

Om

I offer my humble pranaams at the Divine Lotus feet of our beloved Lord, Guide, Guru, Confidant and best friend Sathya Sai Baba. Dear candidates Om Shri Sairam. My name is Raj and I will be your co facilitator for today's session. As you're all aware, today we will be going through the inaugural session of the InSaights Master class on Sneham - Friendship with God. In this session we will look at Sathya Sai Baba as our guru, guide and master. It is my pleasure to introduce you to our facilitator, Shashank Shah. Dr. Shashank Shah is a Thought Leader in Corporate Strategy and corporate social responsibility. With over a hundred national and international publications to his credit, his research focuses on the pivotal role of corporations in economic and social value creation through visionary leadership, stakeholder centric decision-making and inclusive business strategies. He has been a visiting scholar at Harvard Business School, fellow and project director at Harvard University South Asia Institute, a visiting scholar at Copenhagen Business School and Consulting Editor at the Business India Group. As a recipient of the President of India and Governor's gold medals for excellence in the MBA and master of philosophy program at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Learning, he was blessed to complete his doctoral and postdoctoral research at the Institute. He was also the editor in chief of the Institute's Publications Division, and had edited /compiled nearly 30 books on the Divine Message. He has also been blessed to address 25 gatherings in Swami's physical presence, and over a hundred gatherings in His Omnipresence.

Between 2013 and 2018, his books - Soulful Corporations, Win-Win Corporations and the Tata Group, were published by Springer and Penguin Random House

It is now my absolute honor and pleasure, to invite brother Shashank to guide you through today's session.

Thank you. Thank you, very much. Good afternoon. Apologies for the technology. Let us reflect, introspect and imbibe the message of our beloved Master. Offering my loving pranams at Swami's Divine Lotus Feet. A very warm welcome to all of you at this first webinar on InSaights, by the Sathya Sai International Organisation YA group. First of all, I would like to congratulate them for initiating something like this, which gives us an opportunity to reflect on Swami's message, and also see what we can learn from that, so that we can recalibrate our spiritual journey in alignment with Him, His message, and His expectations from us. So, once again, hearty congratulations for initiating something like this. Thanks also, for having me as one of the first speakers on this theme of Sneham, or Friendship with God.

The topic today that I have been given before me is Swami, as the Guru, Guide and Master. Let me begin with a story. This is from the interview room at Prasanthi Nilayam. There were some of our students who were sitting with Swami in the interview room, and Swami always used to have these kind of question and answers with the students. He said- He asked, "What is the rarest thing in this world?" And then, the students gave different answers, "Self realization, Swami", "Swami, spiritual progress", so on and so forth. Swami would usually listen to all the students and then ultimately, give the final answer. So, after everyone had given the answer, He said, "No. All of you are wrong. The rarest of the things in this world, is to be a contemporary of the Avatar."

Everyone, right from the ant - to the animals, everybody will reach the Atman, the final destination. There is nothing special about it, it's a process. But, how many get an opportunity to be born at time when the Avatar incarnate? from there, how many have an opportunity to be aware of His Divinity? How many are having the opportunity to understand his message, to reflect on it and practice that? And

from that, how many have the opportunity to be a part of His mission, live His message, and spread it across the globe?

That is the rarest opportunity that anybody can aspire for, and let me share with you - dear brothers and sisters- that this is the rarest of opportunity that we have been blessed with.

Swami's message has been resonated by what Adi Shakaracharya, eighth century **performers proponent of advaita vedanta said that of the rarest of things that human appeal(Sanskrit word) which means that human desire ... life he to have** a Master who will help us in that spiritual journey. It is the rarest of the things that humankind can expect, or that an individual can be blessed with. It's not money, it's not wealth, it's not status, it's not power, it's not position- which we usually think are the rarest of things. He has come to deliver to us, in order to enable us to achieve that goal that He has in mind for us.

The first one.

Let me pass the word MASTER into each of its alphabets, as I take you through what Swami has been for us, what He means to be for us, *****.

****, in the interview room, some of the students were sitting with Swami in the interview room. Swami's eye was a little red. One of the teachers asked Swami, "Swami your eye is red? "

Swami said, "that is because I don't waste." So the teacher again asked Swami, "Swami. No, no, your eye is red." Swami said, "Yes, that is because I don't waste water." The teacher and the students were wondering, when the question is about the redness of the eye, why is Swami talking about wasting water?

But when Swami says the same thing twice, it means that we haven't understood what He is trying to communicate to us.

Sai Ram and my apologies, I'll continue from where I got disconnected.

So, Swami said, "I do not waste water and hence I switched off the tap between my applying of the soap and applying of the water. But you Boys, when you are shaving in the hostel, the tap is running, the water is flowing and constantly getting wasted, and you are not even bothered about it. I am extremely committed to ensure that I don't waste water." That is one of the primary principles which we in today's world, need to reflect upon. The importance of water in India alone, over 150 million people do not have access to drinking water and what kind of water wastage do we indulge in, as in, when we have so much access to water.

Another very nice example, which one of my, our elders who was in the hostel told us, there was a tumbler next to the wash basin. There was clear flowing water in the tap, but Swami wanted that there should be still a tumbler next to the tap and when that brother asked Swami, "Swami, the water is flowing, why do you need a tumbler?" Swami said, "That is because I want to measure how much water I am using." Don't waste water was practiced by Swami in such perfection. *****

Next, whenever we students went into Swami's interview room we always would see that after we entered the interview room, Swami would switch on the light and the fan, and whenever we left the interview room, Swami would switch off the light and the fan. He mentioned to us, "Do you know why I

am switching on the fan and switching off the fan only after you enter and when you leave? It is because I do not need the light and fan. There is enough ventilation in the room, I do not want to waste energy. But when you boys leave the hostel room, the fans are on, the lights are on. So much energy is wasted. Who do you think gives the energy? Nature gives energy - which is so precious- and who has endowed nature with this kind of energy? It is God. So, you need to pay your taxes. First, to the government because they're providing you with all these things, but also to God, who is the original provider of these gifts of the nature, and don't waste energy." Wasting of energy can be seen from the natural aspects first, but it is also to be seen from our own personal behavior.

Swami always used to tell us, "Don't waste energy by putting your senses to misuse."

One of the first concerns that Swami had for students and youth was, too much talking.

Swami always used to tell the students. Once, He told us, "Excessive talking can lead to four sins that are committed by the tongue. Or rather, the tongue commits four mistakes. One, excessively eating. Second, excessive talking. Third, gossiping and rumor mongering, and four, speaking ill of others."

If we use the tongue more effectively, we'll be able to put it to a much better use. Similarly, the misuse of eyes, the misuse of ears, all of these deplete the precious energy, the God-given energy, that exists within us.

In one of the convocations in 2014, if I remember correctly, the chairman of India's Space Research Organisation was the chief guest for the event and in the course of his talk, he said, "Science and scientific analysis indicated the human mind has the capacity to store as much data as is present on the entire social media platform of Facebook. Every single human mind can store as much data as is present on the totality of Facebook. That shows the power that the human mind has, but what is the problem? The problem is that the human system follows what we have learned in Information Systems, which is called GIGO. Garbage in- Garbage out. If garbage goes into the input devices, the garbage will come out of the output devices. All that we see, all that we hear, all that we read, is a continuous input onto the mind. And the kind of junk that gets into the mind is very easily prone to come out as junk through our actions and words, so we need to be clear that we install the right kind of anti-viruses, to ensure that our mental system has the right kind of virus scans done on a regular basis, and that this storage device of the mind, remains healthy."

That's why "don't waste energy" is applicable to all that we do or say in our daily life. What is the solution?

Swami always used to say, "See no evil- see what is good. Hear no evil- hear what is good. Talk no evil - talk what is good. Think no evil- think what is good. Do no evil- do what is good."

These are very simple maxims that Swami has left behind for us, which are the essence of what responsible living can be considered as.

Another example, Swami often used to invite students for lunch to His residence, in Poorna Chandra, in Trayee Brindavan, and very often, for those of us who were blessed to go with Swami to Kodaikanal. There, Swami would sit on a separate table for His meals, we would all be sitting on the other side. Swami would take up water and swallow that water. The usual practice is that we gargle. We take in a mouthful of water and then we spit it out. Swami used to swallow it. So, one of the elders took courage

to ask Swami, "Swami, why is it that you are swallowing the water? We usually spit it out." Swami said, "I am doing this to ensure that every small food particle in my mouth, is going into my stomach. I do not want to waste even a particle of food. Do you know why? Because the farmer invests so much of time, efforts and energy in order to grow, to cultivate, to provide us with the food that we consume. Hours and hours of toil and labor in the fields. How much, how often do we waste this?" Swami said, "Don't waste food, food is God."

Talking about food, I am reminded of another experience, how Swami used to teach us small lessons in our daily life and conducts. Once, we students, we were sitting with Swami in the Poornachandra auditorium. It was just before the Vice-chancellor's Conference in 2003, and that time, Swami usually needed some help to rise from His chair. So, a few of us were sitting near Him, just near His feet. And, Swami had served us Idly, and we had consumed that as His prasadam and then, He showed His hands and indicated that we should lift Him.

In Indian culture, when our hands are dirty after consuming food, you do not touch anybody else, or you do not- definitely- touch Swami, with those soiled hands. So, we showed Swami our hands, and then we said, "Swami, our hands are dirty" . And again, Swami said that He needed help to be raised from the chair. So, we just obeyed Him by giving our dirty hands and He stood up. When He stood up, He looked at us and said, "It is okay if the hands are dirty, we must always ensure that your heart doesn't get dirty." These are the ways, the simple ways in which Swami has taught us responsible living.

Another aspect of Swami's teaching in responsibility, which I would like to highlight, is the problem which all of us face, and, the problem of time. Let me take you through quickly, through how Swami used to manage time-how Swami has managed time. In the 1950's, 1950 to be specific, Swami started the Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram. He was just 25. And for 60 years, He showed how an ideal ashram should be run. In 1960, Swami started the Sathya Sai Organization, and for 50 years, He showed how an ideal social spiritual organization should be run. In 1970, He started the Central Trust. And for 40 years, He showed how an ideal public charitable trust should be run. In the 1980s he started the university, and for 30 years, He showed how values can be integrated into a higher education curriculum. Recently, the Cambridge universities added Swami's organization in their syllabus.

What is important to learn from here, is that Swami is so *** that He ensured that every single moment was spent to be used for the most productive processes. Swami always used to say, "Time waste is Life waste." I have a quotation here, Swami had told students of the Brindavan Hostel in 1977, incidentally, on this very day, August 17. He said, "The years of life allotted to humans are a result of the enormous amount of merit earned and accumulated through many lives in the past. They have to be utilized for the purpose of rising higher towards Divinity. For this adventure, congenial and inspiring company is essential. Religious decline is when it is only just spent, but life is-in its own course- being cut short in every moment. Even when we sleep, unconcerned, every minute makes us older, takes us nearer to the grave." This makes it all the more necessary to reflect on how time waste is life waste.

Another aspect of responsible living that Swami often used to share, was about wasting money. Swami used to tell students, "Don't waste money. Waste of money is evil." Here, I would like to share how Swami had lived such a simple and frugal life. Most of us who haven't been in Swami's physical proximity, wouldn't know that Swami lived from 1950 to 1993, a big chunk- almost four decades of His life- in an 8x10 feet room with a 4x6 feet washroom. And later, in His fifties, His washroom did not even have tiles. There was cemented flooring, as one of my seniors had shared with me, as he had an

opportunity to clean Swami's room. So, he went to clean the washroom, and he saw that the washroom had cement, and not even tiles. That is the frugality with which Swami lived.

From His twenties and throughout Swami's life, Swami often had shared how in His school days, He used to have just two pairs of clothes. He used to wash one of them when He comes back from school, iron them, and then put the other one for washing, and that was how He used to manage His clothes. When they tore, He used thorns to stitch them together. That's the kind of frugal life that Swami has lived.

Swami had shared with students often. He said, "I am telling you all this because I have myself practiced it. Do not waste money. Waste of money is evil." Swami often used to say, "Using/ spending money is one aspect. Earning money is an equally important aspect." How do we earn money? This is a question, often discussed in spiritual debates, whether means justifies ends. Whether money earned through wrong means can be justified by using it for right, charitable purposes. Swami always used to say, "Money should be earned righteously. Means are as important as the ends. If money is not earned righteously," Swami once said, "it could be taken away in four ways. One, it can be stolen. Second, it could be raided by the authorities. Third, it could be destroyed in fire. Or fourth, you may be forced to spend it in some severe diseases that we may undergo." So, it's a *** and a warning, that earning money the righteous way is as important as spending money the right way.

Swami also used to highlight, that money should be in circulation like blood in the human body. Because, just like blood in one place clots, money in one place makes many wrongs. It needs to be used for the wellbeing of others- it should be used for charitable purposes. In fact, Swami has given students a very nice formula for life. He used to say, "Education confers humility. Humility gives credibility. Credibility gives wealth. Wealth is to be used for righteousness and charity. And these will confer happiness, year and year after. This is the golden formula for a good life." An opportunity for us to reflect, how much of it we can practice?

So, if we put all of these together, these five aspects of responsible living, it is what Swami used to say, Ceiling on Desires. Way back, in 1976, almost four decades ago, Swami had given this mantra to the devotees all over the world. That if you practice these five things, your spiritual life, and global well-being, will be ensured. Almost five decades later, we realize that these are the five areas that humankind has been suffering and struggling to manage and maintain. Fifty years ago, our master had given us the secret to responsible living.

The other R of master, is about relationships. Swami always used to say that there are four qualities that youth should take care of. It is very important if they want to lead a spiritual life, that they should practice these four. What are they? First, Maitri or friendship. With whom should we be friendly? With whom should we cultivate friendship? That's the theme, Friendship with God, of this series of Masterclass sessions. Swami used to say, "Friendship should be cultivated only to those who are equal to us, in priorities, in attitudes, in culture, in value systems. If that is not the case, the dissonance in the relationship will severely affect the relationship. Moreover, the essence of friendship is selflessness." Again, looking at Swami's life, if we recollect, Swami did not apparently have money to buy uniforms for his school days. His friends, Ramesh and Paresh had offered to buy the uniform for Him. In fact, they had got uniform for Him and books for Him and presented it to Swami, the Young Sathyam. And Swami said, "No, I cannot accept this. There is no give and take in friendship. Friendship is a relationship of selflessness, of heart to heart, of pure love."

Talking about how Swami maintained His friendship, true friendship survives the test of time, it is not the one which is dependent on the resources at our disposal or the geographic proximity that gives us access to one another. There is this incident, several decades after Swami began His mission. Swami was distributing His Prasad in the Poornachandra Auditorium, clothes and food. And after He had distributed the clothes and food in the first few rows, HE started walking towards the end of the auditorium. He went to the last row, saw someone, and went back all the way to the back stage, and got a bag of clothes. He was holding it, and again walking down to go to the end of the hall. One of the teachers was with Swami. They said, "Swami, please give it to us, we will go and give it to the concerned devotee." Swami said, "I will do it myself." He took the bag, went all the way to the back of the hall, and gave it to that man, who was so happy and full of joy. Swami said to this teacher, "Do you know who he is? He is Sathyanarayana. Sathyanarayana, my classmate in school. Even his name is Sathyanarayana! That's why I have myself come, as a friend, to give him this prasadam with my own hands. Isn't that the demand of true friendship?"

Swami asked, "That one friend gives the gift of love to the other friend with his own hands." That is what friendship is. It survives the test of time, it survives the passage of decades. Second aspect that Swami said, is kindness and compassion, Karuna. This should be shown to those, who are lesser off than us. In age, in financial status, in education, in health. Compassion is very, very vital for an individual.

I remember an opportunity in Kodaikanal, in the late 90's. It was Eashwaramma day and prasadam, food, clothing, blankets, we distributed to the devotees, and other local people from Kodaikanal were gathered in Swami's Sai Sruthi Mandir to receive it. After it was over, Swami was very happy. He came back, He sat for a while, and then He felt that something was missing, and then gave some instructions to the teachers. And then after a few minutes, got into the car with three other students and then left. For an hour, Swami wasn't back. So the students were wondering, "Where has Swami gone? Maybe He's gone to give Darshan to devotees on an auspicious day, who could not come to Sai Sruthi and have His Darshan." After an hour when He came back, the Face was reflecting pure joy! He was so happy and satisfied. He asked some of the students, "Are you'll wondering why I am so happy?" So the students said, "Yes, Swami. Because You have gone and given Darshan to those who could not come to Sai Sruthi Mandir." Swami said, "No, no. I am not happy for that. I had not gone to give them Darshan, I had gone to give them blankets and clothes, especially to those physically disabled people who did not have the capacity to come to Sai Sruthi to receive these gifts from me. True compassion involves going all the way to the receiver and giving that which he deserves to receive, not sitting in your ivory towers, waiting for the opportunity to come to you, to serve or to express your virtue of compassion."

Talking about compassion, it is often misunderstood. I remember when the Gujrat earthquake occurred in early 2001, Swami had sent almost 40 truckloads of food, clothing and essential items to the people who had been afflicted by this calamity. Swami had sent several senior administrators from the organization through to go, and serve these items to those beneficiaries. At that time, the students thought that they too should contribute, so they got their old clothes, and put it together, classified them nicely, and then the warden approached Swami. He was the head of the university. He approached Swami, and said, "Swami, the students have also got together their clothes, their used clothes, and they want to send that for the benefit of the, of those who have been afflicted by this natural calamity." They thought Swami will be mighty happy, at the sensitivity and concern for these people who had been struck by this earthquake. Instead, Swami was very unhappy. He said, "Is this what I have taught you? Those people were living normal lives 'til the earthquake struck them. They are respected, respectable

people belonging to very well-off families. Today, when they are undergoing such sad times with the natural calamity, is it correct on your part, to send used clothes to them? They deserve to get new clothes. And if you want to do service, you must ensure that you send them new clothes, and not your used clothes.” Compassion involves ensuring that the dignity of the recipient is also maintained. It is not just considering ourselves as superior and the recipient as inferior. Call this appreciation, or as it is called in Sanskrit, Muditha. Very often, what happens is that we are absolutely uncomfortable with someone who is better off than us. Jealousy is the worst disease, and has to be cured. As Swami always used to say, “True spirituality involves appreciating what the other person enjoys. We should be able to be happy when others succeed. We should be able to feel happy when others have better fortunes.” Scriptures have been witness, have been proof of the fact this jealousy, or lack of appreciation for other’s well-being, has led to wars and has destroyed clans. Appreciation also involves appreciating the good in others. I remember, talking about appreciation, something from my own life. When I received my first stipend as a doctoral student in Swami’s university, I had a desired that it should be used, it should be gifted to Swami. It would be my gratitude to Swami. Usually in India, it is a custom that the first stipend, the first salary is given to the Mother. I thought, what better than to give it to the Divine Mother. So I said, I wrote a letter, saying that Swami, “This is my first stipend, I wish to present it to you, please accept it”. And I gave it in Swami’s residence, in the Yajur Mandiram. I thought, see the problem is that, in Swami’s scheme of things, *you cannot give money to Swami*. Swami used to feel very bad when students used to give money to Swami or attempt to give money to Swami while leaving the university in the form of some gratitude like this. Because you don’t pay your mother for an opportunity, or for whatever she has received, whatever you have received from her. But, this was a very different thought. It was an expression of gratitude to the Divine Mother. So, I gave the letter inside, with the stipend that was there. I thought that it will get lost in so many letters there, that are usually inside Swami’s residence. I gave that letter, came back, sat down in the bhajan hall, somewhere behind in the 20th- 25th row, hoping that Swami should not find me or identify me, and kind of reprimand me. Swami came. When He came for Darshan, He came to the bhajan hall and there was an envelope in His hand. I believed He had given that envelope to those who were following Him before Darshan. And after He completed Darshan- before entering the bhajan hall-He took the envelope from them. He came with an envelope in the bhajan hall. And He called out my name. I was trying to hide myself but all of my friends were nudging me out of the line, and I went towards Swami. Then Swami asked, “Did you give this?” I said, “Yes, Swami.” “What is this?” I said, “Swami, this is gratitude for all that you have done for me, this is my first stipend.” And then Swami said, “No, no, no. You should not do like that. This is not my money. This is University’s money. This has been given to you for your boarding and lodging.” Saying that, Swami literally counted the currency notes that I had placed in the envelope, folded the envelope, pulled my pocket, *** my cheek and said, “Don’t do like this. When you want something, ask Swami.” Saying that, He waved His hand, materialized a white, three diamond ring and placed it on my finger, saying, “Good boy.”

This is how Swami used to appreciate or encourage any small genuine virtue that we would express. True spirituality involves appreciation, not only of those who are better than us, but also those who are with us. The last of this is Upeksha or dislike. Swami always used to say, “Run away from bad company, because our company determines our mind, our thoughts and our actions. Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are.” Swami often used to say that dust in the company of the wind rises, but the same dust in the company of water, sinks. The paper gives the fragrance of the product packed in it. If flowers are packed, the paper is fragrant. If foul-smelling substance is packed, the paper gives foul-

smelling smell. The company of the product gives the fragrance or the foul-smell. Similarly, the company that we keep in terms of individuals, affects our mind and our thoughts. So, we must keep away from bad company. The example of **Karana** from the Epic-Mahabharatha- is a great example of how, bad company can ruin the most noble of men. So, these four things with respect to relationships, Swami said, are very vital. I'll just recount them. First, friendship with equals. Second, compassion for the lesser off. Third, appreciation for the better off. And fourth, dislike for those who have wrong tendencies. If these four are practiced, our spiritual journey would definitely move ahead in the right direction, with the right momentum. I'd like to quote what Swami told with respect to these four in a discourse, in the Prasanthi Nilayam campus hostel, on 20th June 1989. "If you cultivate these four qualities, you will not need any other goals in life. Friendship with equals, compassion towards the lowly, rejoicing in the good fortune of those who are better off, and keeping away from the wicked. These are the true objectives to be pursued in life. It is because of the failure to observe these directives that the quality of life has deteriorated."

Then we move to the next alphabet, E. In the workbook that I had shared, the questions that I had shared -Question number 6, what are your goals in the short term, medium term and long term with respect to contributing to the Sathya Sai Mission as an active foot soldier? I think, responsibility and relationships, are two areas where each one of us as youth, need to work on, so that we can in the short term and medium term, internalize several of these ideas and ideals that Swami has placed before us.

Next, E . E is for equanimity. What does the Master teach you? Equanimity. Take the example of today - you were all prepared and gung-ho for the video webinar. We had planned, done several sessions where we practiced every angle, the clarity, etc, of my presentation, and on the final day at the final time, when I am supposed to give the presentation, the internet gives way, radio becomes choppy, there are technical problems. What is the impact of that on the listeners and the speaker? Are we still equanimous and that- consider that - whether it works or not, that is the proof of the pudding, that the master wants to teach us. In any project and every project that Swami has taken, there has never, ever been a smooth ride, because Swami always wants to test us. The objective is not to accomplish the project. The objective is to groom us as individuals, as spiritual beings, so that we are equipped to progress in our spiritual journey. Here is an example, a story I would like to share. In 1999 , during the convocation drama, Swami had taken very active role in directing the drama. This was about Krishna and the Pandavas. In the process, Swami had also materialized a particular pen, and that pen, was supposed to have been used by Krishna to write a message on a piece of paper, a special piece of paper, which was given to the Pandavas before they left for exile. Krishna said, in the ******* of your exile, in the worst, when you cannot take it anymore, open this secret formula and you will be blissful and joyful. So, the Pandavas were very happy - they got the secret formula to happiness, despite being on the exile! Several, several years into the exile, when they realized that they could no longer bear it, they all got together and decided to open this secret formula, which was rolled by Krishna in the special paper, nicely written by the special pen. Swami had materialized that pen and given to the students to be used for that particular drama, and very interestingly, He took it back after the drama was over. So, what was written in that piece of paper? When the Pandavas, in their most difficult times, opened that piece of paper, there was no formula. There were just four words, which were like magic for them in those troubled times. What were they, those four words? Those four words were, "This Too Shall Pass". "This Too Shall Pass". Even this situation will pass. These difficult days will also pass. The good times will also pass, the bad times will also pass. The true equanimous individual, is the one who takes good and bad

with equal fervor. That is the message Swami had given way back in 1947, when He had written a letter to His brother. The original copy is now with the archives, and the digital copy is available online- if you want to refer to it. Swami said that, "I have a definition of devotion. Those who are devoted to me, should take good and bad, success and failure, victory and defeat with equanimity. Only then can they be considered as my devotees". So, the E of Equanimity is very vital in the message that this Master has given us. When we talk about equanimity, comes this modern day dilemma. Modern management teaches us, result orientation. We have to get results at any cost. Quarter on quarter results, year on year growth, unending success, there cannot be any kind of failure! And it is this mad race, which is the cause of all the stress, this *** and the problems that we see in the corporate world. And then we often ask, "I try my best and yet I don't succeed, why doesn't Swami help me?" This also comes in the questions which several youth participants asked before the webinar series, which I received from the organisers. The answer to that is the following: ancient wisdom, does not focus on result orientation. Ancient wisdom, or Sai message, focuses on action orientation. You give your best, and leave the results to God because the results are not in your hand. The results are not an outcome of the action that you have undertaken. The results are a product of several circumstances, issues and impact of several things around, micro and macro-that is what final result is determined by. To say that our solo action should result in a particular outcome is not fair, and hence, what will we be judged by? We will be judged by the intention behind our action. And the intensity of our action. The Bhavam, or the intention behind the action, and the intensity, the fervor with which we are pursuing those actions, is what we will be judged by. That's why the Bhagavad Gita has said and Swami has often said, **** " You have right only over actions. You do not have right over outcomes." And what is the solution to that? Swami always used to say, "The key to equanimity is detachment from the outcomes." Detachment from the outcomes meaning, the detachment is misunderstood usually as *** being detached from the world, home and hearth. Going and settling down in the forest, that's how detachment is often described in the scriptures. No ! Swami has said," That is not detachment. True detachment is : hands in the society, head in the forest. True detachment is giving your best, and yet, facing the outcomes as the will of God. That is true detachment." But we are not able to achieve that. We are not able to give up attachment. Swami would often joke. In Kodaikanal once, He told the students, " Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, saw four sights, and developed detachment. What were the four sights? The sight of a sick man, the sight of an old man, the sight of a dead body, and the sight of a sage who had renounced the world. He saw these four sights once, and developed detachment , and renounced the world. How many times have all of you seen these four sights and how much of detachment have you been able to develop as a result of this?" We often blame circumstances for the lack of detachment. It is not the circumstances, but we, who are responsible for our attachments. Swami used to narrate a very nice story. In olden times, how would they catch monkeys? In India, in rural India, *** and I'm sure in several other countries, that is was done in those years. They used to take a big pot with a small entrance at the top, and they used to fill the pot with peanuts. Ground nuts, because monkeys love peanuts. They used to keep that in the open. The monkey would come, put its hand in the pot, catch hold of the peanuts. As it caught hold of the peanuts, the size of the hand increased because it became a fist, and the hand would no longer come out of the pot. The monkey would think that something inside has caught hold of it, so it would run helter-skelter with all concern and frustration that, "Oh my God, something in the pot has caught hold of me." The reality was that it had caught hold of the peanuts and because of that, it was not able to escape from the situation in which it had landed itself. And then the people would come and catch hold of the monkeys and take them into the forest because they were disturbing them in the

residential areas. What is the meaning of this? Swami would often say that this pot is like the world. The small opening on the top, is like the family. And our hand inside that, is the commitments that we have made, the relationships that we have developed, and the attachments that we have cultivated in our lifetime. We want to hold onto it all the time, and we do not want to give up, saying, "No, no! The attachments have held us, the circumstances have held us, the people around have made things difficult for us."

Swami always used to say, "This is like behaving like the monkey who thought that the peanuts and the pot had caught hold of it. It is not the peanuts in the pot but the monkey and his hand, and his desire for the peanuts that is responsible." So, true equanimity comes from cultivating this detachment and developing attachment. Attachment with what? For the higher purpose, For God Himself, for Divinity.

The next alphabet T. Swami always used to identify Himself with this word. The word is truth. What is truth? In that which is seen, truth is that which is scientifically verified, truth is that which is experienced. Truth this is something which continuously makes it difficult for a common ground between scientists and spiritual seekers. The earth in front of our house is flat but the earth is round. Then, is the earth flat or is the earth round? If the earth is round, why cannot we see as such? Similarly, we say that the Sun has risen and the Sun has set. Is the Sun rising and setting, or are we rising and setting? What if seeing is believing, and only what is seen is believed - then how can we accept the law of gravity?

There are several questions which we need to ask ourselves. The main reason being that we use the senses as a means to understand what is the real truth. The senses themselves have their limitations. When we are sick, the same tongue is not able to experience the taste. When we are old, the same eyes, the same ears, are not able to hear. The dog can hear far more distant sounds than the human being, and several animals can perceive a much different range of colors than the human eye. Then how can we really on these instruments to understand the truth- what we consider is the final truth?

Swami often would say, "Science is based on experiments and spirituality is based on experiences."

Till we have our own experience, we need to go by the experience of those who have experienced and realized the truth.

Swami used to give the example of the sages who used to do so much of meditation and penance - they would go beyond the mind, cross the higher mind, rise beyond the super mind, go even beyond the illuminated mind and the Overmind, and reach a stage which was called amanaska or thoughtlessness.

And at that time, they were able to capture the cosmic vibrations and realize the true nature of divinity.

How do we experience that divinity?

We trust and accept the experience and the message of those who have achieved it. For example, if I haven't been to Mauritius how would I know how Mauritius is? Today, the internet will show me images and videos of the beauty of Mauritius, but in the earlier years I would have to depend on those who have gone to Mauritius and seen it, and experienced it and come back and tell you all this is how it is.

Similarly, in our spiritual journey, we need to depend on the experiences of those who have already reached there, and then work towards that.

At the more practical level, what is truth? How Swami would express His opinion to communicate this truth is another interesting lesson.

Whenever Swami wanted to convey something he would always use the word Na Theshumulu, meaning in Telugu, "in my opinion". He will say that and then He will say whatever He wants to say. He would never force His views, at the same time, put them forward in an effective way. So we need to be very careful- that even if we are speaking the truth, we do not harm or hurt others by our allegiance to speaking truth or being honest.

Speaking truth has many benefits. Well, here is a story which Swami had shared with the students of the MBA program in Swami's University. Sir C V Raman, the nobel laureate physicist, was doing some interviews to hire new people into the industry of science, which is one of the leading universities in India, in the city of Bangalore. One such individual had come from a far-off place. He had gone for the interview, but he was not selected because CV Raman did not find him to be up to the mark. He left the interview having been told that he is not selected, and he was walking in the campus on his way out. On the way, Swami was sitting in the house of Professor Bhagvantam, who was one of another leading scientists, also professor at ISC, eventually, the chief scientific adviser to the defense minister of India, and Swami saw this man crestfallen, and He asked him what happened.

So this man explained to him what happened in the interview, and then he was not able to get selected for this particular job. And then this man - Swami gave this man- a particular idea. This man was very happy.

He went back to Mr. C V Raman's office. CV Raman had gone for his lunch and when he came back, he found this man standing outside his office. So, he told this man, "I already told you that you are not eligible for the job, why have you come back? This man said, "No, Sir. I have not come back to ask for the job. I have come back to return the excessive money that I have been given as a part of my travel allowance. I want to return this money to the accountant. "

CV Raman was mighty impressed at the honesty of this particular candidate.

He immediately said," I am so happy that you have been so honest even for a few rupees that had run excess in your allowance that was given by the institution. I think you qualify for the job by the virtue of your honesty and truthfulness." And he was taken up for one of the roles.

That was the idea that Swami had given us, had given him, that you speak the truth, go and return the additional money that you have, and I'm sure you will get selected for the job.

So truth, whether it is speaking the truth, it is living truthfully, it is understanding the truth of Divinity, or it is attaining the truth that is Divinity, in all these four varieties - as it is called nijam Sathya and rutam in Sanskrit.

Swami had guided us and had told us what we should be doing. Swami always used to call himself Aham Sathya Bodhaka. "I am the teacher of truth." And in the master that Swami is for us, truth is a very very important message that he has given us.

Next, S.

Since we missed out about 15 minutes due to technological problem, I propose to take another 15 minutes and finish. I have five more minutes and then I shall take about 10-12 minutes to conclude, so I hope that's fine with the organizers- so that we can cover the key aspects that I want to in this particular theme.

So, S. what does S stand for, S stands for in master the word, the alphabet S stands for sacrifice.

Swami's life is a saga of sacrifice - from dawn to dusk. Swami lived for others and not for himself. Just visualize this: every single day, from 1925, when He was 25, He started the Ashram and began his spiritual journey, the more institutionalized format. Every single morning, evening, Sunday, weekday, summer, winter, monsoon- whether he is 25 or He is 80 plus- Swami's schedule was so very committed only for the well-being of others.

He never took leaves, He never took breaks. Even when His body did not permit, He wanted to go out and give Darshan.

Several times in Kodaikanal, I have been witness to this fact, that Swami's health wouldn't be good. It would be too cold outside and the elders would request Swami, "Swami please take rest, the weather is not good, your health is also not good." Swami said, "No, no, how can I take rest? So many hundreds of devotees have come from all over Kodaikanal, Tamilnadu and India to have my Darshan. It is my duty to go and fulfill that desire of my Darshan and and give them that joy."

True sacrifice means living for others and Swami lived that in His life, every one of those 85 years in His earthly sojourn.

I have done a "back of the hand" calculation, and I came to the conclusion that in His lifetime, Swami would have given a hundred thousand interviews. If we consider that there were twenty to twenty-five people in each of those interviews- because the bulk of the interviews were group interviews, Swami would have addressed 2.5 million people, one-on-one in His lifetime. That is the kind of time, the commitment, the energy and the sacrifice that He has done for the sake of others.

Swami had often said, that we consider that giving up something when we go for a pilgrimage is true sacrifice, or trying to please God by a gift of money or some product is true sacrifice. In India, there is the common belief that we must go to the pilgrimage place of Tirupathi and shave your hair, and with that, God will be very happy. Swami often would say, "God doesn't need your dirty hair, He has His own beautiful locks." Giving up your hair in a particular place or giving up anything in a pilgrimage place as the culture of several religions, inspires in the follower. You should give up your negativities because God alone has the capacity to take your negativities and render you pure, render you more powerful. Render you more ready to progress in your spiritual journey.

I'd like to share a story well Swami had narrated to us in one of his discourses.

There was this boy, who had his math examination and he was very not very strong in his math so he prayed to God secretly, that if I do well in the examination, I will make a special sweet preparation and offer you in the altar. When he went to give the examination he, saw his question paper he started answering the questions. In parallel, he prepared a cross sheet of the different items that would be required to prepare that particular sweet. As he success with the answering of the question paper was, as he became more and more successful while answering his question paper, he started reducing, one

by one, items that were required for preparing the sweet. Finally when he realized that he is able to answer the whole paper with great success, he decided, that I don't need to make any sweet preparation.

Ultimately God wants our noble feelings, so he decided that he will give drinking water to God. He will take a glass full of water and place it in the altar. He thought of that, completed his paper, came back home, and went in a very committed form to the kitchen, took a glass of drinking water and went to the altar and placed it.

His father was wondering, what happened to this boy. Why is he behaving like this? After some time he went inside his room and he was unpacking his luggage bag from his school. His father asked him, "How was your paper?" He said, "It was great." He said, "Show me the paper." So, he said okay, went back to his room, came out. He went back to his room and shouted then, "Oh my God! God has deceived me!" So this father was wondering, why did God come into the picture? What is this deception? What is this boy talking about? So he went inside and said, "what happened?"

It had so happened, that in his joy of saving on all the ingredients that he would have to invest in order to make that sweet preparation for God, and because if paper had he had attempted, his paper very well, he had ended up giving the cost sheet of making that sweet preparation to the teacher, and brought his answer paper home. His father told this boy, "God has not cheated you, you have yourself cheated God." This is how we consider that we can do some kind of deals with God. Swami always used to say, "Your relationship with God is not a profit-sharing ratio. The relationship with God is to be a heart to heart, has to be love to love, because He understands your innermost thoughts. He is observing you when no one is observing you. He is observing you whether you are in the washroom or you are in the meeting room, whether you are in the middle of the forest or you are up in the skies in an aeroplane, He is always observing you."

Swami often used to point at his robe and say, "Do you know why I wear the color orange? The color orange symbolizes sacrifice. It is not a color of choice in random. It is a color which symbolizes that spirituality is a journey in sacrifice.

Another experience to talk about sacrifice, and how we can learn from Swami : One particular birthday celebration, Swami was sitting inside the interview room, few of the students were around Swami. Swami's eyes were closed for a long time, and after the few minutes, after about 10 - 15 minutes when He opened His eyes, He had asked the boys sitting around Him, "Do you know what I was thinking all this while?" They said no. He said, So many devotees have come to have my Darshan for birthday, I just distributed saris, I was just thinking in my mind, whether all the devotees have received the saris or not."

Even in the middle of birthday celebrations, when thousands of devotees are gathered in Prasanthi Nilayam for a glimpse of Swami, He is interested in seeing whether they have received His Prasadam, whether it is sari, whether it is dress, whether it is food , whether it is anything that He's wanted to give them. That is what a life of sacrifice involves. We need to be all the time living for others.

The next one, the penultimate A. What is A? "A" stands for action. Having understood all of these things, what should we do? You have to practice. One of our teachers once asked Swami, "Swami you are telling us all these things, but they're extremely difficult to practice, you know. Swami said, "Yes. You are

aspiring for the highest. You are aspiring for spiritual progress. Spiritual progress is not for the weak-minded. One's spiritual Progress and spiritual attainment is the most difficult - than the highest of aspirations, but- there is a good news. "What is the good news?" And Swami asked that teacher, He said, "When you were small how did you learn walking, how much time did it take?" "Swami, about 1 year." "Didn't you fall while you were walking?" "Yes Swami." Then what happened? The mother or the father held the hand of the kid, and bit by bit, the kid learned how to walk. Today , walking is second nature, whether we are awake or asleep, we flawlessly walk in the washroom if you have to go in the middle of the night, and of course, irrespective of wherever we are, walking is so natural to us, but to learn that walking, it took fairly long. It took one year as a kid, in which we fell down and damaged our different, ourselves several times. We got hurt, we got injured, there'd be blood, etc,etc .Swami said, Just like walking requires practice, talking requires practice singing requires practice, dancing requires practice acting requires practice, spiritual progress also requires. Practice of Abhayasa- is the word in Sanskrit. We need to practice. We need to consistently be committed to practice, but the problem is that we want to know what the results are. Several times I have these questions, "Why did God create this universe, why this, why that?" It is like wanting to know how certain scientific experiments are done even before learning the ABCD of the alphabets of the language. We have to first start with alphabets, then we have to start with words and sentences, paragraphs and then we move ahead with books, and then we move ahead with much much longer documents. So the journey of practice of spirituality is similar in nature. Are we taking the baby steps and consistently moving ahead? But this desire to know the final result now is what deprives us of our opportunity for spiritual progress, and Swami had narrated the story of this man who was standing at one end of the forest late in the evening, and had to cross about five miles of that forest to reach the other side. He was standing there for a long time and people around were wondering, "Why is he not moving ahead?" So they asked him, "Why are you standing here? Why are you not moving ahead?" He said, "No, I have to cross the five, five mile long forest but the torch light in my hand throws light only up to five feet, how will this five feet light help me cross the five miles of the forest?" So, the people around said, "Oh, foolish man! The five feet light will keep moving ahead as you walk, and with that progression of the light on the dark path of the forest, you will be able to reach the five miles journey. It doesn't look possible at this point in time, but is possible only when you make progress in that direction." Swami used to say, that is the essence of practice.

What is the purpose of the human life? Threefold: giving up animal qualities, sustaining human qualities and attaining divine qualities. That is the purpose of human life. Swami would often say, "I don't want your devotion. I want your transformation." We are always very busy trying to show how devoted we are to Swami, through our service activities through our personal Sadhana, through several other things that we are doing. But is that in turn leading to our transformation? If the transformation does not happen, then the whole purpose of doing all the spiritual practices is incomplete, because they are a means to the end of self transformation, and not an end in themselves. And the first step in this transformation, is accepting our mistakes or the situation we are in. Another very nice experience between Swami and students, Some students were sitting with Swami inside the interview room. He had given them Murkoo-which is a crunchy snack, as it was a long session. Usually, whenever there is a long session, Swami would give some snacks - that's what good host does- isn't it? So, Swami gave those, gave that murkoo, and that snack is such that when you bite into it, the crumbs fall into, fall on the plate. Now, there were not plates, were not. There were smaller plates- not very big plates- and you know how shabby we are sometimes, when we have some kinds of foods. So, these boys ate the

Murkoo, ate this crunchy snack and they saw that all the small pieces of that snack had fallen on the ground, around the same time these students had asked Swami, “ Swami, how do we move towards our transformation?” Swami was giving some instructions to the elders, these boys saw that this food pieces have fallen down, so they decided, the best thing would be to lift the carpet up, and shove those small pieces under the carpet. Just when they were about to lift the carpet, Swami turned His face, and looked toward the kids. And He saw that this is what they were doing, and He said, “This what you should not do, if we want to walk towards transformation.”

Yeah, I’m back- and I hope I’m audible again. Sorry for that, I got disconnected. I’ll complete this story. And just complete Man’s journey. So, what is important, is accepting our mistakes and working towards our journey, towards transforming us. Now, how do we know our mistakes? So many questions that I received from the participants had this in common, “How do I stay connected with Swami after His physical exit?” I also thought the same, how do I connect with Swami after He’s left His physical form? I discovered a way which has stayed with me. Ever since after Swami left, what I was doing was, I used to go for long walks in the evening. From the hostel in Prasanthi Nilayam, which is just opposite the international stadium. For almost a few kilometers away from the hostel, I used to plug in, listen to a discourse in Swami’s own voice in that one hour, go walk and come back. I literally felt that Swami was talking to me, and giving me guidance on my spiritual journey. In His lifetime, Swami has given five thousand discourses. They answered every single question that baffles humankind. There is nothing that we are facing as problems and difficulties in our life, that Swami has not addressed in His discourses. But the problem is that we hardly make any effort in order to access these discourses, read them, ruminate over them, reflect over them and then work towards implementing them in our lives. It is called Shraavanam, mananum Njijasanam- listen or you read, then you do-mananum or you reflect or introspect, and do. You then do njijasanam- you practice what you have listened or read, and introspected on. Very often, we think that spirituality is a ATM machine. Any time money. You insert a card and you get money. Similarly, we insert a query, and the answer should come. It does not happen that way. Spirituality is a journey where a lot of time needs to be invested in understanding the message of the Master, and hence, it is very, very crucial that we practice this, and before that, we are aware of what is the message. This is also there in the nine point code of conduct- regular reading of Sai literature. If there is one key takeaway from this webinar that I would urge you to practice, is spend fifteen to twenty minutes every single day studying Sai literature in a structured form. Don’t do this cheat business. Lot of people said, we put cheats if we have a query. Do you do that in business? Do you do that in your profession? Do you do that when writing an exam? Then why follow cheat while doing, living in your life, when Swami has given all the answers. We need to take up, for example, Sathya Sai Speaks. Invest fifteen minutes, and discourse after discourse, study what Swami has said. Iver a period of six weeks/ eightweeks you take up Vidya Vahini, Jnana Vahini or Dharma Vahnini, which is Swami’s writings on these areas, and spend about a month - fifteen minutes every day, reading and ruminating in a structured way.

What Swami has said, it is only then that we will be able to understand and mature in our own understanding, as to what Swami has laid down for us. He wants us to be active foot soldiers and leaders of the Sathya Sai Mission for the future.

It is not one book, it is not one discourse, it is not one mantra He said.

When there is an ocean out there, can we fill our vessels to the extent that we can, we have the capacity to, and and fill our personality with that message, and the benefits that it has to give.

I still remember in in 2007, we started the Shiridi Sai Satcharita parinaya****, which is reading the life of Shirdi Sai Baba in a week's time, just before Guru Poornima. So, we had taken the card to Swami, seeking His blessings that, "Swami, we want to do this Shiridi Sai Satcharita parinaya**and seek your blessings." He had listened to the students, He blessed them and He said, "Yes, I am very happy, go ahead do it." A week later, we completed that one week of reading of the life of Shirdi Sai Baba, and the day after was Guru Poornima. So, in His guru Poornima discourse, when Swami was talking about His message, He said,"Last week, some students came to me and said, we are doing Shiridi Sai Satcharita parinaya***for one week," and Swami said, "I told them I'm very happy go ahead and do it, and then in the discourse Swami said, But I want to tell all of you it is not important to turn the page of the book while you are reading the life of Shirdi Sai Baba. It is important to turn the pages of your heart, and transform yourself while you are reading and inbibing the message. " That is, life places before you then, the whole purpose of reading that book is justified so action is all about practicing what He has placed before us. He has transmuted His breath into words, and those words into messages which have been documented verbatim. It is our loss if we don't invest our time in reflecting on that.

The last is M. What is M?

M stands for Mergence, that which the Guru or the Master, is supposed to confer on all of us. What is this meregence?

It was Buddha Purnima Day, and in that context, Swami was telling us, what is true Nirvana- what is true moksha or mergency. And in His quintessential way, Swami said, "What is moksha? Moksha is giving up your desires, is true mergence. Why? There was this question one asked to Swami," What is the cause of rebirth?" "Desire is the cause of rebirth."

Swami gave the example of a rice, which is sown along with the husk. As long as the husk is there on top of the rice grain, it will regerminate and grow into the another - into another plant. But, the husk is removed. Then, even if the rice grains are sown, they are not going to germinate. That husk is the desire. If we give up the desires, we do not need to come back. True Mergance, or true moksha, is not a destination- somewhere beyond the seven skies where we will have a golden abode staying with God. Here and now, we can experience that if we have a state where we are no longer bound by desires. What is the way to do it?

Very often, we misunderstand the purpose of all the spiritual practices that we undertake. We think that spirituality means singing bhajans, participating in study circle, doing service activities, so on and so forth. This is not spirituality.

Swami had once said, "All these are good activities- they are not spirituality. Then what is spirituality? True spirituality is in realizing your real nature." Now, what is our real nature? Once, Swami was sitting in the Yajur Mandir and listening to Radio Sai. Swami Himself, was listening to radio Sai! And this question of atheist, and atheist came in that conversation- that debate, and then in that, they said, even an atheist or non believers in God are also eligible for self-realization. So, there were some students sitting with Swami and they asked Swami, "Is what they are saying in the radio channel in this discussion true?" Swami said, "Yes. You do not need be devoted to any form of God, to attain the ultimate. You

only need to be aware that you are not this body, you are the soul residing in this body. If that conviction and that experience is what you live by, then no devotion to God is required.”

And how do we achieve this process? Swami always used to say, “God is like a washerman. The washerman just removes the dirt, he doesn’t make the cloth white. The cloth is already white. It has been tainted by all these external forms of dirt. Similarly, you are inherently Divine. All these external influences of several lifetimes have covered up your identity as Divinity.”

Sneham, or friendship with God.

I will conclude with this analogy: Arjuna was verily Krishna’s shadow. Good and bad, he depended on Krishna alone. Even when he had to choose between the army and the weaponless Krishna, he chose the latter. He made Him his charioteer- and lived solely by His command. And to acknowledge this relationship, Krishna called Himself, Sanathana Sarathi. Now, what is the inner significance of this relationship? The inner significance of this relationship between Krishna and Arjuna is ***** Fasten over the senses. The mind must reign over this entire process.

And the one riding in this chariot is you, or the individual. In the mural of Bhagavad Gita or the image of Bhagavad Gita that we see anywhere, what do we see? Arjuna is riding the chariot. Who is the charioteer? Krishna. Who are the best friends? Arjuna and Krishna. So, what is the real message of Bhagavad Gita? What is the real message of the friendship of Arjuna and Krishna? That God, who is the Indweller, should also be the charioteer of our lives. And it is hence that Krishna is considered the best friend of Arjuna and Arjuna is the best friend of Krishna, because the individual and the charioteer are the true friends of each other. They are the true friends of each other because they exist to help each other. Krishna, the charioteer- the God there-is meant to be our Guru, Guide and Master. That is the true message of Sneham or friendship between Arjuna and Krishna.

I will conclude with a quote of Swami, given on 20th August 1978 at the Brindhaven Hostel. He said, “The friendship of Arjuna, is a stage when all distinctions between devotee and God disappear. And the two friends are one. When this stage of utter trust, unshakeable faith and complete absence of doubt, fear and anxiety is reached, the next stage of mergence with God is natural and easy to cover. This is the real friendship to which the youth must aspire for. See God in every being, and then true friendship will blossom. This type of true friendship can only come when you follow the advice of Krishna, or God within.” This is the essence of having Swami as our Guru, Guide and Master, because He is also our closest friend, as well as our Indweller, a genuine friend and He will always give us the right advice if we tap into Him and access Him. And also give us the right direction because He has the reigns of our lives in His Hands. That is why Swami has given Himself the name, Sanathana Sarathi.

I will conclude by saying that the six questions given in the workbook help us to achieve this very purpose for which the Master has come. In fact, the answers to all those six questions, lie in the very first song which Swami had sung in 1940, that is the bhajan, ‘Manasa Bhajore Guru Charanam Dustara Bhava Sagara Taranam’. What is the meaning of that, and how do we understand? Swami had said in one of the discourses, you revert the order. Reverse the order of this bhajan, and the answer is for you. What is the reverse of the order of this bhajan? Dustara Bhava Sagara, which means , first realize that you are in this ocean of life and death. Then, Taranam. Decide that you want to cross this ocean of life and death. Then, find a Guru for yourself. And finally, Manasa Bhajore. Which means, reflect on the Guru’s message, and live that in action. So, the six questions in essence, need to be reflected in the light

of the message that Swami has given. What is the goal of your life? Are we convinced that mergence or becoming one with Swami is the goal of our lives? What are the key expectations from Swami as our Guru, Guide and Master to achieve our goals? Are we treating this relationship as a profit-sharing deal, or are we seeking His guidance and His inspiration to work towards this goal of mergence with Him? What are the challenges that you are facing while practicing the Sai values in your personal and professional life? I think sacrifice and surrender, and a sense of equanimity are the key challenges that we face because things don't go our way, and so we presume that we are no longer in touch with Swami or that Swami is no longer helping us. He's going to hold onto the reigns of our lives as long as we let Him do that. What are the key changes that have come in your life or personality after joining the Sathya Sai Mission? I think this is what I spoke about, practice or action. Are we transforming the understanding of His message into key deliverable action items, and changing by the day? Or are we just happy with the fact that Swami is Divine, I am Human; He is God, I'm not. I will worship Him, He will shower His Grace on me. I will continue to make mistakes, He will continue to forgive me, and this journey will continue like this. No, I am sorry. It is said in Sai Literature that it's not the objective of this relationship. The objective of this relationship is to hold the hand of friendship that Swami has given before us and then to walk with Him as His friend and move together in this journey towards Him. What are the areas of improvement you need to work on? I think that's something which each one of us should reflect on. Given this, how is it that we can improve on ourselves? And what are the areas that we need to work on so that we can better discharge our role as a foot soldier of His mission, and also become a better human being. That is why the mission of the organization is transforming self to transform the world. The transformation of the world begins with the transformation of the individual and the transformation of the individual begins once we are very clear about our actions *

On the medium term and long-term to achieve the areas that you have identified for yourself. I think that responsibility and relationships are the two key areas which we can work on in the short term and medium term to help us achieve this particular objective. So, with this I'll conclude, I'm sure there will be lots and lots of questions, I just didn't want this to be an experience sharing session where I keep on sharing experiences from my life or the lives of fellow students and devotees, and make it a sense of entertainment. I think any Sai conversation, any Sai talk, any Sai discussion, should be based on the message that Swami has given. 1h 24m 5s

Where we lack, how we can work towards it and move ahead. I think this particular 1hr 24m 12s

To present these six areas of how our Divine Master has given us these six key areas for us to focus on and how our friendship with Him will help us achieve them. With that, I will conclude. I look forward to the other two sessions, and please feel free to share your thoughts and your questions, for the final session two months later. We will be responding to individual questions. I'll also encourage you to visit the Sathya Sai with students blog. It's accessible on google. It's a compilation of the messages, discourses, conversations, the experiences of some of the students and Swami in Prasanthi Nilayam. It is put together by the students and managed by the students. It has a search option, and you will have lots and lots of insights, especially directed towards, what are Swami's expectations, what are the experiences that communicate that, and what is Swami's message with respect to the youth and the students. Please do have a visit, please do make the most of these resources, as also with Radio Sai and the wonderful treasure of hours of the Sai message that they do provide for us. And I'm sure that with all this with us, and with His Grace and Blessings, we'll definitely be able to move ahead and achieve the

goal of the human existence, which is that we are born, so as not to be born again. Thank you, Jai Sai Ram.

Thank you so much Brother Shashank, for such an inspiring and uplifting session. For sharing beautiful stories and experiences with us. From the session, we take home many lessons. For it to be known, that the rarest thing to be found, is a true friend. That Swami, is a good example, and a teaching friend to us. That we should always remember to pay taxes to God for the gifts of nature. And we also focused on how it is that we should earn money. That it should be earned in a righteous way and that it is also important to spend righteously. We went over the four qualities that youth should practice, starting with friendship. Friendship with equals-a relationship that stems from the heart to heart, and is infused with love. One friend gives gifts of love with their own hands to the other. We learned that kindness and compassion should be given to those who are less than us in age, health or standing. That compassion, goes directly when we serve, and does not wait in an ivory tower. That dignity of the recipient, must remain intact. We learnt about appreciation (Mudita). To appreciate what others enjoy and to appreciate the good in them. We learnt that we should run away from bad company. As Swami says, "Tell me your company, I'll tell you who you are." The master taught us quite practically about equanimity today, as we saw in our various technical issues. We learnt, that the objective is always to grow spiritually. The definition of a devotee, is one who is able to bear good and bad with equanimity, and of course, the most profound advice issued- that this too, shall pass. We learnt, that we should always give our best and leave the rest to God. As the results are not determined by solo actions alone. We are judged by Bhavam, which is the intention of our actions. That we do not have rights over outcomes, only our actions. The key to equanimity is detachment. Swami has said, that we should have our hands in society and our heads in the forest. That science, is based on experiments, but spirituality, is based on experience. We were taught, to not harm others, while being honest. As Swami had said, "Na Theshumulu"- In His opinion. That too, He is Aham Sathya Bodhaka, our Truth Teacher. Swami taught us that true sacrifice is when we give up our negativity to God, as it is only God who can render us as pure. That the relationship with God, is not a profit-sharing ratio, but one of love to love. We also learned why Swami always wears beautiful orange, as it symbolizes spirituality and that spirituality is a journey of sacrifice. He taught us that just as walking requires practice, spiritual progress also requires practice (Abhayasa). Swami wants transformation from us, not devotion. And the first step of transformation, is to accept our mistakes and work towards transforming ourselves. We have vast resources available to us, more than 5000 discourses of Bhagawan. And He taught us that spirituality is a journey that takes time. Brother Shashank had recommended that we fifteen to twenty minutes each day on Sai literature, to mature in our understanding. When there is an ocean available to us, why not fill our vessels to full capacity. We learnt, that Nirvana or Moksha is found in giving up desires, that is where we find true mergence. That desires are the reason for rebirth, and nirvana is not a destination, it is a state where we are not bound by desires. It is said that all we need in life is an awareness that we are the soul, not the body. We were taught, that God is the Indweller, the charioteer of life. When the distinction of God and the individual are removed, two become one. That is true friendship with God. The answers to life, lie in Manasa Bhajore, the bhajan- When we reverse the order. First, realise that we are in the ocean of life. Decide, that we want to cross this ocean. Find a Guru, and then live your life through these actions. The most important message as passed on by Brother Shashank, is to hold the hand of friendship and walk with God. Thank you once again to Brother Shashank. We offer our heartfelt

gratitude to our dearest Swami for His ever-loving presence in our lives. We trust, that you are enjoying this InSAightful journey and that the information received, will inspire further transformation in each and every one of us. We will now end with one Aum and three Shantis. Aum. Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

May our dearest Swami keep guiding us to be His best friend and shower His abundant blessings on us, always. Wishing you a lovely week ahead, Jai Sai Ram