

The True Flowers for Worship

From a Discourse by Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Dhamakshetra on May 12, 1981

"When the mind is cleansed of all its dross and impurities, and noble and pure feelings are cultivated, then will dawn the Vision of Wisdom and the entire creation will be glimpsed in its true light as Brahman (the supreme Godhead itself).

"If there be no flower, the fruit-bud is not born; if there be no fruit-bud there will be no fruit either. In the same manner, if there be no dedicated activity (Karma), devotion (Bhakti) will not arise. Without devotion, wisdom (Jnana) will not dawn."

Embodiments of the Pure Spirit: It is not correct and proper for a person to remain always in a stationary state (i.e. in the elementary state in the spiritual sphere). Just as a student does not accept to remain in the same class in his school) for ever. Each year he will be eager to progress from class to class.

In the same manner, it is not befitting and proper for a spiritual aspirant to remain in the same state without making progress and rising higher and higher. One should not remain and stay back in the path of duality (Dwaita) only all his life-time.

One should progress from the path of dualism to the path of Qualified Non-dualism and thereafter to the path of Non-dualism (i.e. to the Advaitic state) and should try to experience and realize the Supreme Principle and Reality.

While keeping this as the ultimate Ideal and Objective, one should in the beginning, however, take to devotional practices like Pooja and Archana as preparatory disciplines. This indeed has been the tradition in our country, to do the worshipping of God with flowers and by performing the sixteen-modes of service (Shodasopachara).

But there is a higher mode of offering worship to God than this normal commonplace and ordinary mode of worship. The higher mode of worship is through good and pure thoughts, through good and pure conduct. This is a far superior type of devotion and is also called Para Bhakti.

Instead, if one continues for all time doing his worship with only flowers and material things, which is the lower form of worship, he will remain in the lower stages only and will not be able to progress forward on the spiritual path.

In the initial stages, however, such worship is very much necessary and much beneficial too. But to remain in this same elementary state for all the time and thereby failing to rise and evolve to higher stages is not good and is very unfortunate indeed.

It is a far higher and nobler form of worship to propitiate God with good conduct, good thoughts and keeping holy company (Satsang). Thus worshipping God through one's own virtues is no ordinary worship, but is a far higher and advanced mode of worship. The Scriptures have referred to this mode of worship as Guna-Archana, worship through virtues, and also they have listed out the virtues through the offering of which, God will be pleased and we will be able to earn His Grace.

These are the Real Flowers for Worship:

Ahimsa (Non-violence) is the First Flower.
Indriya-Nigraham (Sense-control) is the Second Flower.
Sarva Bhuta Daya (Compassion to all beings) is the Third Flower.
Kshama (Forbearance) is the Fourth Flower.
Santhi (Equanimity) is the Fifth Flower.
Tapas (Harmony of thought, word and deed) is the Sixth Flower.
Dhyana (Meditation) is the Seventh Flower.
Sathyam (Truth) is the Eight Flower.

Through the worship of God with these Eight Flowers, His Grace can be won in full. [This is] Instead of worshipping God with flowers obtained from Nature which fade and wither away in no time and lose their fragrance. Instead of worshipping with such flowers and craving for rewards which will be as transient, you should try to worship God through real, everlasting and enduring Flowers, Flowers of your virtues, and earn thereby everlasting and enduring rewards, Reward of the Experience and Realization of the Ultimate Reality.

In our country Bharat, there were many who attained to such highest state, [the] state of divine realization, by practising this mode of worship. But ordinarily people continue for all the time their performance of worship with nature-given flowers and do not take to the higher mode of worship, and as the rewards they earn and receive in return are as paltry and as transient as the flowers with which they worship, they remain forever dissatisfied and discontented. Therefore, every aspirant desiring to attain to the highest state of gaining what is lasting and enduring, should take up to the superior form of worship, of worship with The Flowers of Virtues.

You should also first realise that the flowers needed for this higher mode of worship are the flowers of one's own heart, and are not the ones that grow in gardens and which you can purchase from anywhere in basketful.

The flowers of virtue which will for ever remain fresh and fragrant are those that spring and blossom forth in the Brindavan of your own heart.

Embodiments of Divinity: The flowers you daily use in your customary worship are not of your creation. You are just procuring them from trees and gardens where they blossom by the Will of God, and you are offering them back to God. What is the greatness in it, in your offering to God what has been created by Him alone?

People go to bathe in the holy Ganges, take the water from the river in the fold of their palms and do an offering of the same back to the river. The water you are offering is not your own, not bequeathed to you by your grandfather as inheritance to you, it is not of your creation.

Instead, if from the tree of your life, if you pick out the flowers and fruits which you have cultivated and nurtured, the virtues you have cultured in your heart, if you make an offering of them to the Lord, that is indeed something distinctive and noble. To cultivate good qualities, it requires, persevering effort. You will have to cross many hurdles in it.

Through [the] cultivation of virtues only, your mind will get purified and can acquire one-pointedness and become absorbed in Divine contemplation and meditation. In the absence of such good qualities, the mind will not be able to remain quiet and calm even for a moment. If the mind is not endowed with good qualities and good thoughts, how can it succeed to fix itself in meditation? If you have not procured and be ready with bricks and mortar, how can you ever raise the house?

Therefore, if you desire to engage and immerse your mind in meditation, you should firstly imbibe good qualities and good thoughts.

The first flower of virtue is Ahimsa (Non-violence).

In common parlance, Ahimsa is understood to mean as not causing physical harm to any living beings. This is not the true meaning. The true implication and the real meaning of Ahimsa is of not causing any harm to any being either through thought, word or deed. The cleansing and purifying of one's thought, word and deed is termed as Input; in the spiritual parlance. This kind of flower is meant when it is recited, "Tridalam, Trigunakaram, Trinetrancha triyayudham, Trijanma Papa Samharam, Ekabilvam, Sivarpanam."

One's thought, word and deed are to be harmonized and unified and offering made to God with such a flower.

The second flower is the control of the sensory organs.

Our senses habitually run without any restraint and control. If the horses and animals are let free and allowed to go on their own, it will result in great danger. We should, therefore, restrain them, i.e. the senses, and guide and regulate them on the right path and in the right direction.

Through exercise of Viveka (i.e. discrimination) between what is right and what is wrong, between what is permanent and lasting and what is impermanent and fleeting, we should discipline our senses and put them under control.

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit: The body, the organs, the mind and the intelligence are like the clothes we are wearing. They are our Upadhis.

The body has been defined as "which gets burnt." We should not understand by this as a reference to the cremation, the setting fire to the body after death. The body is constantly aflame, it is being scorched all the time with all sorts of, worries and troubles.

There is also another definition of the body, "that which is ever decaying." To imagine and hope that we can ever get any real happiness through the means of this body, which is constantly wearing out and is doomed to fall off, is a total delusion.

God has gifted us each of the organs of our body for a specific and particular purpose. It is only when we use the organs for the right purpose, for the purpose for which they have been created, we will be fulfilling the divine purpose and can merit His Grace. Each of the human organs are to be put to use only for the purpose they have been created and meant.

The conduct of these organs should be controlled and regulated on certain chosen and proper paths.

God has given us the nose. The nose is meant for us to breathe in and to breathe out air and to inhale in fragrances. But if we use the nose for taking in snuff, the purpose of the nose is lost and is wasted. In the same manner, God has gifted us a mouth and the tongue, in order to take in sustaining and satwic (i.e. pure) food.

But if we use the mouth for swallowing unholy food and intoxicating drinks, the sanctity and the purpose of the mouth are lost. Keeping this in view, we should discriminate and reason out as to what purpose and in which manner we have to use our different organs, and should use them only in the right manner.

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit: The body in itself is insentient. You may question, if the body is insentient, how is it that it grows. The answer to that is, for growing in size, the life principle is not required. Daily after sweeping your house, if you go on throwing the dirt in one place, you will find that in a few days it piles up into a huge heap. Likewise is the growth of this insentient body. Every day, from morning till evening, you are loading into your body something or other, food, tiffin (snacks), coffee, etc., and thereby your body is growing. Stop feeding the body and you will find that the growth of the body also comes to a stop. Since the body by itself is insentient in what manner are we to control the organs?

The organs are not to be used for exciting and rebellious adventures. Nor are we to subject them to sorrow, which indeed serves no purpose. Sorrow and grief are not natural to man. Bliss is the real nature of man.

Bliss is man's own innate nature, but he deludedly thinks sorrow is his lot and subjects himself to grief for no purpose at all. If we subject our senses to unnecessary excitement or to sorrow, our strength and energy will get vitiated and debilitated.

Because of mental agitations and excitement only, the bodily illness sets in. Subjecting himself to excitement and sorrow, man is aging out also too fast and too prematurely. The reason for our precious human life being wasted away is only the lack of proper sense-control. Hence the importance of worshipping God with sense-restraint and sense-control, which is the second flower of virtue.

The third flower is compassion to all living beings - Sarva Bhuta Daya Pushpam.

In our ignorance, we see only the manifoldness in the creation, we see only the superficial multiplicity and do not try to see the basic and unifying Divine Principle, the oneness that is God. We immerse ourselves in worldly pursuits, and are losing ourselves in pursuing worldly desires. As these worldly desires do not find fulfilment, we turn averse to God.

When our worldly desires find some fulfilment, our devotion to God finds a sudden spurt; and when our desires are foiled, our devotion to God changes instantly to aversions, alas!

Plagued always by worldly desires, deludedly thinking that the fulfilment of the mundane desires only is the end and aim of life, and forgetting the Omnipresence of God and the real purpose of life, we are losing all our innate strength and feel weak and helpless.

Our Scriptures have proclaimed that Truth is one only (Ekam Sat), yet we let ourselves attracted and deluded by the unreal appearance of the manifoldness, and are failing to apprehend the non-dual Divine Reality behind this manifoldness.

As I was telling yesterday, we are implanting just one tiny seed. From that tiny' seed, an enormous tree grows in course of time. On that tree will grow thousands of fruits. In each one of the fruits, the (same type of) seed we have planted will be found. In the same manner, from the seed of Divinity, this huge tree of creation (Viswa) has emerged.

In this tree of creation, the living beings and the men are like the fruits. In each one of these fruits, the primal divinity, is latent like the seed. That is why in Bhagwad Gita, the Lord has said, "I am the source and origin of all the living beings and inhere in each one like the seed in the fruit. I am the Atman, the Divine Principle in each and everything."

In the light of this truth only, recognizing that God is inhering as Atma in all, we should cultivate and manifest love towards all beings. This is what is meant by the offering of Sarva Bhuta Daya Pushpam - love and compassion towards all beings.

Iswara (God) is present in all beings. When we apprehend this truth only, the flower of Sarva Bhuta Daya will blossom in our hearts, and we will be able to offer it, with all its beauty and fragrance at Feet of the Lord.

The fourth one is the flower of forbearance.

In fact, Kshama is one of the foremost and the highest virtues for a man. Man unfortunately develops a most narrow outlook - instead of making his heart expansive, [he] constricts down his heart, by nurturing ideas like 'I', 'mine' and 'myself.' He deludedly thinks, 'I and myself only matter. Others are all apart and different from me. They are none of my concern!' As long as narrow ideas are rooted in our heart, the flower of forbearance will never grow in there.

Only when we are able to develop the feeling that we are all the children of God, that we are all one-brotherhood and that none really is apart and alien to us, the flower of forbearance will blossom in our heart. Only when there is love, there will be forbearance. Forbearance is but the result of love and compassion towards all beings.

There is a small example.

In our home, there are our children and there is also our servant. Our son unfortunately has taken to bad habits, he goes on pilfering money or something from home every day. What we do in such circumstances is, we try to admonish him, and at the most we may beat him. But we will never think of reporting and handing him

over, to the police. But if the servant boy commits even the paltriest theft, if he steals a small spoon even, at once we report and hand him over to the police.

What is really the reason behind this, that we show such indulgence and lenience towards our son whatever big thefts he be committing, whereas even for such a minor theft of a small stainless steel spoon, we create almost a Ramayana and hand over the servant boy in our house to the police?

It is only because of our narrow idea and attachment that the boy is my son, he belongs to me, and you feel that the servant boy is an outsider, he does not belong to you - hence there is no place for forbearance in your heart towards the servant boy.

So you see that only when you can have a loving heart and feeling that 'everyone is mine', you will earn the virtue of forbearance. It is then only that love also grows in you. This is the reason why it has been said that love lives by giving and forgiving.

Self lives by getting (receiving) and forgetting. Therefore, if we desire to cultivate in our heart the flower of Kshama, the way to it is by first promoting love towards all beings and then the flower of Kshama will blossom in us automatically.

The fifth one is the flower of Santhi - equanimity and peace.

The Santhi is not to be interpreted to mean remaining stubborn and silent, without making a murmur however much you were beaten and scolded by whosoever (but agitated and angered mentally). Santhi is certainly not this.

When you are able to keep up your mental equanimity and remain unperturbed, and without getting excited when someone is making false accusations against you and attributing to you faults which aren't in you, this is real Santhi. Only when your heart is filled with and is full of love, Santhi results naturally.

When is it that we do not have peace? Actually, peace is not something which you can acquire in you from outside. To a large extent, peace is lost as a consequence of bad qualities.

- **With pure thoughts, man becomes pure.**
- **With impure thoughts, man becomes a victim of sorrow.**
- **When one has been able to sublimate all his thoughts, he becomes a sage, anchored in peace.**

When one is free from all thoughts, quietened all the modifications of the mind whether good or bad, then he will have established himself in peace. Therefore when you are able to arrest all your thoughts and mental agitations, you can have peace.

What is the reason for all our pain and sorrow? Your own bad and unholy thoughts are the cause of your pain and sorrow. Through good thoughts and holy ideas only one will become a Sadhu. By Sadhu, it is not meant one who dons a saffron robe and has a clean-shaven head and wearing Rudrakshamalas on his neck. Sadhu really means one who is filled with holy ideas, who has become a Sathya Sankalpa Swarupa - embodiment of all pure and holy ideas.

In the state of peace, man's nature will be like the rippleless water surface of a lake. When there is water in the store-drum, you find ripples caused by the movement and play of the wind. With the disturbed surface of the water, you will find your reflection in the water also wavering and shaky. In muddy and impure water, your reflection will be indistinct and dull. In clear and rippleless water, your reflection will be also steady and clear.

In the same manner, although the Basic Reality, the Atmic Reality, is only one and the same in all beings and in all the creation, its reflection however, its degree of manifestation, varies as per the purity and nature of the reflecting medium; when the Atma is reflected in Tamo-guna, it reflects as nascence or Avidya. When the Atma is reflected in Rajo-guna, it reflects as Jeeva (embodied being). When the Atma is reflected in pure Satwa-guna, it reflects as Maya, as the divine associated Maya. Maya is the vesture of Iswara.

Maya is, therefore, of divine nature. Satwic reflection is Iswaratwa. Rajo-guna reflection is Jeeva, and Thamo-guna reflection is nature (creation). Therefore it should be recognized and realized, that although the reflections may appear as different, they are not really and basically different, as they are all derived from the same divine principle. God, man and creation thus are one, in their essence.

Therefore we should try to apprehend the basic Truth, which is the source of all - The Muladhara Sathya.

There is a fruit. Even if it be a neem fruit, but when it becomes fully ripe, it acquires a sweetness. In the case of Santhi also, only when you have attained to the state of perfection, you will be able to attain and enjoy the bliss and supernal sweetness of Peace. Such state of peace will be ours when we have promoted the virtue of Kshama, forbearance, in ourselves.

The sixth one is the flower of Tapas.

What is meant by this Tapas? It is not giving up your wife and children and running away to a forest and fixing your body in an upside-down posture, with head down and feet up. The notion we have of Tapas is, of giving up everything and running away to a forest and taking to contemplation of God and like that. Tapas firstly means cleansing of the mind of all Impure thoughts. Tapas actually implies coordination of one's thought, word and deed - harmonization of our thoughts, words and deeds.

Whatever thoughts arise in our mind, to render them into words as they are, and to put them faithfully into action - that is the implication of Tapas. In this context only there is the saying, that such a one is a Mahatma, in whom his thought, word and deed are harmonious and one.

Driving away, giving up of all bad thoughts from the mind is Sacrifice. That will lead you to Yoga. Giving up one's property, separating away from wife and going away to the forest is not Yoga.

The common notion of sacrifice is giving up of one's property and leaving his wife. This is a very false and wrong notion of sacrifice. From the mind all bad and unholy thoughts are to be driven away and mind should be made pure.

You should not understand Tapas in any other manner. Tapas consists in coordinating and harmonizing your word with your thought and your deed with your word.

The seventh flower is the flower of Meditation.

Today meditation has taken many forms and has assumed many connotations. All sorts of meditations that people are adopting today are against the true spirit, culture and tradition of Bharat. Sitting in Padmasana and trying to awaken the Kundalini Sakthi (life energy) in the Muladhara and leading it up to Sahasrara in the head is not the real Dhyana.

True Dhyana consists in recognizing the presence of God everywhere and manifesting that awareness (spiritual awareness) in every bit of work we do. God is all-pervading, He is the inner-being in all, He is the Immanent Principle and Reality in all the creation.

In contrast to this, trying to limit down and confining the presence of God to one place you choose for your Dhyana, is too narrow and a constricted outlook on your part.

When you are driving the car, you have to feel that the car is your God. When you are transacting business in the market, you should feel that the market is your God. As per the sacred tradition of our country Bharat, it has been the habit to first make obeisance to the work which we undertake. Before we begin any work, we should begin with the feeling that that work is God. My obeisance to the work - Tasmai Namaha Karmane is the Upanishadic Instruction. The work I have to do, I regard it as God, and make my obeisance to God in the form of that work.

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit: In our everyday and day-today experience, we have constant instances of this devout feeling and outlook. There is the Tabala player. Before he begins to play on the Tabala, he pays obeisance to the Tabala.

See the Harmonium player. He pays obeisance to the harmonium before he begins to play on it. A dancer before she starts her dance, offers obeisance to her gungroo (ankle-bells). Even the driver of the lifeless lorry, before he sets his hands on the steering wheel, offers his namaskar to it.

You needn't have to go so far. If your foot, even inadvertently, hits or dashes against another man's foot, you immediately offer namaskar to his foot or to him.

The significance of all these, is the faith and belief that God is present in all beings and in all things. To thus regard the entire creation as the form of God and in doing whatever bit of work you do with the awareness is Dhyana.

Therefore, you must cultivate the feeling of kinship and love with all the creation. You should have the convictions and feeling that the whole creation is linked up with your own heart.

Lord Krishna revealed to Arjuna the Cosmic Vision - the Cosmic Form of the Lord. If we try to understand the significance of this, we will realise that the whole cosmos is enveloped by the Lord, the entire creation is existent in Him alone.

What did Arjuna find in Krishna? Within the Form of Krishna, Arjuna could perceive all the oceans, all the mountains, all the beings and the whole of the creation. Since all the creation is existent in Iswara alone, it follows that the creation is essentially identical with the Lord.

If you feel that Krishna belongs to you, you try to confine Him within the bounds of your heart, it isn't wise and proper for you. The proper attitude will be that you belong to the Lord. If your feeling is that the Lord belongs to you, it is sheer ego. But on the contrary, if you feel that you belong to the Lord, it is pure Para Bhakti, the higher form of devotion.

The people of Dwaraka used to proudly feel that Krishna belonged to them, and that because of the One who belonged to them, the Yadava clan, because of their Krishna, the Pandavas won the battle of Mahabharata. This pride and attitude brought their own destruction. Such attitude promotes the ego.

On the other hand, the attitude of the Copikas was entirely different. They always felt that they entirely belonged to Krishna and used to say "Krishna, we belong to you, we are yours." Because of this, the Copikas are characterized in Bhagavata as those totally surrendered to Krishna and the people of Dwaraka as those priding Krishna as one belonging to them.

Like the Gopikas, the peerless devotees, you should also cultivate the feeling of surrender to the Lord. You should have the feeling "I belong to my Lord, I subsist in you, I am enveloped by you, I am growing in you" and with such feelings, you should develop the cosmic vision, i.e. that you and the whole creation is subsisting in the Lord. This is the right basis and attitude for real Dhyana.

The next flower of virtue is Truth.

Your simply speaking truth, just narrating facts as they are, this is only Loukika Satyam - Vyavaharika Satyam. Actually this is not what is meant by Truth, and the term has a far deeper connotation.

Truth, in its real sense, is that which is for ever changeless, which does not change at any time. It is Trikala Satya - Eternal Reality.

The Loukika Satya is of a very much lower order. It is truth for that moment alone. The next moment it is no longer valid; it isn't the same what it was a little while before. All the material objects in this world, which you see, are in a continuous flux of change every moment and they are all subject to decay. In this ever-changing and transient world, how can anything what you see or hear be a valid and lasting truth? Truth really means God - This is the eighth flower of worship. Truth is the form of Divinity.

In this world and nature, what we experience and take as truths are of relative nature only - [they are] Vyavaharika Sathyas. Let us take chemistry for example.

You take some chemicals, and mix them in some order. They react and produce another chemical. When you mix lime and turmeric powder, a red colour results. This is chemistry.

You take the case of physics. If you take a 3 inch long needle and heat it in fire, it will become 3.5 inches long. Such is the truth of physics.

How long do the truths of physics and chemistry last? Their validity is only of a relative value - their significance is of a relative nature.

But the Spiritual Truth, Truth of God, is eternally valid, valid under any circumstances and ever changeless, whether you use fire or whatever you may do. So Truth means that which is changeless, which is immutable and which remains ever the same. That is Truth; that is Divinity.

Because we are bereft of such virtues and do not make any attempt to cultivate them, so much of cruelty and suffering is prevalent in the world today. Today, whether they profess themselves as believers or non-believers or semi-believers-cum-semi non-believers, among all of them there is the same type of attitude and conduct which is deplorable.

But the day when we are able to help promoting good virtues in at least among those who are of theistic temperament, that will go a long way and will eventually eradicate atheism from the world.

The attributes of God are said to be Sat (Truth), Chit [Knowledge, Intelligence, Consciousness) and Ananda (Bliss). But these same attributes (in a measure) are the nature of every being also and are manifest in all.

When we follow the path of Truth and through conduct based on truth, we try to acquire knowledge, scientific as well as spiritual, bliss comes to us by itself and of its own. Truth is inhering in us. So also is knowledge. The aspect of bliss is also latent in us. It is also our innate attribute. That is why we desire for bliss always.

If bliss is not our own nature, we can have no claim at all for Ananda at any time. We will not be deserving and entitled to Ananda, if it has not been already our own innate attribute and nature.

We, ourselves are the embodiments of these three attributes, viz., Sat, Chit and Ananda. The one you think you are, is Sat. The one others think you are, is Chit. The one you really are is Ananda. These three attributes are the privilege of man; they are his birth-right. They are his very nature, they are his Swabhava. They are indeed his essential attributes.

Oblivious of this essential truth, we have no respect for human dignity, and go on criticizing, ridiculing and abusing others. By ridiculing others, we become sharers of their sins. We should never ridicule others and hurt their feelings. If you find a fault in others, try to talk to them gently, reason out, convince and mend them with understanding and love. There should be steady and steadfast faith in human dignity in the Atmic Reality and the divine omnipresence. Samsaya (lack of faith) is ruinous.

Doubt is a demonic quality which we should never let in and harbour. Man plagued by doubt will not be able to even sleep. He will have no peace of mind. Doubt is like a devouring worm infesting the flower of love. A heart filled with doubt is like a place infested with bats.

To rid the heart from doubts, and to get anchored in the awareness of the omnipresence of God, one should take to worship with these Eight Flowers.

Embodiments of Love: You should cultivate the habit of moderation. We should not go to excesses and extremes in any matter or actions.

Even the ocean which is a source of immense benefit and gives sustenance to the world, never crosses its bounds. Even in case of food, which is essential for the sustenance of the body (if eaten in a little excess) will turn into poison and cause disease. Take another instance, the chewing of pan (Betel leaves). If you do not apply lime, it isn't palatable and doesn't serve the purpose. But simply because lime is necessary, if you apply it liberally, it will cause blisters in the mouth. Therefore lime also is to be used in its limit.

That is why our scriptures, which proclaim the spiritual truths and which are endorsed by the seers, by their personal experience and example have exhorted Ati Sarvatra Varjayet - "Avoid extremes in all cases." If we take anything in excess, it will ruin our health. But again, if we restrict it to too little, that will also cause harm, and will affect the health adversely.

You should therefore adopt always "moderation."

You should consider all matter and everything as God; consider every bit of work you do also as God - This is the Pathway of Bhakti. In the initial stages, while you are still a beginner in the spiritual path, you can use an idol or a picture to represent and symbolize divinity. But you should try gradually to transcend that state. You can worship a picture as God. But do not worship God as a picture. Do not limit down the Infinite Form of God to the confines of your small picture. You must try to rise and evolve to higher states of devotion from the primary stages you begin with.

The beginning stage is like the bud. It is the common and primary stage. It is Sahaja Bhakti. The higher state is like the flower. It is Vishesha Bhakti.

Then there is the still advanced stage, the worship through virtues, which is like the fruit. This is Para Bhakti. Without [a] bud, there can't be the flower and without flower there can't be the fruit. Therefore these three are the natural and sequential stages on the Pathway of Bhakti. Recognizing the value of the higher forms of worship, you should endeavour to rise from stage to stage, and as you succeed in this, you will enjoy the real bliss, you will experience the bliss of divinity.

Embodiments of Pure Love: Although 12 years have passed by since the establishment of Dharmakshetra, you haven't really advanced much as you should have, on the above lines, and this sense of disappointment is weighing on you, I know. But don't dishearten. Continue performing your Bhajans and Poojas at home, as usual, but when you enter the society, recognize the Society as the Form of God - as the Viswa Virat Swarupa. Try to experience the omnipresence of God in the

Society. Cultivate good qualities and let them grow and strengthen in your service to the Society. Let not your personal problems and the agitations of your mind hamper and dampen your enthusiasm in your work for the Society. You will then have peace and will enjoy bliss.

God is omnipresent and pervades all the creation and the whole universe. If you try to limit down and confine such God within the infinitesimal and small bounds of a 3" x 4" picture, it is the most narrow idea. To limit God, who is vast and infinite and its boundless, to the tiny form of an idol or picture, it is too narrow and constricted an outlook on your part. You must widen your heart and make it broader and broader, till it merges in the vastness of God.

If you look at the balloon, in the initial stages it is tiny and flat. As you go on blowing air into it, it goes on getting inflated into bigger and bigger size, till it bursts and the air within it and the air in the vast space becomes one.

To begin with, ideas of 'I' and 'mine' are natural. But one should march ahead from the narrow feelings of 'I' and 'mine' into the vaster spheres where you should feel 'all are mine', 'all are one', which will lead you to the ultimate and highest state, when you will be beyond all bounds and merge into and feel one with God who is omnipresent. You should therefore first recognize the true ideal of life, that man's life in this world is a journey from the position of 'I' to the position of 'we'.

If for all time you remain stationary in the position of 'I' only, you have missed the purpose of life. This creation is like a bridge, which is provided for you to be able to reach God. It is the link and connection between you and God. 'I' is one hill and 'God' is another hill. Between you and God, there is the bridge, the aspect of creation. If you do not make use of the bridge, you will never be able to reach the goal and destination of your life, i.e. of reaching God.

You should move into society by dedicated service to society; you should march forward on the bridge, and thus utilize it to reach and merge in God. I hope you will understand this march, and bless you in this spiritual adventure.