

Shraddha. Saburi.

SAI SANDESH

The Official Monthly Newsletter of
OM SAI MANDIR

A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION
45-11 Smart Street * Flushing, NY 11355 * Tel. (718) 461-0454
www.omsaimandir.org * info@omsaimandir.org
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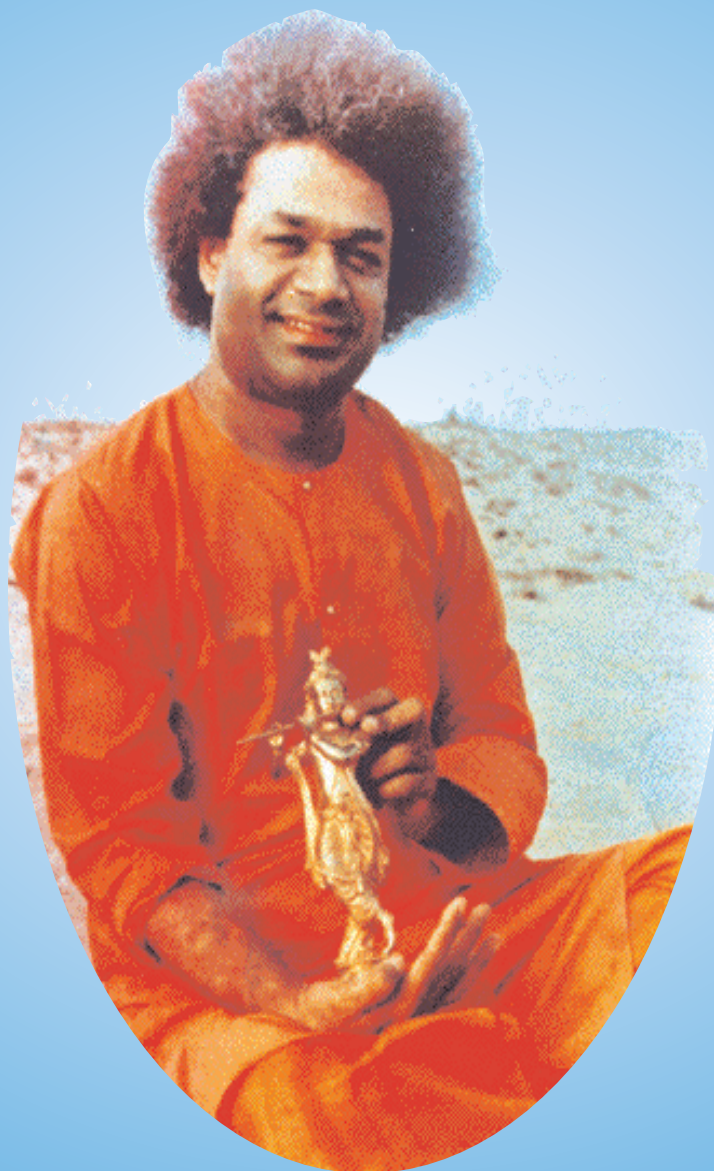


Love All. Serve All.

August 2006

Volume 3, Issue 8

SRI KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI SPECIAL ISSUE



SURRENDER AND *Let Go*

BY THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

“Whatever God grants is for your good, for your liberation; not for your fall or bondage. A God who does evil is no God at all. God has no likes and dislikes; He is above and beyond all traits and characteristics. So, how can He be hating or revengeful? He is Mercy. He is Goodness, He is Wisdom, He is Power. He gives you what you ask. Learn to ask the really beneficial boons. Do not go to the wish-fulfilling tree and come back in glee, with a towel that you asked and got.”
—Sathya Sai Baba

Glorified in every religious text, *surrender* epitomizes the pinnacle of man’s spiritual journey. Yet, many fail to grasp its true meaning. To surrender is to become like a hollow flute through which the Lord plays melodious tunes. The flute does not blemish the divine melody by dictating its own notes; it simply trusts the player, stays hollow, and eagerly, but patiently, awaits the Lord’s kiss. [Is it any wonder the flute is so dear to Krishna?] The individual who makes the mind hollow in this manner becomes a perfect instrument in God’s capable hands and enjoys the bliss that accrues as a result—a reward that no earthly pleasure can ever confer, for, truly speaking, surrender is its own reward and *permanent* joy, merely its offshoot.

We already practice it

Although it sounds thorny, surrendering is not new to the human race. As a matter of fact, we regularly acquiesce, even in routine life. A newborn knows not what to do; it simply trusts the mother, who in turn responds to the child’s innocent reliance by unconditionally taking care of all its needs. A patient undergoing surgery is another example of our blind trust in fellow-humans. The patient quietly rests on the operating table with full faith that the doctor may cut open the body but won’t cause any harm. Think that’s all? What about our air trips? Don’t we submit completely? We easily trust an unfamiliar pilot to take us to our desired destination without every entertaining the fear that he can drown the plane midway. If we can trust unknown people in this manner, how much more should we trust God.

Whatever God wills, takes shape

Pointing to a bird, Krishna once asked Arjuna, “Do you see that peacock?” Arjuna responded in the affirmative. “Oh Arjuna, it is not a peacock; it is an eagle,” said Krishna. Arjuna promptly agreed. The naughty Krishna then said, “I am sorry; it is a dove.” Arjuna approved again. “It is not a dove at all; it is a crow,” asserted the mischievous Lord. Arjuna acceded yet again. Krishna was now roaring with

laughter, as if mocking Arjuna’s blind agreements. The wise Arjuna, however, gave an eye-opening response: “What you say is the truth for me. You can make a crow into a dove, or a peacock into an eagle. Why should I differ from what you declare? Your word is the truth I go by.”¹ Arjuna had realized that the five elements were nothing but God’s slaves and would unfailingly carry out His command.

Although surrender is such a noble virtue, our ego and possessiveness⁸ prevent us from submitting to God. During the Mahabharata War, Arjuna was very despondent and confused. On one hand was righteousness; while on the other, his blood relatives disguised as opponents. Faced with the unsolvable dilemma, he surrendered to God and sought His advice. Until that instant, Arjuna had relied on his own resourcefulness, but the moment he surrendered, Krishna taught him the *Gita* and personally steered the way to victory.

The Lord protects His devotees

During the sixties, Swami took upon himself a serious heart attack that was to affect a devotee who had surrendered even his mind to God. Sai’s timely protection had saved his life. Draupadi, too, had experienced this protection in the Dwapara Yuga (the previous age) when evil forces were attempting to disrobe her in public. When none came to her rescue, she helplessly called out to Krishna for help. The Lord immediately appeared on the scene and protected Draupadi’s modesty by covering her with an endless stream of fabric that the evildoers could never exhaust.

Just let go; He knows what is best

Sai Baba often explains “letting go” by giving the example of dropping a handkerchief. It is much harder to hold on to the cloth as it causes strain on the fingers, but releasing it is much easier. Our worries are like a kerchief woven from threads of worldly attachments, which if dropped would grant us everlasting peace. In comparison to our *eternal* cosmic life, the earthly journey is not even a millionth of a fraction of a second; if such be the case, why does it matter whether we live in a palace or a hut?

Guru Charitra cites the example of a devotee who approached Sri Guru seeking protection from an alien king. The king would order the killing of one *brahmin* every year, and that year happened to be the devotee’s turn. After [futile] worrying for many months, he resorted to the Lord



and expressed his feeling: “Thy will, not mine.” Sri Guru assured him of divine protection and ordered a bold visit to the monarch. The devotee surrendered his worries to the Lord and left for the palace. As soon as the disciple entered the court, the king fainted mysteriously. On waking up, he honored the devotee instead of killing him.

Surrender always draws a very powerful response from God, as in the example of a mother-in-law. The absence of grandchildren in her family was a cause of great concern for the lady. When she visited Swami, the latter explained that destiny had not decreed children in her lineage. The woman did not lose hope, however, and insisted that Sai could alter the *divine writ* itself. She left all her worries at Swami’s feet and returned home with renewed faith and hope. After a year, she came back with grandchildren.

The Lord surrenders back

Dr. K.V. Raghava Rao (Guruji) of Hyderabad was a highly evolved soul, nay, a saint who had completely surrendered to Sai. His relationship with Baba was very intimate, and the latter would often warn him about approaching dangers. Once, Sai cautioned him about an imminent stroke. Ordinary devotees would panic in such situations, but Guruji cheerfully accepted the disease as God’s blessings. Baba, on his part, surrendered Himself back to Guruji and would honor every prayer that emerged from his pure heart. Once, a *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) learnt about his nearing death. He was terrified and vehemently prayed to Shirdi Sai Baba. Baba appeared to him in meditation and said that He would not reverse the verdict as his allotted time on earth was over, but also added that there was one surrendered soul (Guruji) whose prayers could never be refused. The *sadhaka* immediately rushed to Dr. K.V. Raghava Rao, on whose request Baba prevented the demise and extended the *sadhaka*’s life by eight years.

The path of devotion

One should not be overwhelmed by difficulties encountered in life; they are all transient. The source of enduring bliss is within us and we must not give way to weakness.³ *Prapthi* means total surrender, offering everything to the Divine and doing away with the sense of ego that separates the individual from God. In such a state, pleasure or pain are both cheerfully accepted as God’s blessings.

The *bhakti marga* (path of devotion) is truly the path of *sharanaagathi* (surrender), of which Lakshmana is a classic example. During His exile, Raama once asked Lakshmana to put up a hut on a site of Lakshmana’s choice. The latter grieved and pleaded with Raama: “Why do you ask me to select the site? Have I any individuality left? Can I choose?

Will I select? Don’t you know that I have no will of my own? You decide and I obey; you command and I carry out.”⁴ This is the essence of *sharnaagathi*. Krishna has assured us that if we surrender, He will liberate us.

The whole Universe can become yours

Baba once narrated a beautiful example. A king held a big exhibition with a variety of art products. He had announced that all his subjects could take home anything. All rushed there and filled their hands with the choicest of products. One lady, however, came out empty handed. The king was surprised and questioned her. She expressed her disinterest in worldly things. The king was adamant, however, and promised to grant her anything. After repeated assurances, she finally asked for the king himself. The king kept his word and along with him, the entire kingdom—including the exhibition, became the lady’s. Sai compares this cosmos to a vast exhibition. All entering this exhibition are free to satisfy their desires with objects of their liking. Some seek wealth; some, jobs; some, children ... and so on. The wise, however, seek only God, for they know that all else is contained within Him.

Compiled from the following divine discourses:

1. Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Brindavan, January 06, 1977
2. Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur, January 21, 1988
3. Brindhavaan, April 04, 1979
4. Uttharaayana Day, November 01, 1966
5. Prashaanthi Nilayam, August 10, 1967
6. “The cleansed heart.” Sathya Sai Speaks. June 17, 2006. <<http://www.sathyasai.org/search/volume06/sss06-45.pdf>>. Accessed on June 17, 2006
7. Sathya Sai Institute at Nandanavanam, Ooty, April 16, 1988
8. Prashaanthi Mandir, July 17, 1988

SAI WISDOM

God will respond to your prayers for succour only when you respond sympathetically to the needs of others. Life should not be wasted in selfish activities, blind to others’ distress and deaf to others’ groans. Treat joy and grief equally—this according to Lord Krishna is Samathwam (equanimity). Practise this equanimity (the way to win His Grace). You may not be rewarded materially for your compassionate acts, but there is no greater reward than the joy that you will derive from alleviating others’ sorrows.

—BABA

Source: Thought For The Day, June 30, 2006

OM SAI MANDIR'S ACTIVITIES

DAILY ARATIS

Kakad Arati: 8.00 A.M.
 Madhyana Arati: 12.00 P.M.
 Dhoop Arati: 6.00 P.M.
 Sheja Arati: 8.00 P.M.

SPECIAL BHAJANS

Every Thursday: 7.00 P.M.-8.30 P.M.
 Every Sunday: 2.00 P.M.-3.00 P.M.
 STOTRAS (CHANTING SAHASRANAM, BABA'S
 108 NAMES, ETC.): Daily
 ANNADAN (FOOD SERVICE): Daily at the Mandir
 ANNADAN (FOOD SERVICE) FOR HOMELESS
 BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Every Saturday at 1 P.M.
 29th and 1st Ave. Call 718-461-0454

PUJA SPONSORSHIP

Archana: \$11
 Abishekam: \$51
 Satyanarayana Vrata: \$81
 Vahana Puja: \$15
 Annadan: \$251
 To sponsor pujas, call (718) 461-0454.

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 2006

Tuesday, Aug. 15: India's Independence Day
 Wednesday, Aug. 16: Sri Krishna Janmashtami
 Sunday, Aug. 27: Ganesh Chaturthi/Siddhivinayak Chowthi

September 2006

Tuesday, Sept. 05: Onam
 Saturday, Sept. 23: Devi Navarathri Begins
 Saturday, Sept. 30: Durgashtami

LIFE SIZE STATUES OF SAI BABA

Two life size, marble statues of Sai Baba will soon be adorning the temple's altar. Devotees interested in contributing toward this cause may contact the temple's management at 1.718.461.0454.

Om Sai Mandir is a Non Profit Organization.

SAVED FROM FIRE

By A SAI DEVOTEE, NEW YORK

After my morning meditation, I used to offer a lamp and some *prasad* (food offerings) to Baba. As I was living in a basement, I did not have much space for a special *puja* (prayer) room. A makeshift shrine on the inner window sill was the only arrangement I could come up with. Packed in that cramped space were pictures of Shirdi Sai Baba and some other deities along with traditional *puja* materials.



The picture that had saved me

One morning, I finished my meditation, lit the lamp, and went to the kitchen to bring Baba's *prasad*. By the time I returned, I found Baba's picture covered with black soot, as if it was severely burnt. The thread hanging just above the picture served as a switch for the light bulb and was emanating smoke as well.

I panicked but soon realized that the thread (connected to the bulb) had come in contact with the flame and caught fire. Baba had miraculously pulled it very close to him and taken the fire over Himself, extinguishing it right near His head. Had Sai not done so, the flames would have reached the light bulb and set the whole house ablaze. The miraculous protection had saved all of us.

The most surprising element in all this was that Baba's picture had a few other people in it, but only Sai's image was burnt all the way up to the head—a clear indication that Baba had taken the fire over Himself and saved us.

PRAHLADA: THE SURRENDERED SOUL

By THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

The demon king Hiranyakashipu ruled over the three worlds (heaven, netherworld, and earth) during ancient times. After intense austerities, he had acquired unusual boons: he could not be killed by men, animals, devas (demigods), or demons; death could not approach him during day or night--neither inside the house, nor outside; and no weapon could ever harm him. Prompted by demonic impulses and a false sense of invincibility, the tyrant opposed divine forces and the worship of God in the form of Vishnu. He proclaimed himself as God and issued an ordinance prohibiting the worship of any other deity. Notwithstanding these, the arrogant ruler unleashed a tirade of atrocities on all who defied his orders.

The compassionate Lord willed the birth of the noble devotee, Prahlada, in the demon's race. The king rejoiced but remained unaware of the greatness of his son, who had, due to Sage Narada's grace, mastered all wisdom while still in the womb. Even at a tender age, the lad would experience supreme bliss--deprived even to great yogis--by incessantly chanting the divine name.

Once, when Hiranyakashipu was busy drinking, Prahlada came to him. The demon asked him with fatherly affection: "Son, tell me all you have learnt from your teachers." Prahlada replied, "I bow to the great Lord who is without birth or end; who remains unchanged at all times; who is forever present everywhere and in the hearts of all beings; and who acts as the wirepuller of the entire universe." The exposition infuriated the king, and he immediately questioned the royal teachers' logic in preaching about a God other than himself. The preceptors were flabbergasted and pleaded innocence, claiming they had never given such instructions to any of their pupils, let alone the prince. The focus was now on Prahlada. He explained that all knowledge was already implanted in the heart, the abode of the *real* ruler: God.

The emperor angrily reprimanded Prahlada for respecting another sovereign and also threatened the teachers with ill consequences if they failed to change his son's thinking, an order that they tried to execute to the best of their ability (but failed). Some time later, Prahlada returned from the royal school and faced the same question again: "What did you learn?" The prince repeated all that he had spoken earlier. The king was enraged to hear the reply and ordered the brutal assassination of his own son.

The tests

Prahlada smiled and said that every weapon and attacker was pervaded by Vishnu and that none could harm him. True to these words, none of the attacks could even scratch Prahlada, let alone hurt him. The surprised ruler once again warned his son to change his ways but also promised to pardon him if he accepted the demon king as the Supreme Being. The child was wise beyond years and uttered the following words: "How can I fear anything when the destroyer of all fears, God, resides in my heart." Hearing this, the cruel father ordered snakes to kill his son. The reptiles obeyed but, despite breaking their teeth, failed to inflict the slightest injury on the boy, who was chanting Om Namō Narayana uninterruptedly.



At this, the monarch ordered elephants to trample the boy. This attempt failed as well. Hiranyakashipu was not accept to defeat so easily and tried many other ways to kill his son. These included throwing him from mountains, drowning him, poisoning his food, and many such antics. But who can harm the one whom God protects? The youngster escaped unharmed every time. During all these ordeals, Prahlada, though young in years, did not give up his faith on God and his reliance on the mantra Om Namō Narayana. Having exhausted all his attempts, Hiranyakashipu finally asked his sister Holika, who had the boon of being immune to fire, to burn Prahlada alive. She was set ablaze with the young devotee seated on her lap; however, a divine miracle took place and the prince came out unscathed, while Holika burnt to ashes.

A [surrendered] devotee emerges victorious, always

Maddened by his sister's death, Hiranyakashipu asked Prahlada if the Lord was omnipresent. The lad promptly replied, "The lord is present in every atom of the universe." Hiranyakashipu then asked if God was also present in a pillar. Prahlada answered in the affirmative. The merciful Lord immediately emerged from the pillar assuming the form of Narsimha (man-lion avatar). The avatar roared at Hiranyakashipu and dragged him to the doorstep of the palace (neither inside nor outside) and killed him with his claws (without weapons). At the time of his death it was twilight (neither day nor night). Ultimately, it was a little child's complete surrender and faith that had won the Lord's butter-like heart and saved the three worlds.

KNOWLEDGE OF *ATMA*

SOURCE: OKA CHINNA KATHA

Once, King Janaka sent a message to his subjects: "If there be amongst you a great scholar, a pundit, a *mahatma*, a yogi, whoever he may be, let him come and teach me the knowledge of *atma* (self)." In his message he said that he expected to attain *atma jnana* (self knowledge) within a matter of a few moments of instruction. Even while climbing on his horse, before he was completely settled, he should have attained God realization. He said, "If the person offering to teach me *atma jnana* is not able to accomplish the task of providing me instant illumination, then I don't want to see him, even if he be the greatest scholar." All the *rishis* (sages) were frightened. None dared to instruct the king.

At this point the boy Astavakra entered the kingdom. On the way, he met a number of scholars and pundits, all with grief-ridden faces. Astavakra asked them the cause of their anxiety. On learning all that transpired at the palace he ridiculed the need for worrying over such a small thing. He added: "I will gladly solve this problem for the king." So saying, he directly entered the court of Janaka and addressed the king: "My dear King, I am ready to enable you to experience the knowledge of *atma* as you desire. But this sacred knowledge cannot be taught so easily as the palace is full of material tendencies. We must leave this place and enter an area of pure spiritual vibrations." They left the palace accordingly and went along the road leading to the forest. They were followed by the army, but King Janaka bade them to remain outside the forest.

Astavakra told King Janaka: "I am not going to fulfill your wish unless you accept my conditions: I may be only a boy, but I am in the position of a preceptor; and you may be an all-powerful emperor, but you are in the position of a disciple. Are you prepared to accept this relationship? If you agree then you will have to offer the traditional gift to the guru. Only then will I start my instructions." King Janaka told Astavakra, "The attainment of God is the most important thing to me, so I am prepared to give you absolutely anything you want." But Astavakra replied, "I don't want any material thing; all I want is your mind. You must give me your mind." The king answered, "Alright, I offer my mind to you. Up to now I thought that this was my mind, but from now onwards it will be yours."

Astavakra told Janaka to dismount from his horse and sit in the middle of the road. The soldiers waited for a long time. Neither the king nor Astavakra returned from the forest. The soldiers wanted to find out what had happened to

them, so one by one they proceeded to look for them. They found the king seated in the middle of the road. The king had his eyes closed and sat still, almost immobile. The officers were afraid that Astavakra might have exercised some magic spell over the king. They went to look for the prime minister.

The prime minister came and addressed as follows: "O King! O King! O King!" But Janaka did not open his eyes; he did not move at all. The prime minister was frightened. Not only the prime minister but all the officials were now terrified, because the time when the king usually took his food and drink had passed and the king had still not stirred. In this way, the day went on and evening came, but the king did not move from his position. Left with no alternative, the prime minister sent the chariot back to the city to bring the queen thinking that if the queen spoke to the king, he would surely respond. The queen came and called out, "Rajah, Rajah, Rajah!" The king did not stir. Meanwhile, the soldiers searched throughout the forest for Astavakra. There, under a tree, the sage was seated peacefully, with absolute calm and serenity. The soldiers caught hold of him and brought him. Astavakra told them, "Why are you all so worried? The king is safe and everything is alright." But still they insisted and brought him before the king seated on the road with his eyes closed, his body completely still. The soldiers said, "Here, look for yourself! See what has happened to him!"

Until that time, the king had not responded to anyone's calling, but as soon as Astavakra spoke the king opened his eyes saying, "Swami!" The sage questioned the king, "Well, the ministers have come, and the soldiers have come, and so have many others; why did you not respond?" Janaka answered, "Thoughts, words and deeds are associated with the mind, and I offered my mind to you. Therefore, before I can use the mind for anything, I need your permission. What authority do I have to speak to anyone or use the mind in any way without your permission and command." Then Astavakra said, "You have attained God-realization." He asked Janaka to put one foot in the stirrup and mount the horse. By the time he had seated himself on the horse and put his other foot in the stirrup, he had attained the experience of *atma*.

Once a person offers his mind (words, deeds and thoughts), then he will not have the authority or power to perform any action without the permission of the one to whom he has surrendered. This is perfect surrender.

TEMPLE JOURNAL



Guru Poornima Celebrations and Sri Viswayogi Viswamiji's Visit



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