



SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Maha Shivaratri

STUDY GUIDE



Offered with love and gratitude at the lotus feet of

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri 2023

INTRODUCTION

This study guide is divided into two parts:

Part 1 (Sections 1-8) are excerpts from the 1987 *Maha Shivaratri* discourse of our beloved Bhagawan.

Part 2 (Sections 9-19), extracted from other discourses, relates to spiritual practices to help develop pure thoughts and gain closeness and dearness to our Lord.

Questions to contemplate are included at the end of each section.

May Swami bless us in our spiritual endeavor on this holy day of *Maha Shivaratri*.

With Love,

Sri Sathya Sai Scriptural Studies Committee

CONTENTS

PART 1

1. TRANSFORM EVERY MOMENT INTO A SACRED CELEBRATION.....	4
2. THE WELL-GUARDED TREASURE.....	5
3. TWO ENTITIES: THE 'SEEN' AND THE 'SEE-ER'	6
4. THE THREE LEVELS OF SPACE IN MAN	7
5. THE ROLE OF INTUITION	8
6. TWO BASIC SADHANAS THAT ARE IMPORTANT	9
7. THREE EVILS AND THREE REMEDIES	10
8. THE NIGHT OF GOODNESS AND GODLINESS	11

PART 2

9. GET CLOSER TO THE DIVINITY WITHIN	12
10. THE INNER MEANING OF NIGHT-LONG DEVOTIONAL SINGING	13
11. VISUALIZE GOD AS THE ESSENCE OF ALL.....	14
12. THINK OF NATURE AS A FEATURE OF DIVINITY	14
13. THINK OF GOD AS YOUR REALITY	15
14. GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY TRANSFORMING ATTITUDE	16
15. GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY BEING NOT LIMITED OR BOUND.....	16
16. GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY HAVING LIBERATING THOUGHTS	17
17. GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY POSITIVE ASSERTION	18
18. GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY SHAPING OUR THOUGHTS.....	19
19. PATH OF SYMBOLIZED DIVINITY (ANYA-VATHI).....	20

TRANSFORM EVERY MOMENT INTO A SACRED CELEBRATION

Shivaratri is prescribed for the fourteenth night of the dark half of the month, the night previous to the New Moon when the Moon suffers from total blackout. The Moon and the mind, which it rules over, are drastically reduced every month on the fourteenth night. When that night is devoted to vigilant adoration of God, the remnant of the wayward mind is overcome, and victory is ensured. This month's *Shivaratri* is holier than the rest, and so it is called *Maha Shivaratri*.

With firm faith and a cleansed heart, the night should be spent glorifying God. No moment should be wasted on other thoughts. Time flees fast. Like a block of ice, it melts soon and flows away. Like water held in a leaky pot, it disappears drop by drop. The time allotted for one's life ticks off quite soon, and the span ends sometime somehow. So, be vigilant. Be warned. Be alert and aware. Seek the shelter of the Lord and transform every moment into a sacred celebration.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

1. How can we transform our thoughts and perspectives to appreciate the value of time given to us to redeem our souls?
2. Relate the significance of the night vigil and fasting and how these practices can transform our minds.

THE WELL-GUARDED TREASURE

The body of man is a receptacle designed to keep safe a precious treasure. Legends announce that cobras guard hidden treasures. The name of the cobra that prevents access to the priceless treasure hidden in man is egotism (*Aham*), the fascination for oneself and for one's belongings. In order to reach and recover the *Ananda* treasure, man has to first destroy the snake of egotism (*Aham*).

The river is a part, a portion of the sea; it earns fulfillment when it returns to the sea and merges with its source. Fishes are of water. They live in water and die when deprived of water. The baby is a part of the mother. It cannot survive apart from the mother. The branch is a part of the tree. Cut it off the tree; it gets dry and dies. Man is a part (*Amsa*) of God. He, too, cannot survive without God. He lives because of the urge to know God, his source. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (chapter 15, sloka 7), the Lord declares that "all living beings are My part (*Amsa*). I am in them as the Eternal *Atma*," He indicates.

Man lives for a high purpose, not for submitting as the beast does to every demand of instinct and impulse. He has to install himself as the master, not crawl as a slave. He has the right to proclaim, "I am Shiva (*Shivoham*)," "I am the undiminishable fullness (*Achyutha*)," and "I am divine bliss (*Ananda*)." As soon as one becomes aware of his reality, the chains that bind him, iron and gold, fall off, and he attains liberation (*Moksha*).

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saisspeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

1. If this was the case, why is it so difficult to proclaim, "I am Shiva."
2. The snake of egotism (*Aham*) prevents access to the ANANDA TREASURE. What implication might this have for my spiritual journey?

TWO ENTITIES: THE 'SEEN' AND THE 'SEE-ER'

Divine bliss (*Ananda*) is all around us and within us. It is *Ananda* that sustains and supports us, but this truth is hidden by petty selfishness, which prods us across the sea of storms in order to gather on the outer shore, the things which apparently give *Ananda* inherent in them. Man envelops them with a layer of the *Ananda* within him but, while imbibing it, imagines that the thing itself can confer *Ananda* on him! Really speaking, it is his own *Ananda* that he is receiving back.

After a term of deep sleep, a man declares that he has unbroken *Ananda*. The mind and the senses, even the faculty of reason, had no contact then with any object, nor did they have any impact from objects. So, the *Ananda* was derived, during sleep, from within his own reality.

There are only two entities' the *Drnya* (the seen), and the *Drk* (the See-er). *Drk* is *Atma*, *Drnya* is the creation. The *Drk* is conscious; *Drnya* is inert. So long as man is immersed in the inert and the See-er, the witness, or the *Atma* is neglected or negated, he cannot escape from distress and despair.

The bait on the hook, hanging at the end of the rod, draws the attention of the fish and tantalizes it, but the fish gets hooked and has to give up its life. The man who yields to the desire for sensual pleasures has to suffer the same fate. The *Rishis* knew that the 'seen' could not last or provide lasting joy. They renounced the lower cravings and the transitory comforts. *Thyaga* (renunciation) was, for them, the genuine Yoga (path to merge with the Divine).

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saisspeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

1. The challenge is to discriminate what can be considered lower cravings and transitory comforts. How do we decide this?
2. It is *Ananda* that sustains and supports us, but this truth is hidden by petty selfishness. So how do your moments of selfishness hide your inherent *Ananda*?

THE THREE LEVELS OF SPACE IN MAN

There are three levels of *Akasa* (space) in man, of which two are *Drasya*, and the *Drk* is the third. The first comprises the earth, the solar system, and billions of heavenly phenomena, reaching out to stars whose light, though emanated, has not yet reached this globe. This physical space is named *Bhootha Akasa*.

The second level subsumes the first and retains it in a miniature form. It comprises the area cognized and imagined by the mind and is therefore named *Chittha Akasa* (mental space). Even this area is a dot when compared to the *Akasa* (space) enfolded by the *Atma*, named *Chidakasa* (space of awareness or consciousness).

The two other spaces are but tiny fragments to the See-er, the *Atma*, the *Brahman*. The human being has this journey towards the *Ananda* that *Chidakasa* can offer as the precious prerogative. The journey does not lead outward; it has to be inward toward one's own reality.

The musk deer runs around frantically in its search for the source of the fragrance that fascinates it. When at last, it is too exhausted to continue, it discovers that the source has been within itself all along! So, too, man expects *Ananda* in a career, in a job, business, or farming and believes that the satisfaction he derives from these is worthwhile.

But he can soon arrive at lasting *Ananda* if his career is converted into *Sadhana*, his business is transformed into calm serenity, and his interest in farming is sublimated as cultivating devotion in the well-ploughed weedless mental field. Even intelligent persons are tempted by the pleasure that external effort can yield, rather than the divine bliss that inner search can confer.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

The vigil and fasting during *Shivaratri* are supposed to create connectivity to the inner space, as described in this passage. How can we continue to ensure that the external pull of sense objects does not distract us from the inner experience of *Ananda*?

THE ROLE OF INTUITION

The sages who declare the uniqueness of this bliss yearned to discover their reality and to identify that reality with the reality that projects, protects, and absorbs the cosmos; that is to say, to submerge their truth in the truth of truths. This can happen only by *Prajnana* (total awareness), not by logic or reason. The Vedic declaration "*Prajnanam Brahma*" (God is constant integrated awareness) supports this conclusion.

Once man glimpses this truth, he can experience God in everything and everyone. "*Sarvathah Pani Padham Sarvathokshi Shiro Mukham*" (Everywhere His Hands and Feet, His Eyes, Head and Face) is what the *Gita* states about Him.

Investigators do not visualize God in all that they study; they see the apparent, not the genuine. So they are misled into the realm of multiplicity instead of being led into the all-comprehensive region of light.

Peace cannot prevail in the individual and society until he develops faith in the unity of mankind, in spite of the apparent differences. One has to renounce all thoughts of difference and derive delight from the vision of the one in the tiniest and the most tremendous of God's glory. This is the real *Vairagya* (detachment).

People complain of grief, sorrow, and distress. What exactly is grief? It is a reaction to the loss of something gained or the failure to gain something desired. Therefore, the only way to escape grief, sorrow, etc., is to conquer the desire for the illusory. See the world as God (*Brahmamayam*). That vision will scotch desire. When the desire is limited to God and concentrated on God, success is assured, and each step contributes to its *Ananda*.

The Gopis of Brindavan knew this and longed for the Lord to the exclusion of all else. Pure, undiluted love expressed itself as selfless action. They were simple rural folk with no knowledge of scriptural texts or of spiritual exercises. Unflinching faith in Krishna endowed them with all the inspiration and instruction they needed. Krishna told Arjuna, "Possessing faith, one acquires spiritual wisdom (*Sradhhavan Labhathe Jnanam*)."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

Peace cannot prevail in the individual and society until one develops faith in the unity of humanity, despite the apparent differences. What are some small and large steps each of us can take to achieve this ideal?

TWO BASIC SADHANAS THAT ARE IMPORTANT

During this *Kaliyuga* (age of the all-around moral decline), two *Sadhanas* (spiritual disciplines) are important - *Namam* and *Danam*. *Namam* means the name of the Lord. It must activate every thought, word, and deed and render them full of love. It can certainly lead man to the vision of the bearer of the name. The Name, the sound, is the material that can reveal the non-material, the *Jada*, which is the door to the awareness, the *Chaitanya* enshrined in it. This is the purpose of the *Sadhana* - to recognize both the *Kshetra* (field) and the *Kshethrajna* (the master and manipulator of the field) as the Lord.

Danam, the second *Sadhana*, means gifting, caring, and sharing. The gift of food to the hungry gives immediate contentment and relieves the pangs of hunger. *Annam Brahma* (Food is God), says the *Upanishad*. Gifts are to be given without inflating the ego of the giver or deflating that of the receiver. They should be offered with understanding, humility, and love.

Love is quality, essential for propitiating divinity. People may argue that rituals performed meticulously are effective for the same purpose. But the scriptures themselves announce that ritual worship and rites can, at best, contribute only to the purification of one's mind and heart (*Chittasya shuddhaye karmah*). . Or, as the promise reads, the rites might raise the person to heaven. But, one can be there only as long as his deposit of merit lasts. He has to return to earth as soon as the merit is exhausted by use (*Ksheene Punyam, Marthya Lokam Visanthi*).

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saisspeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

1. *Namam* and *Danam* are the two important spiritual practices prescribed. How intense is our *sadhana* towards these two practices?
2. Recall your experiences while carrying out these two practices and highlight any transformational effects they had in your life?

THREE EVILS AND THREE REMEDIES

Love is the most direct means of attaining God. One has to love all without distinction, for the Lord resides in everyone, and He is the very embodiment of love.

There are three obstacles that stand in the way of the full free flow of love from man to God. They are man's inveterate foes - desire, anger, and greed. Fortunately, ancients in India have devised three holy texts that, when assimilated, can equip man to confront and conquer these wily enemies. They are the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagavatha*.

Ravana is a warning to everyone who fosters desire and allows it to vulgarise itself into lust. A spark of lust, if not scotched, is sure to become a calamitous conflagration. Ravana's evil deed destroyed the entire clan and reduced his capital into a heap of ash.

The *Bhagavatha* holds forth many lessons to instruct man against the evil consequences of anger, and its root, hatred. The brothers Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were angry at God Himself. Hiranyakasipu had, by rigorous austerity and practice, established his mastery, as modern scientists have done, over the elements. He could transport himself through the hydro spheres as a fish, through the atmosphere as a bird, but he denied God, who has projected the elements and who exists inside everything and outside too. Of what benefit are powers and skills in the face of insolence and ingratitude? Hiranyakasipu believed that he had eliminated God. He exploded in anger when his young son dared to praise God. Anger resulted in blind fury and heaped untold misery on his head.

The *Mahabharatha* epic depicts the disaster that greed can bring about. Duryodhana was so greedy that he was not willing to allow even those who had the legal right to own the possessions that he had grasped. He who keeps as his own, what is not strictly his, deserves to be called a thief. He was so greedy that he refused to yield even a pin-point size of land to his five Pandava cousins, though they had a rightful claim for a vast and flourishing area. Naturally, his greed destroyed him and his clan and subjects. The three texts mentioned can be used to cure the three mental illnesses which impede the growth of love.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

Everyone has these three enemies lust, anger, and greed. Suggest practical ways to learn to love unconditionally, whether or not we face these three negative qualities in ourselves.

THE NIGHT OF GOODNESS AND GODLINESS

Today is *Shivaratri*, the *Ratri* (night) of *Shivam* (goodness, godliness, good fortune). It is an auspicious night because the mind can be made to lose its hold on man by devoting the night to prayer. The Moon is the presiding deity of the mind, according to the scriptures. The mind is kindred to the Moon as the Eyes are to the Sun.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, February 26, 1987
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/shivoham>



Questions to reflect

1. Narrate experiences where one's vigilance and fasting on *Shivaratri* conferred spiritual experiences.
2. What new resolutions will you formulate tonight to increase your spiritual aspirations and experience?

GET CLOSER TO THE DIVINITY WITHIN

You must realize that bhajan, *Naamasmaran*, and *Puja* are **not for pleasing or propitiating God but for our own spiritual progress**. Frequently people flatter the rich and the powerful - especially when they are in their employment or are beholden to them for some precious help - in order to induce them to shower gifts.

But God does not shower grace on people because they sing His praises. Nor does He come down upon them because they do not praise Him. **Recitation of the divine attributes only enables us to dwell on elevating ideals and approximate ourselves, more and more, to the divinity that is our nature.**

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, March 7, 1978
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/god-source-good>



Questions to reflect

1. What are some elevating ideals that we can dedicate our lives to?
2. How does this prepare us to get closer to divinity?

THE INNER MEANING OF NIGHT-LONG DEVOTIONAL SINGING

The mind is intimately associated with the Moon. Moon (*Chandra*) is the presiding deity of the mind. Moon loses one-sixteenth of its brilliance every day after the full moon day and continues waning until, on this night, it is left with just one-sixteenth of its power.

The waned Moon may be taken to stand for the mind, with all its vagaries and waywardness reduced after it has been conquered by spiritual discipline.

On this night, there is just a minute part of the mind left to be conquered, and that can be done by keeping vigil and dwelling on the glory of God.

The vigil prescribed is symbolic of the eternal vigil one has to observe, while the rite of fasting is symbolic of divesting the senses of the pleasures they crave for.

The night-long singing of devotional songs signifies the lifelong consciousness of the divine presence that everyone should cultivate.

Immerse your mind in good thoughts, and the world will be good. Soak it in bad thoughts, and the world will be bad for you. So, recollect only good. Think, plan, and do only good. Speak and act only good. Then, as a result, you will approximate God, the source of all good.

This is the message of *Shivaratri*.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, March 7, 1978
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/god-source-good>



Questions to reflect

Dive deep into the meaning of the significance of this night and contemplate why this vigilance and fasting have been prescribed for this auspicious night.

VISUALIZE GOD AS THE ESSENCE OF ALL

The scripture defines the divine thus: The *Atma* is immanent everywhere, just as butter interpenetrates every drop of milk. When the seeker pursues the truth with this conviction urging his endeavour, the spiritual practice is called *Sathya-vathi* (based on truth).

The Lord declares, "In My latent form, I am in the entire creation, operating the mystery. See in Me all this; see all this as Me." When one succeeds in this effort, the path based on truth will lead to success. The Lord assures, "I shall be visible to you as all this and in all this." The Lord promises this vision of immanence and transcendence to whoever persists with sincerity on this path based on truth.

Sathya Sai Vahini

<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>

Questions to reflect

1. While reflecting on the above example of "butter in every drop of milk," what struggles do you have for bringing out the divinity latent in you? Why is divinity in us not clearly and obviously manifested?
2. If divinity is present within us in its hidden form, what is the easiest way you have found to express it openly?

THINK OF NATURE AS A FEATURE OF DIVINITY

The universal being is the fire, the wind, the Sun, the Moon, and all else. He is the breath that sustains life in all beings. He is the fire that illuminates all. He is the rain that feeds the plants that provide sustenance. So He can be adored either as fire (*Agni*), wind (*Vayu*), or rain (*Varuna*), as having graciously assumed all these beneficent forms. This approach through benign features of divinity (*Angas*) is the path based on a feature (*Anga-vathi*). *Anga* means "limb," "fact," or "feature."

Sathya Sai Vahini

<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

In the above statement, Swami suggests that we should be aware of the divine aspect of nature. What is the consequence of day-to-day living if we are unaware of this divine aspect of life?

THINK OF GOD AS YOUR REALITY

Resolve on this holy *Shivaratri* to visualize the Shiva, who is the inner power of all. With each breath, you are averring, 'Soham,' (I am He). Not only you, but every being also avers it. It is a fact that you have ignored it for so long. Believe it now

When you watch your breath and meditate on that grand truth, slowly, the 'I' and the 'He' will merge, and *Soham* will become transformed into *Om*, the primal sound that the *Vedas* proclaim as the symbol of the formless supreme reality (*Nirakara Parabrahman*). That *Om* is the *Swaswaruupa* (own natural state) - the reality behind all this 'relative un-reality.'

This is the genuine *Sadhana*, the final lap in the progress of the seeker. But there are many preliminary laps, each one of which requires much stamina and steadfastness. For example, I would advise you to dwell always on one name of God, one personification of one of His innumerable attributes of glory. Then there is the expansion of your love, the removal of hate and envy from your mental composition, seeing the God whom you adore in every other person as intently as you see Him in yourself. Then you become the embodiment of love, peace, and joy.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, November 21, 1979
<https://saispeaks.sathyasai.org/discourse/holiest-task>



Questions to reflect

1. To see God in oneself and others is the basic message of Sathya Sai. What do we miss in our day-to-day living if we don't nurture such a noble perception?
2. How will our life differ if we are constantly infused with love, peace, and joy especially when we are aware that we are the embodiment of love?

GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY TRANSFORMING ATTITUDE

“I am not happy. I have no joy. I want this. I must earn this.” Such longings constitute the individual. **This attitude is the core of ignorance.**

So, if you seek to destroy the ignorance that separates and stultifies, this attitude must be transformed and the conviction that “I am the embodiment of happiness. I am the one who has realized desire,” has to be cultivated. The person who has the former attitude has individualized knowledge, and one who has the latter knowledge has universal wisdom (*Jnana*).

Sathya Sai Vahini
<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

Swami gives us an example that ignorance keeps us away from our innate divinity. Then, He provides an example of the correct attitude of a Self-realized person. Explain how you can relate to both of these and narrate from your day-to-day living the difference in the experiences gained from these two states of awareness.

GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY BEING NOT LIMITED OR BOUND

Bearing the burden of non-existent problems, kicking up dust in confusion, and tied helplessly to the wheel of birth and death, people curse themselves in despair. The non-dualistic texts arose in order to warn people against this ignorance and arouse in them the wisdom that can save them from misery and wrong.

Truly speaking, we are ignorant as long as we feel we are in bondage. In fact, we have not been created. We are not limited or abridged, or bound. The faith that has taken root, namely, “There is a universe (*Jagat*) that contains me along with other similar seekers of happiness. In that search, I meet joy and grief and encounter birth and death.” This is fundamental ignorance.

Sathya Sai Vahini
<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

1. Swami gives another example of the false way of identifying oneself. He calls it “fundamental ignorance.”
2. Why does ignorance about our true self pose such a problem, and what consequences does this have on human society?

GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY HAVING LIBERATING THOUGHTS

We become what our thoughts are. These thoughts on the validity of the objective world and the value of the joys derivable therefrom, though they emanate from ignorance, do shape us from within. The reason we are caught in this mold lies in the absence of four requisites:

1. attention to spiritual progress
2. steady faith
3. devotion
4. the grace of God.

Even if one of these four is absent, people cannot experience the highest bliss of the absolute.

Our inquiry should not be directed to the obvious and the superficial. This line of inquiry will only mislead us into believing what is not the cosmos. It makes us forget that it is our mind that has generated this panorama of cosmic proportions and presented it to us as truth. **It is indeed strange that this huge cosmos depends ultimately on whether “we cognize it as such or not.”** If you feel it is there, it is there. If you feel it is not there, it is not there. This means that we have to go deep into this process of the mind.

Sathya Sai Vahini

<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

How would you explain the statement that “We become what our thoughts are?” How can we benefit from adopting that statement as a daily guideline?

GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY POSITIVE ASSERTION

Is there any occasion when our assertion leads to the existence of a thing and our negation results in its disappearance? Or is this conclusion a figment of the imagination? Inquiry on these lines would undoubtedly reveal the truth.

When the rope is seen in the darkness, by mistake, by ignorance, the serpent arises and appears in its place, displacing the truth of the rope. For some reason, when the truth is known, and the witness feels, "This is no serpent, it is a rope," the serpent disappears, for it was mere falsehood. **So, feeling or thinking is able to create the serpent and also destroy it.**

Assertion creates, and negation destroys. Both are mental processes, which can be classified as "thoughts." Though there are diverse levels and grades, all these are thoughts. From where do these thoughts emerge? Are they free to emerge spontaneously? The answer is: "Our intellect follows the lead of our activities (*Buddhih Karma Anusarini*)."

Thoughts arise in conformity with the attachment one develops and the results one anticipates from one's actions. The very first motive for action is, "I must attain happiness and harmony." This motive arises from the ignorant assumption that the world is real.

Sathya Sai Vahini

<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

1. Sathya Sai says that how we perceive and think about the world and ourselves will shape our destiny. Our thoughts arise from our attachments and expectations. What do you think you are most attached to, and how does this influence your aspirations?
2. What will your focus be during *Maha Shivaratri*, and what new resolutions will you make to enhance your spiritual aspirations?

GETTING CLOSER TO DIVINITY BY SHAPING OUR THOUGHTS

The conclusion set forth in all sacred texts and scriptures is that All This is *Brahman* (God). Setting this aside, if one still claims that one is “I” (a separate, worldly individual), one is asserting that one is but an ignoramus.

A doubt may arise: Is it at all possible to forget oneself and believe that one is something else? We have already seen that the acceptance of truth polluted with untruth (*Mithya*) is a sign of ignorant people. In the dusk, falsehood is superimposed on truth - the serpent is visualized on the rope, lying on the road.

The delusion affects the consciousness and warps the intellect (*Buddhi*) so that people forget their genuine nature, which is an ecstatic delight (*Ananda*). They impose on themselves the limitations of individuality and consider themselves as individual souls (*Jivas*).

They welcome the belief that happiness is outside them in the objective world, and they entangle themselves in the moving, changing, restless world. They suffer the twin blows of fate and fortune. Such people are taught by the revealed scriptures, the Vedas, and sacred texts, to transform their lives through consistent endeavour for knowing and realizing the innate divinity (*Atma*).

Sathya Sai Vahini

<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

Sathya Sai said, “The delusion affects the consciousness and warps the intellect (*Buddhi*) so that people forget their genuine nature, which is an ecstatic delight (*Ananda*). They impose on themselves the limitations of individuality and consider themselves as individual souls (*Jivas*).” Narrate examples from your life experiences that help you realize this truth.

PATH OF SYMBOLIZED DIVINITY (ANYA-VATHI)

Picturing the many-faceted divine and symbolizing, in perceivable ways, the attributes that are evidenced in each facet, the seeker endeavors to acquire the presence of the Divine.

One form of the Divine, the Omnipresent (Vishnu), is pictured as having the conch, wheel, and mace (symbols of the primeval word or sound, of time, and of might and majesty). The facet to which is ascribed the power and willingness to overcome obstacles (*Vigneswara*) has the symbol of the single tusk, which symbolizes sharpness and concentration. It is associated with Siva (*Iswara*), the facet of disintegration and dissolution, which bears the trident (*trisula*), which symbolizes in its three prongs the past, the present, and the future.

Rama, the form of dharma, is always pictured with the bow, which can send the arrow (will) straight to the target. Krishna, the manifestation of universal love, has on His crown a peacock feather, which symbolizes the thousand-eyed glance of grace. He bears a flute on which He plays enthralling tunes; the flute is the symbol of the egoless desireless seeker.

The facet of wisdom pictured as the Goddess Saraswathi has a veena (a stringed musical instrument) in Her hand, symbolic of heartstrings responding with harmony and melody to the gentle touch of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

Seekers meditate on these pleasing personifications and the significance of the symbols of their attributes. They adore the divine in the delight that wells up in their hearts. This is named the path through symbolized divinity (*Anya-vathi*) — *Anya* meaning the other, the accessory.

Sathya Sai Vahini

<https://sathyasai.org/teachings/vahini/sathya-sai-vahini>



Questions to reflect

To what degree are this and other paths of spiritual growth relevant to you in your day-to-day living?





SRI SATHYA SAI SCRIPTURAL STUDIES COMMITTEE

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