

*Mrs. Kamaraju's Talk in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA*

*March 22, 2009*

I offer my salutations at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba. Sai Ram to all of you. Thank you to the Sai Center of St. Thomas for organising this wonderful program and for giving me this opportunity. Sai Ram.

Singing a song reminds me of the One who sings a song for the needy and poor, the One who gives *mantra* to be chanted, the One who sources the way, the One who fills the hearts of devotees with Divine thoughts, the One who removes the illusion and delusion from the heart. To that One, to Bhagavan, I offer my *Pranams!*

*WHAT IS PRAYER?*

Today, I wanted to share with you a few thoughts about prayer. What are Swami's views on prayer?

When we are in odd situations, when we are in difficulties, naturally we go to Tirupathi or to Prashanti Nilayam in Puttaparthi to ask God for His help. But when we are happy, naturally we don't go anywhere – we enjoy ourselves; we enjoy our lives. It shouldn't be like that. Always we should be chanting the name of the God. Always we should continue to pray to Bhagavan.

There is one proverb in Telugu, "When we are in difficulties, we go to God; but naturally we don't go to God." When the devotees make their appearance suddenly in Prashanti that usually means they have a problem. As for those who stay there, they also are having so many problems. Otherwise they would not be with Swami for such a long time.

What is prayer? How should we pray? Why should we pray? What is the prayer?

*PRAYER MEANS PUTTING AN APPLICATION BEFORE SWAMI*

Prayer means putting an application before Swami with all our difficulties, hoping He will solve all our problems. That's just an application.

As Swami's devotees we have so many privileges, so many blessings. We are free to write any problem and present any problem before Swami. That is our privilege and His Grace.

Why should we pray?

Someone asked Swami, "Why can't we pray once or twice in a day or once or twice in a week? Why should we pray daily?"

Swami told that person, "You are eating three times in a day; why don't you pray three times a day?"

There are so many varieties of prayers.

For example, householders have so many problems; when they pray to Swami, it will be about the household and family matters. Business people pray differently; they will ask for success with their work. Students pray in a different manner -- for their exams. Householders pray to get their daughters married. They also want to bribe God in such a way that if the daughter gets married, they will put ten thousand rupees in the *hundi* (collection box at the temple). Or, if the son gets some seat in engineering, they will put a donation in the temple.

Our prayers are so different. But actually that's not the point. What is prayer? How should we pray?

### *THANK SWAMI*

God has given us so many things. He has given us this birth – it is a rare thing, a human birth. He has given us good children, a good husband, a good home, a good job. Everything we are enjoying because of Swami.

Here's how we should thank God. We should be an instrument to serve Swami in such a way that we can be useful to society. Whatever service we can do to society, that we must do. That's how we must thank Swami, for giving us the opportunity to be used as an instrument in His hands. That's how our prayers should be.

One day, an old man came to visit Swami in Kodaikanal. That man was repeatedly saying to Swami, "Swami, I want to serve you. I want to serve you." That was his prayer; that was his request.

Swami was silently watching him every day. Swami never said anything. He kept quiet.

Every day this man was holding out a letter in his hand. He wanted to ask Swami if some service project should be given to him immediately.

One day Swami came to him and asked, "You are an old man. You can't walk. Your legs don't go to the place where you want to go. Your eyes cannot see anything. You can't hear. All your body is useless. You want to give this useless body to God? No, no. You go to your native place and serve there, whatever may be the condition. You serve your grandchildren."

That means when our bodies are no longer of use to anybody, we shouldn't go to God asking for service. Only when we are young and strong, only then should we do service.

When we are able and fit we should be useful instruments in the hands of society. That's the message in Swami's reply.

Whenever Swami replies or gives an answer to anyone, we can take it as an answer for all of us. Our doubts also will be cleared in so many ways. When Swami gives discourses, so many of our questions will be answered by His words in the discourse. The discourse is not for a single person; it is for all.

### *SURRENDER IS PRAYER*

Prayer should be surrender. That old man wanted to surrender himself to Swami; but it was not the right time.

The right time for service is when you are youthful and energetic. Then you are useful for society. When you are old, you cannot even bear the burden of your body. How then can you serve others? That is the message Swami gave in reply to this man who wanted to surrender to Him.

That means surrender is also prayer. In one way surrendering ourselves is a prayer. Only the person who is devoted can surrender to Swami.

### *HUMILITY IS PRAYER*

Humility is prayer. I have observed in Puttaparthi how we come in grand gala wear, with so many wants and desires. We are not simple and humble. We command or demand from Swami. That's what I have observed. That's not the proper thing.

In a subtle way Swami spoke of this also; when we want anything from Swami, it's almost like begging. When we are stretching our hands and asking for something that means we want something. Only with humility can we can request anything from anybody. Humility is also prayer.

One student was studying in the school. Some special anniversary had come, so his teacher wanted the student to sing. That boy was practicing the song. After some time, the actual rehearsal day came. He was asked to sing; the teacher was listening. The boy sang the song. He sang it with a loud, strident voice – not with humility.

When we pray, our voice should be somewhat low and humble and simple – the melodious singing of the heart. The song should come from the bottom of the heart. It is melodious singing – a melodious song that should touch the heart of God so that He will be compassionate, so that He will be kind enough to respond to our prayer. That means we should be humble and simple while praying.

### *SUPPORT IS PRAYER*

Support is prayer. When we think that God supports us and that, in whatever we do, God will accept it, then our behaviour will be different.

Sometimes small children behave and play the way they want to because they have the support of their parents. They know that their parents will support them; they know that whatever they ask for, their parents will grant them.

That's how when we feel about Swami: He is behind us. Swami will take care of us and will respond to our prayers. When we have that support, our behaviour will be different. We will have so much confidence. God's support gives us so much confidence. In that way, support is also prayer.

### *TRUST IS PRAYER*

Trust is prayer. Trust in God is prayer. When we have trust in God only then we will pray. We have the trust that Swami will take care of us, Swami will solve our problems. With that hope, we are praying to Swami. That means trust is also prayer.

At one time Dr. John Hislop was coming to Puttaparthi. On the way, in the forest, the car gave him some trouble. He tried to repair it for some time. He spent half an hour trying, but he couldn't repair it.

Suddenly a man came to his rescue. He repaired the car and went away. By the time Dr. Hislop looked around for that man to give him some money, the man was not there. He had vanished. He disappeared.

Next morning Dr. Hislop reached Puttaparthi. Swami called him into the interview room. Immediately Swami asked, "Where were you yesterday? I thought you would come last night."

Hislop said, "My car gave trouble, so I couldn't come."

Then Swami said, "I was waiting for your call. You never called Me, so I couldn't help you."

### *SWAMI IS READY TO RESPOND TO OUR PRAYERS*

That means Swami is waiting for us. Whenever we call Him, whenever we pray to Him, He is ready to respond to our prayer.

If our prayer is not answered that means we are on the wrong side, not Swami. Swami will be ready to help us at any time – even in the nights or when we are out of the city or out of the country. Wherever we are, Swami is ready to help us and to respond to our prayers.

Trust is also in one way prayer.

### *GOD IS THE ONLY FRIEND*

God is our only Friend. That means we can discuss anything with Him.

When small children want anything, they go to their mothers and ask for it – toys or books or whatever they want. Usually that closeness and dearness will be with the mother only.

Just like that, we can ask for whatever we want. Whatever we want to talk about, we are free to discuss with Swami when He gives the opportunity. Or we can write a letter to Swami presenting all our problems.

That's how we can think: that, in one way, Swami is our only True Friend.

In an interview with Swami, overseas visitors were asking some questions. They said "Swami, we have committed so many mistakes in this life."

Then Swami said, "Past is past. Don't think of the past. You proceed. Take care of the present and it will take care of everything."

That means we should not brood over the past. We should take care of present conditions. That's how we will be sure of our success in the future.

### ***FRIENDSHIP IS ALSO PRAYER***

Friendship is also prayer. An example for friendship is that of Arjuna and Krishna. They were good friends. Krishna guided him as His bosom friend. That's why Arjuna succeeded in every act. Even in the terrible battle of Kurukshetra, he won.

There was one *pundit* by the name of Ram Sharma. Ram Sharma was a great scholar; he was in the court of a king. All the other scholars were jealous of him because he was a greatly talented person. After some time they could not tolerate Ram Sharma being in the court.

These scholars thought about how to get rid of him. They went to Ram Sharma and said, "You have to quit this country or write on a slip of paper: 'I am not a scholar; I am not a great man.'"

Ram Sharma was so obliging. He wrote on a paper, "I am not a great scholar." He gave the slip to the scholars and asked them to give it to the King.

Next morning, the scholars went to the King and gave that slip. The King ordered that they should read what was written on it.

When they opened the slip, the words read, "Ram Sharma is a great scholar." That was there instead!

### ***GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF GOOD PEOPLE***

God can even change what is written on a paper. He changed Ram Sharma's writing completely. The plotting scholars were so surprised! God will take care of good people

and talented people. He will take care of those people because He wants to bring out the talent in all of us.

God wants our talent to improve in one way or another. That is Swami's wish. Swami always encourages youth in the field they are most drawn to, in the field where they are most talented. That's how youth are given so many chances and opportunities in Puttaparthi.

One man asked a devotee, "You are always praying and always singing *bhajans*. Will this song be able to reach God?"

The devotee said, "My song will go wherever God is. He is sure to hear my voice. Wherever I am, my song will go and reach God."

We heard a song in Bali when we went there. A Malaysian devotee there was singing a *bhajan* so nicely. It is not an ordinary thing, hearing an overseas devotee sing a *bhajan* like that. Natives staying in Puttaparthi hear *bhajans* sung daily, but even they couldn't sing like that. We thought this beautiful song will definitely reach Swami. The song was so beautiful. The devotee sang it in such a melodious way. That means the devotion with which the song is sung will reach Swami definitely. If we sing from the bottom of our heart, it is sure to reach Swami.

At one time, we were in Bangalore. Next day was Shivarathri; I wanted to go to Swami to have *darshan*. I went to the bus station and was about to get into the bus. The conductor told me there was no place for me. He said, "If you want to get into the bus, you have to stand." I was prepared for that because next day was Shivarathri. I must go and have Swami's *darshan* because the Holy Shivarathri is not an ordinary festival. For one hour or two hours I stood inside the travelling bus. After that I could not stand. I was thinking, "Swami, I am coming for Your *darshan*. Swami, I want to have Your *darshan* and I am coming to Parthi. I was hoping You will bless me and give *padnamaskar* and give all Your blessings. But what did You do? You made me stand for hours and hours. I am almost fifty. You should take care of me." Then unexpectedly, after two hours, a *seva dal* girl behind me gave me her seat. (I had never seen her nor she me earlier.)

I wrote a poem about this experience. The last sentence of the poem says: "Swami, after You made me stand for a long time, You gave me a seat!"

I arrived in Parthi. Next morning was Shivarathri. I went to *darshan*. Swami started His discourse. The first sentence of discourse was this: (that day Swami's topic was Youth) "Wherever you want to do service, wherever you want to serve – in villages, in bus stations, in trains, you can do service. You can do service to ladies." That was His first sentence. I actually started crying. See, my prayers are answered. That's how Swami takes care of us.

Another story: usually it's my habit to go to Ganesh before going into the *Mandir*. Before going to Swami's *Mandir*, usually everyone goes to the Ganesh temple. We do *namaskar* and then only do we proceed to the *Mandir*. One day, as usual, I went there. I did *namaskar* and was about to go to the *Mandir*. This time I heard an inner voice, "Do meditation. Do meditation at least for five minutes."

I thought it's not for me. Only sometime after that, I could I understand that it's only for me, because till then I never meditated. Sometimes I will even be absent at *bhajans*. I don't attend morning *bhajans*, only *darshan*. For *bhajans*, I go in the evening. Morning *bhajans* I never attend.

That day – "five minutes meditation." That was the voice from Ganesha.

"Oh it's not for me." I thought. I neglected that inner voice and never paid any attention to that statement.

Two months later, a boy came to our house in Puttaparthi with a chit in his hands. The boy was from Malaysia. He brought a letter from a businessman back in that country. In that letter one devotee, a businessman wrote about how all his problems were solved. That businessman gave this letter to this boy and sent it with him to be given to my husband.

When that boy came, my husband was not home. The boy gave me the letter and said he will come again in the evening.

I opened the letter and saw what the man had written. He described how he had been in a great dilemma. He had been at a crucial point where he wanted to commit suicide because there was so much loss in his business. There was no goal for him anymore in life. He wanted to end it all. That night he wrote down all his questions to Swami. He expected answers from Swami. He kept this letter near the altar.

At two 'o clock in the morning, this letter started moving. He thought it was because of the wind. After that he went and saw that there some sacred rice and *kumkum* on his letter. He was so happy!

There was one point in the letter: "You should do meditation at least for ten minutes a day." That's for me! (*Laughter*) Because I never paid attention earlier to that inner voice and I never did any meditation at that time.

So, a second time Swami is reminding me! "Oh this is for me. Swami is again reminding me," I thought. There were also many other questions and answers in that letter, but that one was for me.

### *EVERYTHING IS A PASSING CLOUD*

"You need not worry. Everything is a passing cloud. You need not worry about simple things. There will be some jumps and bumps in life. You should accept everything.

When you are happy, when you are in crucial, difficult times, you must take it as the same and pray to God. Everything will be solved.”

Like that Swami gave me His own answer. A second reminder! I thought I must at least start meditating for five minutes each day. I tried in *bhajan* hall when I was in *bhajans*. I closed my eyes and started doing it, but it didn't work out. So, second reminder also neglected.

Third time, we went to Hyderabad. Our relatives are there. My aunty and uncle both practice this meditation. We went there and immediately my aunty closed the room and forced me to do the meditation. It was as if it was Swami forcing me to do meditation!

She didn't even offer coffee. (*Laughter*) I went in and directly she pushed me into the meditation room. I thought, “So Swami is haunting me like that.” I went there and sat there for half an hour. For half an hour she never opened the door!

Half an hour I was in the room, waiting for the time to be over. Afterwards, she asked me, what were your experiences? I told her that I first saw first Jesus Christ in my meditation, after that Swami, and after that some mountains, everything – all of Nature.

From that time onward, I started meditation at least five, six, ten minutes as it is convenient for me, when I find time.

So, the point is whenever Swami wants us to do anything, He sees to it. He will send somebody or something to make it a success. Or He Himself will keep reminding us in subtle or not-so-subtle ways till we do what He wishes. That is the way of Swami.

### *SWAMI ONLY GIVES ONE CHANCE*

At another time, one large group of business people came to Swami. They wanted so much money. They wanted to earn a lot of money. So they brought one coconut to be blessed by Swami. Swami took the coconut and just touched the coconut and gave it back.

When they took the coconut, it was making a coin-like sound. These people asked Swami, “What is it? This coconut is making a jingling sound.”

Swami told them, “Goddess Lakshmi is inside; but don't break this coconut. Keep it in your *puja* room.”

These people then went to Anantapur. There these people were so crazy to break open the coconut and see Goddess Lakshmi inside. They broke the coconut, Lakshmi's idol was there – a golden image of Lakshmi was inside the coconut!

Then they realised Swami asked them not to open the coconut, not to break it. “We broke it.” They were much worried, so they came back and said, “Swami, please, we did a wrong thing. Please give another coconut.” (*Laughter*)

Swami said, "I don't give you anything. I told you not to break the coconut and you broke it. I will not give you anything." Those people went away.

See: whenever Swami tells us anything, we should follow His words very strictly. Swami only tells us once. Only one chance He gives. He doesn't give second chances to anybody. But He forgives so many times. When He wants us or tells us not to do certain things, we should not do them. That is the principle of Swami.

### *DEVOTION IS IMPORTANT, NOT QUANTITY*

Another time, three ladies who are good cooks brought so many food items in big carriers.

One carrier was sent to Swami. Swami saw the carrier and kept it aside. Devotees were sitting there. They asked Swami, "Why you are not taking anything from that carrier?"

Swami said, "See this lady who sent this, she is always angry. She doesn't smile all. She scolds everybody. From that type of family, I don't take anything." So that carrier was kept aside.

The second carrier came to Swami. That also received the same procedure. Swami kept the carrier aside. The devotees asked again, "Swami, why are you not taking anything from this second carrier?"

Swami replied, "These people are not at all clean. They tease always. They scold servant maids. They don't have any devotion toward Swami. That's why I'm not taking."

Then He pretended as if He was taking something from the second carrier which happened to contain groundnuts. He kept the groundnuts under the kerchief. He was pretending as if He was taking; He was in fact dropping the nuts on the ground.

The third carrier came. That lady is a good devotee of Swami's. He took all the items and requested all the people there to taste the food brought by that lady because it was prepared with devotion. It is the feeling is so important, not the quantity.

When we do anything, if we do it with good feelings and good thoughts, that leads to Swami and makes Swami happy.

I think the time given to me is up.

Thank you everybody. Thank you, Swami.

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