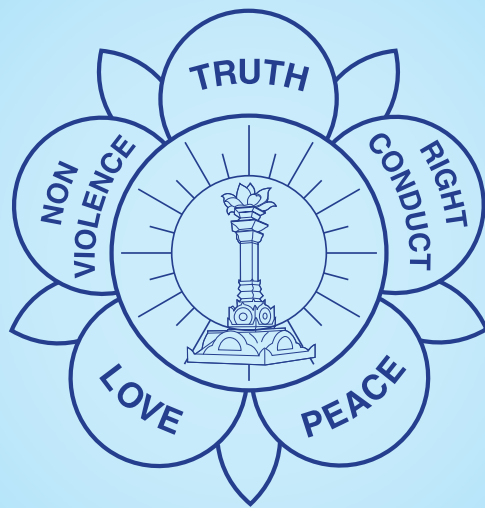
Self; Soul. Embodied Self is *jiva* (the individual soul). Self, with no limitations, is *Brahman* (the Supreme Cosmic Reality).

Satwa/Satwic

It is the quality of purity, brightness, peace, goodness, and harmony. It leads to knowledge.







LOVE ALL, SERVE ALL