



# Disciplines of the Spirit

(Divine Discourse by Sathya Sai Baba on the occasion of Ganesha Chaturthi, 3 Sept 1989)

“To have only pure feelings (*vimala bhava*) would amount to having education, and to have good qualities would constitute being educated. Having equality and equanimity would amount to being simple. This is the path of Truth that Sai tells you. Just as fire is hidden in firewood and oil is found in sesame seeds, so also the *Atma* is all-pervasive and omnipresent—it is found everywhere and in everything. Do not forget these good words.”

Dear students, whatever education you may have, whatever authority and power you may enjoy, whatever luxuries and comforts you may enjoy, they are a waste if you do not have Human Values. Only when you have harmony and understanding in life does life becomes meaningful.

The most important part of education is to understand and protect our ancient culture and traditions in accordance with our daily life style. Since such great sacred qualities are lacking in the hearts of students, today’s students’ hearts are filled with dirt, lack of peace, dissatisfaction, and bad ideas, and therefore they suffer confusion, conflicts, and many difficulties. Today, students are continuously engaged in bad thoughts, bad feelings, and bad deeds. Why is this? They are not making efforts to free themselves from this state. They do not understand human values in the right manner.

What are real Human Values? One’s life becomes sanctified when one understands the correct meaning of *yama* (control of inner senses) and *niyama* (control of outer senses). *Yama* includes *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *sathya* (truth), *astheyam* (non-possession/non-stealing), *brahmacharya*<sup>1</sup> (constant contemplation of the Absolute), and *aparigraha* (renunciation, not receiving from others).

**Nonviolence** (*ahimsa*): Nonviolence means not to harm any living being by thought, word, or deed. People are not fortunate enough to have this kind of pure and sacred approach. To fulfill one’s own selfishness, one hurts and harms others. All problems that one faces are due to “I” and ego and “mine” and the posses-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Brahmacharya* is the state of an unmarried religious student; the first stage of life of a *Brahmin*. However, that does not convey what Sai Baba means here. Further in this discourse, He says that, “Living in *Brahman* is the correct understanding of *Brahmacharya*.” One can call this “constant contemplation of the Absolute”.

sive instinct. Human beings will be able to make progress only when they free themselves from ego and attachment. Real nonviolence means not harming any living being by thought, word, or deed.

**Absolute Truth (sathya):** The second one is truth. It would not be truth if you merely tell things as you see, as you hear, or as you perceive. Truth is that which transcends all the three times (past, present, future). The word must be dear. Truth must be really dear and accepting. You should not be uncertain. We should not hastily tell a truth in order to hurt people. We should not tell a lie in order to please others. The Real Truth will be very natural when conveyed in a dearer and acceptable way to all people, with humility and obedience. Students must in the first instance follow this path of truth. One's life is based on truth; it is sacred, it is divine. It is most precious. It is life meant to be lived. We are wasting our life in following the path of untruth and not realizing the importance of the path of truth.

**Non-covetousness (astheyam):** The third one is non-covetousness. Whatever the time, under any circumstances, we should not covet things belonging to others. We should absorb this with all three instruments: thought, word, and deed. There should not be even a thought of stealing. It is necessary to develop this kind of practice.

**Constant contemplation of the Absolute (brahmacharya):** The next one is *Brahmacharya*. It may be impossible to absorb *Brahmacharya* the way it has to be observed. We should not allow the mind to go into wrong thoughts or utter wrong words or follow wrong deeds. Living in *Brahman* is the correct understanding of *Brahmacharya*. “*Brambavid Brambaiva Bhavathi*.” The correct meaning of *Brahmacharya* is: whatever thought you may get, whatever comment you may receive (either good or bad), and whatever deed you may have to do, make sure you remember God and offer it to Him all the time. Considering yourself as *Brahman* and performing every pleasure and activity for the benefit of *Brahman*—that is real *Brahmacharya*.

Another aspect of *Brahmacharya* is to continuously participate in the study of various things written by *Brahman* Himself, such as the *Vedas*, *Sastras*, *Itihasas*, *Brahma Sutras*, and *Upanishads*. *Brahmacharya* can be compared to the foundation of a building. The next three stories—householder, hermit, and renunciant—are dependent on the foundation of *Brahmacharya*. If this constant contemplation of the Absolute is not sacred, strong, and firm, then the other stages in life will be rather shaky and likely to fall. Therefore, for the mansion of life, *Brahmacharya* is the very important prerequisite. It must be totally pure, sacred, and free from any defect or flaw.

**Non-acquisitiveness (aparigraha) (not receiving from others):** The fifth one is non-acquisitiveness. *Upanishads* have declared that *parigraha* (possessiveness) is a great sin. Whatever good you do to others, do not expect any results or anything in return.

It is natural for one to accept things in return for what one does. But, from the point of the scriptures, it is unnatural and undesirable. We have no right to expect anything from anyone in this world, except from mother, father, guru, preceptor, and God. God is the creator. He takes care of His creation. He protects us. We have every right to get everything from God.

We have a right to receive according to the capacity of our parents, but we should not trouble them and expect too much from them. We have the right to receive education and politeness from the preceptor. The students should always conduct themselves so as to please the guru, who always thinks of the welfare of the student. But this aspect is highly lacking in students of today. It is on account of this lack that people are taking rebirth. We are becoming debtors. On account of this indebtedness, we have to take rebirth, but we do not know what birth we are going to take.

Unless it is essential, we should not even park our foot in another's house. Just because you are staying with your friend, you have no right to stay there for ten or fifteen days. Your friend is dependent on his parents. He does not have his own freedom. Under such circumstances, it would be inappropriate to sit in your friend's house and become a burden to them. It is not earned by your friend; it is what is earned by his parents. Only the children have the right to enjoy the earning of their parents, not others. Sometimes, under such circumstances, we just go to a friend's house and become a burden to them. This is not a good practice. Therefore this *aparigraha* is very important, like not accepting things from others. We should do whatever little things we can for others, but we should not try to accept anything from others.

The above explains what *yama* (control of inner senses) constitutes in terms of Human Values.

*Niyama* (control of the inner senses) includes *soucham* (purity), *tapas* (austerity), *santhosham* (contentment), *swadhyam* (study of scriptures), and *Ishvara pranidhanam* (offering to the Lord)

**Purity** (*soucham*): The first one is purity. This purity has two aspects. One is *inner cleanliness* and the other is *outer cleanliness*. You can cleanse yourself externally with the help of water or mud. This kind of cleanliness is not confined only to the body. Whatever the one partakes in one's life must be pure. The clothes one wears, the bed on which one lies, the books that one reads, the house where one lives — everything must be clean and pure. All limbs of the physical body must be clean and pure. We should recognize that brushing teeth or taking a bath is prescribed not necessarily for good health but for the sake of having joy and bliss in life. We should keep our surroundings also clean.

The other aspect is *inner cleanliness*. Your mind becomes dirty on account of bad feelings. The mind becomes dirty when bad feelings overtake. In such a dirty mind, there is no room for good thoughts to emerge. In order to purify such a dirty mind, develop love, kindness, patience, compassion, sympathy, and other such qualities.

**Penance** (*tapas*): The second one is penance. Penance doesn't mean doing some difficult yoga postures (*asanas*), like standing upside down. It is purity of all things. In order to reach what you aspire to reach, contemplate upon it continuously —that kind of thirst for things will become penance (*tapas*). You want to achieve a Goal. Constantly and continuously, in all places and all circumstances, think of your own Goal. That is why it is said one should be a yogi, always.

Always strive to attain that state of quality-less *Atma* that is pure and divine. That kind of thirsting for *Atma* would become *tapas*. We should enjoy unity in what we think, what we speak, and what we do. That is contemplation of the Lord with purity of thought, word, and deed. By this kind of penance, it is possible to attain that Absolute Supreme Principle, that transcendental entity that is quality-less and that we strive to attain. *Tapas* does not mean leaving home and going into a forest and doing some special things there. It means freeing ourselves from all evil thoughts and bad qualities that are in us. It is not giving up wife and home. Giving up bad thoughts and bad feelings would constitute yoga and sacrifice. Purifying one's mind from these kinds of thoughts would amount to *tapas*.

**Contentment** (*santhosham*): When do you enjoy this delight? Only contentment can confer delight on us. Excessive desires make one restless. One will always be worried. We should always be contented with what we have. We should enjoy whatever we are having. We should never have excessive desires. We have delight only when we are contented. One who has much satisfaction is the richest person and is a satisfied person. We should always be contented, satisfied. We can get joy only with that satisfaction.

**Self Study** (*swadhyayam*): *Swadhyayam* doesn't mean reading merely the *Vedas*. We should read all sacred texts, like the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Brahma Sutra*, and *Upanishads*. We should acquaint ourselves with religious texts. We should always undertake reading some sacred things. By this method, we can clear the mind of all the dirt it may have accumulated.

**Acceptable Offering to the Lord** (*Ishwara pranidhana*): The fifth one is Acceptable offering to the Lord. Whatever we do must be acceptable to God. If you do something that is not acceptable to God, would God be happy with you and with those acts? One should undertake this kind of inquiry and do only such things that are acceptable.

When we say God, that means your own Conscience. Things that do not give satisfaction to your own Conscience should not be undertaken at all. Your own Conscience will punish you if you do it. If what you do is not acceptable to your own Conscience, your Conscience will trouble you. You have to develop good feelings and undertake acts that are acceptable to your Conscience. This is what is meant in the *Vedantic* parallels that are dear to the Lord.

Only when you do things that are pleasing to the Lord will you also enjoy them. Only when you observe these two, *yama* and *niyama* together, the way it was described, will you attain the four goals meant for and prescribed for humanity. Then only will you have satisfactorily done things according to *sama* (control of the inner senses) and *dama* (control of the outer senses).

Students of today do not possess the Human Values of *yama* and *niyama* at all. That is why the heart of today's students is really dirty. Students should develop pure hearts. They should shape themselves into responsible gentlemen. The good or bad of the nation will depend upon the students.

Students should enter into all fields of humanity. Students should leave their impact in all walks of life whether it is political, social, economical, moral, spiritual, scientific, and every field.

We should also observe *sama*, *dama*, and the other six types of moves.

*Sama* refers to controlling the mind and intellect and exercising some amount of control of their actions. This is the control of the inner organs. Only when you can control the inner organs can the external organs be controlled.

*Dama* refers to control of the organs of perception and the organs of action. You should look at things that are good. You should always hear good things and avoid bad things. All your words need to be soft and should not cause any pain to anyone. All your thoughts should be noble and good, and you should never harm others. Any activity you undertake must be good. All actions must be ideal and examples to others. These are the qualities of *dama*.

*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. This is the way to God.*

Since such a tremendous meaning and significance is in *dama*, *dama* alone can transform a person into God if that person observes *dama* ruthlessly and carefully.

Students should develop these sacred qualities. Then only will the real humanity emerges from them. In this society, you should sow the seeds of love, develop patience, and give peace to society. This is the most important duty of a student. Students should see that wherever they are, there is a peaceful environment. But today, what is obtained is the opposite of this. Students are seen wherever you find lack of peace, wherever there is a strike. But students should see that peace prevails everywhere.

The most important aspect of *Vighneswara*<sup>2</sup> is to confer these great qualities in people. *Vighneswara* has one meaning: he gives education. He is the one who can confer *buddhi* (sacred and pure feelings) and *siddhi* (perfection; yogic power). It also means it's great for discrimination.

In this world, what is truth and what is untruth? Any individual, object, or thing undergoes change. There is no object, person, or thing in the world that is permanent. Only the principal of *Atma* is true and permanent. That is where you have to discriminate between what is truth and what is untruth.

Do not aspire to have a comfortable life either here or hereafter. The joys of this world are rather transient. They may be compared to passing clouds. That is why Sankaracharya also declared: how long will youth, money, and other things last—in a moment, they flee away.

Even when you are contemplating and thinking about your own youth, adulthood will start; or when thinking about your childhood, the youth period starts. You are not likely to enjoy these things as long as the moment you think it. In a world that is changing so fast, how can you have permanent and true lives, lives that are permanent and happy?

If you are thinking of enjoying the next world, well, even that is not permanent. The moment your merits are exhausted, you will be thrown out. A person who is elected in the elections is likely to be a member of something higher. With the passing of every year, he loses the particular period and has to be separated from his position. Similarly, your heaven will last as long as your merits are there. The moment your merits are exhausted, you will have to come down again to this earth. That is why you come down to earth once or simply go to a place in heaven. Neither the joy in this world nor the joy in heaven are going to be permanent.

Only the spirit of *Atma* transcends both these things, and that is your goal. That is permanent, true, and gives joy. Keep such bliss in you. Who is going to enjoy life in this world, not contrary to righteousness.

Dear students, consider when your lives have good value. When would that happen? As long as you have high human values in this life. Once you lose human values, you lose the humanity in your life, and life will not have any meaning or value. That is why we should develop human values, such as truth and love. Speaking truth and following the path of righteousness—these are the two eyes of *Bharathiya* (Indian) culture. These are two great principles.

There are two aspects: the individual and the collective. When you say individual, it is associated with the human body. This may also be called the principal of individual soul with ego, the *jiva thathwam*. Collectivity (*samashiti*) represents all the people put together. A single tree cannot be called a forest—only when many trees are put together can you describe it as a forest. Whatever difference is there between an individual tree and forest, the same difference exists between individual and society. One house may be called only a single house, but when you have about a hundred houses together, you can describe it as a village. Similar is the difference between the individual and society. Individual may be described as a *jiva*. Only when we observe, recognizing the existence of humanity in the community, do we call it society. Individual is an individual soul, and society may be described as the principal of Iswara (God). Only when we understand the type of relation that exists between the individual and society will be able to make our life better.

We are studying so many things, but we can't understand them. But do these kinds of studies give any joy? You may get a little happiness, but it is physical. Such joy and happiness is not permanent. And what to say about peace if there is no peace at all? Peace is found within you, you cannot get peace from outside of you. If you want to really enjoy bliss, you should enjoy the principal of *Anandam* (divine Bliss). Every person aspires to enjoy Bliss, but they are not inquiring into where that Bliss can be found. In objects? Certainly

---

<sup>2</sup> Vighneswara is the overcomer of obstacles, Ganesha, son of *Siva*.

not. You can find it in yourself. The principal of *Atma*, which is within us, cannot be found by searching on the outside. One has to look into oneself and inquire and search for it. That is true inquiry.

What is the most important cause for Bliss? It is the world. What is the basis for the world? It is power. What is the basis for the power? *That-tvam*. *That* means ‘That’ and *tvam* means ‘This’. ‘This’ means it is very near to you. When you say ‘That’, you mean that it is a distance from you. That which transcends self-organs is ‘*That*’. That which is under the control of the senses is equivalent to ‘This’.

This world comes with the primary senses. The principal of *Atma* transcends this world and the sense organs. If you want to attain such transcendental *Atma*, you have to transcend the limitations of the senses. That is the true form of meditation. When you say *dhyanam* (meditation), it does not refer to concentration. Concentration is associated with the senses.

We see; vision is through eyes. We hear; that is the ear, which hears. We read a book. We hold the book in the hand and see the letters with the eye. We are inquiring with the help of the mind. We are discriminating with our mind. Only then are you able to read a book.

However, only when you transcend these senses can you enter into the area of meditation. Between meditation and concentration there is a border, and you have to cross that border. The border that separates meditation and concentration is called contemplation. Only when you cross this border of contemplation will meditation start.

People waste their time in the name of meditation! Have they been able to fix their mind for a minute? No! People sit for half an hour and an hour in a certain posture. Instead of sitting like this, which amounts to a waste of time; could you do some work? The mind is running like a mad monkey. Why are you wasting your time—you pull back this running monkey and hold it, but again it runs away.

Consider duty as God, and undertake every activity for the sake of God. Then, work will be transformed into worship. Consider all the work that you do as the work of God. That would be real meditation. By merely closing your eyes and sitting in meditation you are not really meditating—but you can give a good pose to the photographer. Since the youth of today are having such wrong ideas about meditation, they are wasting their precious time.

Consider whatever you do as the work of God. Consider your body as an instrument. Develop faith that God is using your body as an instrument. This spiritual discipline (*sadhana*) will be extremely useful to you. It will be an example to you.

This meditation, on the other hand, is full of selfishness. God is not looking at you from the outside. Whatever service you want to do with the help of selfishness cannot be allowed. Sacrifice your selfishness. Consider everything as divine. Undertake work with this particular approach—that is real meditation. With the other type of meditation, your time, life, and energy—everything—is wasted. Chanting the name of the Lord while undertaking all work. Every act becomes sanctified by this approach.

You cannot confine God to one place. Wherever you look, you find God, in everything and in all things. If you consider God as confined to one place and undertake meditation, you are restricting the place of God. Confining God, who is all-pervasive, to one place is narrow-minded. Develop broad mindedness. Only then can you develop discrimination, and through that, you can develop wisdom. Only through that kind of discrimination, will you be able to understand things correctly. Today, you have wisdom, but there is no discrimination. Science has grown, but there is no discrimination today. Only when science is associated with discrimination can science be used properly.

Students, first concentrate on your studies. Develop discrimination power in studies. Also, try to put this into practice. I have said a number of times that there are five types of knowledge, but today’s students are satisfied with mere bookish knowledge. Some people go beyond bookish knowledge up to superficial

knowledge. But there is no general knowledge. Discrimination knowledge cannot even be thought of, so how can you get practical knowledge? Because of the lack of practical knowledge in studies all, of our education is becoming artificial.

Our MSc student just mentioned that only when man becomes all right will world be transformed. Only when man becomes all right will the world become all right. Only when man is transformed can society be transformed. Finally, the nation will be all right only when society is all right. Thus, the entire goodness of the nation depends upon the good qualities of a human being.

It is essential to develop good qualities and virtues as human beings. Whatever use are the strengths and education that you have? You should have good qualities. Today's education develops only cleverness and intelligence but ignores virtues and qualities. What is the use of your cleverness and intelligence without good qualities? Why should you have ten acres of barren land where you cannot raise crops? Instead of taking three or four degrees, even one degree put into practical use will be good enough. Getting acquainted with books is not education.

Wishing the welfare of the society is very important. You should shape yourselves as ideal students for the whole world. If you do not have such an ideal life what is the use of all your education? There may be great people who have obtained great degrees like BA, MA and MBA. There may be people with great wealth, there may be people who are virtuous and have a long life. They may have everything, and constantly they will be performing repetition of the name and meditation. There will be *brahmins* teaching the *Vedas*. One will study and study until he has become extremely clever, but at the end of it all, the fool doesn't know who he really is. What good does all the education do if he is a mean fellow, if he does not give up his selfishness? By too much education, one becomes highly argumentative and gains no knowledge. Practical knowledge is very important.

Why should you go on wasting your time by studying things that have no meaning? Study things that can give you immortality. Argumentation leads to enmity. More arguments means more enmity, and there cannot be friendship. Do not give room for unnecessary arguments.

With patience and love, we should try to develop understanding and harmony. Such harmony alone is education. We should recognize unity in diversity. Then only will Divinity shine forth in humanity. Divinity is not separate from man. Man's aspect itself is Divinity. When one has this kind of body consciousness, one forgets one's divine nature.

This physical body consists of five elements. It is not going to last. Moment after moment, it decays and leads to bad smell. But consider this body as an instrument. Why is this instrument given to you? This body is given to you for the sake of serving others, helping others. Undertake service to society. Then only will the principle of *Atma* shine forth.

Sanctify your own physical body. Remove the dirt from your mind. Dedicate your life to the principle of sacred *Atma*. Sanctify your human life. Humanity is bound by action. This body is given you because of action. Action can be performed only with the body. We can sanctify time only with the help of this body and the *Atma*. Only when body and action are sanctified is your duty is done. We have to recognize the circumstance of the time and the place that we are in.

Humility is essential for students. Respect your elders. Love your parents. Serve your preceptors. Serve society and other human beings. Only by such unity can you get purity. You can get Divinity by such purity. There is no purity without unity. Where there is no unity there is enmity. Do not give room for enmity.

If we can observe these ten aspects of *yama* (control of inner senses) and *niyama* (control of outer senses), humanity will shine. Even observing the five constituents of *yama* (nonviolence, truth, non-stealing, constant contemplation of the Absolute, and renunciation) will be sufficient.

Do not hurt anyone. Do not try to give pain to anyone. Always exercise control over yourself. Do not aspire to acquire things that belong to others. If you need, ask God. You have every right to God. Do not beg from other human beings. Students should understand this particular point clearly. Always depend on your own strength. Depend on your own actions. Do not become lazy fellows. Laziness and greed are bad qualities in you. Always be busy with some work. Work, work, work, always undertake work. Since we are bound by action, we should always undertake action, and through that free ourselves. Only then will your heart be filled with enthusiasm and ideals. Through God's love, through divine feelings, sanctify your life as a sacred one.

Do not be disgusted with life. Do not develop any kind of despair in life. Do not think that this is a routine life, that every day you are doing the same thing. That is a type of weakness. Yes, we fill the same stomach every day, it is true, but are we getting disgusted? If you delay eating by an hour you will suffer. You wash the same face every day, day after day. You can hear the same thing again and again. Never develop any kind of disgust on this.

All these things are ever fresh for you. For thirty to forty years, every day, morning and evening, you drink coffee. Do you feel disgusted with coffee after drinking it for that many years? If it late by a half hour you develop a headache. Coffee seems to refresh us every morning.

But when it is a matter of the *Vedas* and philosophical works, this is not the proper path. We should hear the same thing again and again. We should enjoy this particular thing again and again. The reason is that every moment things are being digested.

You are hungry, you went to canteen and ate two chapatis, and again you will have hunger and have to eat. In the same way, contemplation on God should be ever fresh, and you should always fill yourself with enthusiasm for contemplating on the Lord. We sing the same old songs again and again, but are we getting disgusted with it? Certainly not. Every moment, they give us joy, fresh joy. So, even if these things are heard earlier we always consider them as fresh and practice them.

Dear students, when we think of *bhajan*, we should not think that *bhajan* is not useful. You cannot get the joy, happiness, and bliss of *bhajan* in anything else. *Bhajan* should be considered food for our life. If we can do *bhajan* continuously, throughout our life, how happy our life would be. Jaidev, Gowrang, Tukaram—all of them sanctified their lives only through *bhajan*. Not by meditation, not by any other thing did they obtain liberation.

All nine types of devotion (*sravanam* (hearing), *keerthanam* (singing the glory of God), *smaranam* (thinking of the names of God), *pada sevanam* (service), *vandanam* (prostration), *archanam* (worship), *dasyam* (servitude), *sakhyam* (friendship), and *atmanivedanam* (surrender)) are for God's contemplation. They are meant to help lead us toward immortality. Whatever studies you may do and education you may accomplish, do not give up contemplation of the Lord. Giving up contemplation of the Lord is responsible for the state of mind. Contemplation of the Lord will confer peace in the world. Even when doing *bhajan*, we should do it for the welfare of the world. Let the entire world be peaceful, prosperous, and happy. Only then will our feelings become sanctified.

Dear students, free yourself from all bad thoughts, bad feelings, bad actions. They are spoiling and ruining your human nature. Whatever education you have, if you do not have good human qualities and values, all that you have earned goes to waste. I have also said that to declare "I am man" is a half truth. The other half of the truth is that "I am not an animal." However, even when you say, "I am man not animal", you consider yourself as man but conduct yourself as an animal. If you consider yourself as man, conduct yourself also as man. Do not give room for bad thoughts, bad actions, and bad words. If you want to reach something sacred and divine, have room for God in your heart.

"Hari Bhajana Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi"