



Shraddha. Saburi.

SAI SANDESH

The Official Monthly Newsletter of

OM SAI MANDIR

A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Love All. Serve All.

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You Can Accomplish the Impossible by Chanting God's Name

By The Sai Sandesh Team

In every incarnation, God allots some service to Hanuman. In the Rama avatar, Lord Rama commanded Hanuman to spearhead his army in a war against demonic forces. In the Krishna avatar, too, The Lord sought Hanuman's service. Krishna observed that His kinsfolk, after achieving many victories in worldly battles, had become blinded by pride and arrogance. Not wanting his beloved devotees to fall in the clutches of egoism, Sri Krishna commanded Hanuman to help them regain their humility. It is a well-known fact that Pavan Putra (another name for Hanuman, the son of Wind God) does not lose a second when obeying God's dictates.

On receiving Krishna's holy order, he instantly flew to Dwaraka (Lord Krishna's kingdom at the center of the ocean). There, he feigned temptation for luscious fruits and began uprooting trees in order to satisfy his hunger. Immediately, an army of soldiers came to the scene to stop the giant monkey. They were vanquished in a trice. Finally, the news reached Balarama's (Lord Krishna's elder brother) ears and he rushed to subdue the mischievous trespasser. Soon a battle ensued between Hanuman and Balarama and the latter was defeated and humbled as if in child's play. Balarama was unable to bear the insult of this defeat and experienced intense sorrow. The Lord, who was witnessing this play invisibly, appeared on the scene to pacify Balarama.

Krishna then explained that the monkey was none other than Hanuman himself. Krishna then asked Hanuman how he could defeat Balarama, who was none other than the divine power who sustains the universe and keeps it in balance. Pat came the reply, "Lord, I am your humble servant. Ordinarily, I would have never been able to defeat the invincible Balarama, but, as always, I adopted a simple stratagem. I was ceaselessly chanting your divine name, because of which none of Balarama's blows could hurt me. It was your name that had made the impossible, possible."

Balarama was humbled by Hanuman's conduct. Not only did Krishna achieve the purpose He intended, but also taught the world the importance of chanting God's name and how the divine name could make the impossible, possible. This has been tried and tested by numerous devotees.

Jnaana Dev and Naama Dev were once walking through a forest. They felt thirsty but could not catch sight of a well or a lake anywhere. At last, they saw a well and ran towards it. They eagerly looked into it. There was water in the well, but how could they drink? There was neither a rope nor a vessel to draw water. There was no question of going into

the well. Jnaana Dev simply closed his eyes. Soon he was transformed into a bird. He flew into the well and drank water to his fill. Naama Dev began chanting the name of Lord with intense devotion. The water level began to rise slowly until at last it was within reach. He just put his hands into the well and drank water. Such is the power of the Name.

Young Raamadas (a well-known Saint) was once challenged to prove his archery skills. He was asked to shoot down a flying bird; intent on proving his abilities, he immediately shot a flying bird with an arrow. Killing of life, however, is a great sin and a few priests asked him to repent for this deed. Raamadas promptly closed his eyes and prayed to God wholeheartedly, repenting for his sin and asking for His forgiveness. Then he opened his eyes and pointed out to the priests that the dead bird had not regained life, in spite of his repentance. The priests, not knowing God's power, said reprovingly, "How crazy you are! Repentance cannot undo what is done; but its purpose is to enable you to make up your mind not to repeat such misdeeds." "That is no repentance in my humble view;" countered Raamadas, "God and His name are so powerful that if we pray sincerely, His grace will bring the bird back to life." So saying, he picked up the dead bird, hugged it to his bosom, and with tears flowing down his cheeks, he wholeheartedly prayed, "O Raama, if I have been chanting your name with all my mind, heart and soul and if it is a fact that I have killed this bird out of ignorance, may your grace either revive this dead bird, or take away my life also along with that of the bird."

As he concluded his prayer, the bird fluttered in his hands. Then he opened his eyes, thanked the Almighty and released the bird into the sky. Astonished at this miracle, the priests exclaimed in one voice, "Revered sir, forgive us for not recognizing your greatness. Since you have the capacity to kill a flying bird with a single arrow, and also the capacity to revive the dead bird, you will hereafter be known by the worthy name of 'Samartha Raamadhas.'"

One can chant any Divine Name of any form. It must be chanted with devotion and in an uninterrupted manner. Whether at work, at play, or in the midst of travel, the divine name can be chanted in the mind or aloud with utmost ease. Let us make a firm resolution to hold fast to this easy remedy for attaining happiness.

What is the Purpose of Life

By The Sai Sandesh Team

Human birth is precious. Scriptures declare that after going through 8.4 million species, the soul assumes a human form, the holiest of forms which even the Bible likens to "God's own image". If after acquiring such a precious state of existence man fritters it on fleeting pleasures and transient objects then it is a waste of a golden opportunity indeed.

If life were merely for enjoyment, eating, sleeping, and union, even animals could claim to have lived purposeful lives. Nay, the lower forms of enjoyment do not fulfill the true purpose of human life. Life has a purpose, the higher purpose of securing liberation and serving society at large. It is the higher purpose of leading a God-centered existence that impelled Buddha, Gandhi, Mother Theresa, and Baba, and other great masters to dedicate their lives to the supreme cause of serving humanity. Unfortunately, the life of modern man is not in sync with their lofty ideals and can be compared to the parable of an old man.

Once, an elderly man lost his golden needle. To recover the precious treasure, he made a frantic search outside his house but despite the long and hard exertion he could not find his treasured possession. Finally, a wise and compassionate sage asked him to search inside the house. Needless to say, he succeeded in his quest and was overjoyed at having recovered his cherished prize.

The parable personifies how we are constantly searching for happiness in the outside world. Everyone wants happiness, most search for it, but rarely does anyone find it. Like the old man, we are all looking for it externally, in far-off places. All through, however, the fountain of happiness, the source of eternal bliss, God, our own inner self, has always been within us. It is only by searching our own inner self that we can discover eternal joy that will set us free forever.

So, should we give up everything and pursue this "purpose"? No! Baba never discourages the performance of basic duties associated with a family life, nor does He advocate devotees to retire to forests in solitude. Baba's philosophy is very simple, practical, and easy. His teachings, "Help ever, hurt never," "Love all, serve all," "Heads in the forest, hands in the society," "Chant the Holy Name, always," "Ceiling on Desires," are guideposts for healthy and purposeful living.

Baba wants us to include God in every aspect of our lives. God is like sweet sugar. When we add him to our lives, our lives will become suffused with sweetness and success. An illiterate laborer had recognized this truth. During the days

of the British rule in India, there was a laborer who was tasked with the duty of filling street lamps with oil (they didn't have electricity then). During every audit it was discovered that the lamps this man filled outlasted everyone else's even though he was allocated the same amount as everyone else. The superiors couldn't understand this mystery and decided to investigate. A spy followed this laborer on every street and found that whenever he filled a lamp, he would utter the following words: "Man mein Ram, Haath mein Kaam." (Chant God's name in the heart, while performing one's allocated duty.)

The laborer, though illiterate, had discovered the truth that life without God is empty and when God is remembered in any task, that undertaking is sure to be a success. Mother Theresa, in her work of serving the downtrodden, followed a very simple philosophy: she saw Jesus in every suffering soul and served the destitute as if she were serving Jesus Himself.

So much time is spent in activities associated with acquisition of possessions. If even a fraction of this time were spent in the performance of prayers and selfless service to others, the purpose of life could be fulfilled in this birth itself. It is time to wake up and mold our lives in this direction. If Vivekananda were to write this article, he would surely quote his famous call: "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached."

DIVINE WISDOM

Only those who have filled themselves with love and have lived in the light of that love are called men. Those devoid of love are demons. Those saturated with love are incapable of spite, selfishness, injustice, wrong and misconduct. But in those who have no love, the above qualities are predominant. By love is meant love which is unsullied, unselfish, steadfast and devoid of impurity. -- Baba

Thought for the Day, July 31, 2008

LORD BUDDHA TEACHES A BEAUTIFUL LESSON

BY THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

Buddha had gained fair renown as an ascetic-saint with remarkable qualities. Many visited him daily. Some came to resolve their spiritual questions and to know truth, some came to ask for material benefits, while others came to see the new phenomenon that was defying the way spiritualism was perceived until then.

Amongst the crowds, most individuals fell in love with the compassionate saint but, as is always the case, a few began to feel jealous of His fame and did everything within their power to tarnish His glory. Of course, they failed. On one occasion, a person bearing extreme malice toward Buddha visited Him under some pretext.

As soon as he saw Buddha, he hurled a volley of abuses at the saint. Out of sheer hatred and ignorance, the man let loose a fury of the choicest of superlatives against the enlightened one. Through all this, Buddha sat tranquil and undisturbed, smiling all along. Lord Buddha was not only unperturbed, he appeared to be enjoying his usual state of unalloyed bliss as if nothing were happening. The man was extremely agitated at the indifference shown by Buddha and soon felt tired and weak.

Finally, after exhausting his vocabulary of evil words, the man fell at Buddha's feet and asked how He could remain unconcerned when being abused for no reason or fault whatsoever. The master immediately forgave the man and replied with infinite compassion and love:

"My dear child, what do you do when an uninvited guest appears at your doorstep? If you welcome him, he will make himself comfortable in your house. But, what if you were to ignore him and not show any hospitality nor make any attempt to receive him? The guest will just leave after realizing that he is unwelcome. In the same way, I did not receive any of the abuses you hurled at me. Because I chose not to be affected by them, they lost their power to affect me and returned to you unused. It is because of my indifference to pain or pleasure, to honor or insult, to heat or cold ... to all the pair of opposites, that I am always established in a state of equanimity. I am undisturbed by external circumstances and always enjoy infinite bliss."

The man was enraptured by Buddha's sweet and soothing words and sought pardon for his behavior. He changed his ways thenceforth and became an ardent follower of Buddha.

What a beautiful lesson Buddha has taught us. In life, so many troubles, insults, painful moments, unfavorable circumstances, bad thoughts, and other unwanted events approach us. If we pay attention to them and allow them to stay in our house (our heart) then they make room forever and disturb us for prolonged periods of time. But, if we follow Buddha's example and keep our concentration on Baba and remain indifferent then none of these things will impact us and we will also be able to remain happy through all situations-good and bad.

Share!

Share your experiences, articles, stories, and other creative works with the readers of Sai Sandesh.

**Send an e-mail to
saisandesh@omsaimandir.org**

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.
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. Call
718-461-0454

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

August

Saturday August 16: Rakhi Poornima/Raksha Bandhan
Sunday, August 24: Sri Krishna Janmashtami

EKADASHA RUDRA ABHISHEKAM

Daily from 8.30 AM to 11.30 AM

Rudra Abhishekam - Daily

For the welfare of humanity, Ekadash Rudra Abhishekam is being performed daily (eleven times) from 8.00 AM to 11.30 AM. All are welcome to attend this historic event.

Baba Produces Mango from Sand

This miracle of Baba is not only mind boggling, it is very instructive. During Swami's younger days he once visited the local beach with some of His followers. One among them asked Sai whether He was really Sai Baba and if so, could He prove it by producing a mango (which was not ordinarily available in the area at that time)?

Swami smiled as the devotee asked where he should dig in the sand. Baba responded by saying he could dig wherever he wanted. The man started digging enthusiastically and after a few feet stopped with disappointment. He asked Baba if he should dig in another place because the promised mango was not found. Sai, however, asked him to continue by saying that it is the duty of man to labor. It is up to God to reward results at the appropriate time.

With Swami's assurance, the man continued his work. No luck, though. When he looked at Sai, Baba asked him to chant God's name while continuing to use human effort. The devotee then started chanting Sai Ram, Sai Ram and continued his efforts. Finally, he could feel something cold, as if the object had just come out of a refrigerator. He panicked because the place also housed a burial ground and he feared that he may have uncovered a corpse. Swami assured him, however, that there was no reason to fear. Finally, the man pulled out the fruit and, lo, it was the very mango he was seeking.

Then, he thought they were five. How could one mango suffice everyone? Out of nowhere Swami pulled out a knife and cut the fruit and distributed it to everyone. Needless to say, it was the most luscious and sweet fruit they had ever eaten and despite eating to their fill, half the fruit still remained to be consumed.

Swami brought out beautiful lessons through this episode: a) God always grants the desired object of His devotees at the right time, b) it is the duty of man to do his part and labor for the fruit he desires, and c) by chanting God's name the object is obtained sooner than its normal course.

Share!

Devotees are requested to share their experiences and stories for the benefit of other individuals. Please e-mail your experiences, articles, and other contributions for Sai Sandesh to saisandesh@omsaimandir.org

MIND OVER MATTER

By THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

Swami's followers may have heard the expression "die-mind". The uncanny coinage is not just a creative expression; it is a profound teaching epitomizing the essence of all spiritual practices, a description of the ideal state where the mind merges with God and all that remains is bliss and love.

What is mind after all? Psychology may fumble at the question. Spirituality, however, provides a definite answer: the mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts and desires weaved by the individual soul over many lifetimes. It is like a cloth with individual threads as its basic constituents. Unloosening each thread (desire) is what sadhanā (spiritual practice) accomplishes until the mind is merged completely.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa would often assume different roles while worshipping the Divine Mother. Sita, Radha, Hanuman--these were some of the many devotional attitudes he adopted during his quest for the divine. During one of his devotional moods, he was worshipping God in the servant-master spirit as epitomized by Hanuman. In that state, he developed a real tail -- power of mind over matter.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has declared that for the one who has conquered the mind, it is the best friend, but for the one who blindly follows its dictates, it is the worst enemy possible. In order to befriend the mind and use its powers for the seeker's benefit, He has advocated the eight-fold path of yoga: abstention from evil actions, various observances, postures, breath control, sense control, concentration, meditation, and absorption in the ātmā (soul).

The mind constantly seeks to acquire objects and possessions that grant temporary pleasure. The moment these objects are lost, one experiences grief again. What is the use running after such objects, then? God, the source of bliss, can grant permanent bliss, one that never diminishes for eternity. Taking us away from this goal, it is our mind that prompts us to enjoy objects and cause our downfall. Like a pendulum, it sways from one thought to another, from one desire to the next, from joy to sorrow, and from pleasure to pain. Fueling the mind's vagaries are the five senses: sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. It experiences the external world through these five and subsequently enjoys joy or grief that arises therefrom. In order to escape the alternating phenomenon (duality) of joy and sorrow, one should cultivate equanimity that allows one to experience both joy and sorrow as God's grace. It leads to the state of bliss.

The mind also has a powerful effect on the body. Modern man suffers from many incurable diseases, many of which can be attributed to the mind.

It is imperative, therefore, to bring the mind under control by freeing ourselves from the entire process of mental agitation. Constant agitation is the mind's natural state, however. Manana sthithihi manaha (the state of cogitation or remembrance is the mind). Through constant rumination over one's sensory experiences and desires, the mind acquires a form and by relating the experiences to the "I" as the experiencer, the consciousness of a distinctive individual (ego) arises. The process of merger with God therefore requires the elimination of all desires.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba once explained this principle through a beautiful illustration. Chaitanya Māhāprabhuji once visited Brindavan, the holy place where every dust particle was a sacred reminder of his beloved Lord, Krishna, who had walked there many centuries ago. The divine environment's effect was electrifying and Sri Māhāprabhuji became completely oblivious to everything, including food and water. Yet, he relished the desire to have food that was consecrated in Krishna's temple. God appeared in his dream one night and admonished him for entertaining even that desire. Chaitanya immediately gave up even that desire and experienced complete union with the Lord.

Lord Buddha, before attaining Nirvana (self realization), called his brother, Ananda, to his side in order to impart his last message. The brother was in tears, but Buddha told him: "Ananda! It was for realizing this blissful state that I had striven all these years. Why do you shed tears at this moment? How many are able to secure such bliss? Few at all. You are looking only at my earthly body; you cannot know the internal bliss I am experiencing at this moment. I suffered a great deal over the past thirty years because of the aberrations of my mind. It was the mind that stood between me and self realization. Today, I am free from the hold of my mind. That is the cause of my bliss. When the mind is absent there is bliss."

If mind is the monarch, senses are its ministers. For peace and security to prevail in the kingdom, the king has to control the ministers, not vice versa. It is very critical, therefore, for every spiritual aspirant to gain control over the senses. Once the senses come under control of the mind, the next step should be conquest of the mind and ultimately its elimination. Next, the aspirant uproots all vāsanās (innate tendencies) and strives to attain jñāna (spiritual wisdom). The branches are the senses; the trunk, the mind; the roots, the innate tendencies. All three have to be overcome and destroyed so that the awareness of the ātmic reality can be gained. *(continued on page 7)*

The Practice of Dharma

Adapted from Chinna Katha II, 143

Prahlad was not only a devotee of Lord Narayana but also a very righteous and bountiful king. He would never say no to anyone who approached him for a favor, gift, or help.

Once, Indra intending to test Prahlad, came to him in the guise of a brahmin. Prahlad offered his respects to him and asked: "What do you seek of me? How can I make you happy?" The brahmin replied, "Oh king! I want you to gift me your sheela (character)." Prahlad said, "So be it. Your wish is fulfilled. I am gifting away my sheela to you." The brahmin left the court. No sooner did the brahmin leave, then a charming young man was seen walking away from the royal court. Prahlad questioned him: "Sir! Who are you?" The young man replied, "I am fame. I cannot stay with you any longer since sheela has left you." Prahlad permitted him to leave.

A few seconds later, yet another handsome man was seen walking away from the court. Prahlad asked, "May I know who you are?" The man replied, "I am valor. How can I be with you without sheela and fame? I am therefore leaving." Prahlad permitted him to leave.

Soon, a charming lady was leaving the court in hurried steps. Prahlad asked her, "Mother, may I know who you are?" "I am Rajyalakshmi, the presiding deity of this kingdom." She replied and added, "I can't live here without sheela, fame, and valor." Then a lady was seen moving away with tears in her eyes. Prahlad ran towards her and asked, "Mother, who are you?" She said, "Son! I am Dharma Devatha (righteousness). I don't have a place where there is no sheela, fame, and valor. Even Rajyalakshmi has left you."

Prahlad fell at her feet and said, "Mother, I can live without sheela, fame, valor, and Rajyalakshmi, but I cannot live without you. How can I send you anywhere. It is the duty of the king to protect Dharma. Dharma alone is the basis of the entire world. Please stay with me. Do not forsake me."

Dharma Devatha agreed to stay. When Dharma Devatha agreed to stay, all the others also returned to the court and said: "We cannot exist without Dharma Devatha. Let us please be with you."

Lord Indra tested Prahlad only to illustrate to the world the greatness of Prahlad, which was founded only on his practice of Dharma.

(Mind over matter continued from page 6)

Conquest of the mind

Despite our best efforts, the mind escapes just the way water slips through the cracks of one's fingers. Conquest of the mind, though seemingly difficult, is facilitated by the availability of sankalpa bala (will power motivated by God), a power that can be easily developed through concentration and japa (chanting of the divine name). Baba has also given us the acronym WATCH (W = watch your words, A = watch your actions, T = watch your thoughts, C = watch your character, H = watch your heart).

Our buddhi (intellect) helps us discriminate between right and wrong. When the mind desires an object, the buddhi should serve as a gatekeeper and say: "O, mind! Don't play your pranks with me." Examine every desire using discrimination to determine if the object is conducive to our progress. When the mind is trained in this way, just like a monkey, it loses its potency and comes under the sway of its master. Ancient seekers also advocated the practice of concentrating all thoughts on God.

There is also a strong connection between mind and food. The mind is extremely subtle and derives energy from food. Pure food shapes good thoughts, while impure food gives rise to unholy thoughts. Every bad thought should be rejected as unhealthy, just the way bad food is rejected.

Once, Lord Vishnu sent Sage Nārada to earth. The sage went to a priest and was offered a grand welcome. During their conversation, the priest asked Nārada what God was doing. He responded by saying that God was passing an elephant through a needle's eye. The priest burst into laughter and disclaimed the statement as mere folly on the sage's part. Nārada left immediately and visited many self-proclaimed scholars and devotees. None could believe what he had to say. Finally, Nārada saw a simple cobbler engaged in work while chanting God's name. When Nārada told him about God's activity, the cobbler burst into tears and said nothing was impossible for God. Why just an elephant, He could pass the entire creation through a needle's eye.

For the one who has faith and determination, God will do even the impossible. The elephant in the above parable could also symbolize the mind, which is often compared to an uncontrollable elephant. Passing it through the needle's eye is like concentrating on the self. God's grace can certainly accomplish that. An ant that has determination can travel any distance, but an eagle without the will to fly will be confined to the ground. Let us make a firm determination to continue our journey Godward and make serious attempts toward that goal. God will certainly do His part and take care of the rest.

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