

Self-Realization

In the Dharma Vahini, Swami proclaims, "What is the objective that one must realize? Is it just eating, drinking, sleeping, tasting a little joy and grief, and finally dying, like any bird or beast? No, certainly not. A little thought will reveal that it is not so. The goal is the realization of the Absolute, of Brahman (Brahma-sakshatkara)!"

For us, this coveted goal of self-realization seems both fascinating and daunting at once. How does one realize the Absolute? In a society that demands our attention to the "materialistic" aspects of our lives, how do we even begin progress on the path of self-realization?

Swami explains, "Realization, which is not possible through logic, which is not possible through offering of sacrifices, and which is not possible through discussion and other disciplines, *can be achieved only through love.*" We do not have to look too far to experience the love that Swami is talking about. Let's take Mother Nature, for example. Mother Nature always works towards balance while lovingly offering light, shade, water and air. Her striking beauty is an embodiment of the present divinity - much like the beauty we all see when we look at our very own Swami.

The previous newsletters have elaborated on stepping stones that one can take to experience self-realization. Self-confidence, self-satisfaction, and self-sacrifice are necessary building blocks for one to view everything and everyone as divine. However, this begs the question - Is self-realization a journey or a destination? Some may propose that it is a continuous journey where one experiences ever increasing moments of divine bliss. Others may say that self-realization is a goal that is achieved through intense spiritual practice and eventual transformation.

Come join us as we delve deeper into the topic of self-realization. We take a look at Swami's words, the three different paths to self-realization and inspiring stories to help bring the concept to life. In addition, we encourage each one of you to find your own unique, meaningful, and intimate journey of self-realization through introspection and connection with Swami within!



Getting Input from YAs from around the Nation

We collected YAs' thoughts on self-realization. Please see their responses throughout this newsletter.

What does self-realization mean to you?

- *I do not think it is an absolute state of being, but instead a practical mindset that means one is in complete harmony and contentment with one's values, sense of identity and actions, "comfortable in your own skin."*
- *It is a state of deep love for creation. It is accompanied by a level of compassion that is hard to fathom, experiencing the pains and joys of even the smallest forms of life and finding peace in it. Fear is meaningless in this state because there is no ego to protect and no desire to fulfill. It is a state of being in which one always feels God's presence and through detachment from all desires, one does not experience ups and downs but always feels content.*

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Self-Confidence to Self-Realization

Over this past year, we've traveled through different topics that have ultimately brought us to this topic of self-realization.

In Swami's words, "First of all, one should have faith in one's own Self. Develop self-confidence, which will lead to self-satisfaction. When you have self-satisfaction, you will be prepared for self-sacrifice. Only through self-sacrifice, can one attain self-realization. Self-realization means to realize that you are everything. Self-confidence is the foundation, self-satisfaction is the wall, self-sacrifice is the roof and self-realization is life. No one can live in a building without roof. Roof cannot be laid without walls and walls cannot be raised without foundation. So, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, self-sacrifice are very essential for self-realization..." (*Divine Discourse: Sathya Sai Baba on "The Life Principles of Man," 9 Oct. 2001, Prasanthi Nilayam.*)

We now present "an experience of love" from one of our young adults as they journey from self-confidence to self-realization.



Self-Sacrifice

Leads to the "God Within" wanting to serve the "God in others"...

Each treatment could have put this patient's life at risk, however, I knew God was doing the work and every moment would be according to the Divine plan. I felt overwhelming love for the client despite the long commute, working overtime, and time away from my family. Her condition considerably improved in a short time frame.



Self-Confidence

Confidence in "God Within..."

At work, I had the opportunity of treating a client who had a complex presentation. Although I didn't have confidence in my own skills, I prayed that God would treat this patient through me.

Self-Realization

Leads to the "God within" wanting to serve the "God in others"...

Due to the immense satisfaction from this experience, I began trying to love my other clients, friends, and family in this same way as if they were extensions of me. Perhaps if I could live each moment in this feeling of love, this would be self-realization.



Self-Satisfaction

Leads to feeling deep fulfillment...

The client lived 1 ½ hours away and could not travel to the clinic due to the diagnosis so I regularly drove to the client's house to provide treatment. Although sometimes resentful when working overtime with other patients, with this patient, I felt a sense of peace and satisfaction even though the additional work was non-reimbursable.



Why Self-Realization?

Why is self-realization the reason behind our very existence? One may say, "I am perfectly happy going to school, watching movies on Friday, going to the center on Saturday and the soup kitchen on Sunday. What has self-realization got to do with all this? I am happy with my life as is. Why must I exert further to achieve another objective?"

We share excerpts from a children's parable which throws some light on some fundamental questions that we may have on the path to self-realization.

The Little Soul and Sun

Source: *The Little Soul and the Sun* by Neale Donald Walsch- A Children's Parable adapted from *Conversations with God*

What does self-realization mean to you?

- *It is understanding that there is only One, a state when the mind is blank and only pure selfless infinite love and peace exists. This is present in us and in every person.*
- *What does Swami say it is? "The awareness of one being the witness of everything is the secret of self-realization. Self-realization is either the knowledge that 'I am the truth of Me' or 'I have known Myself' or 'All are one Atma' or 'I have experienced that the individual and the universal are not distinct.'" (Gita Vahini, p. 226).*

Give us an instance, story, 'aha moment', where you have or feel like you have experienced or 'recognized' self-realization?

- *I have had no direct moment but I think once one is liberated, the state of being is bliss so let me relate one instance. During the first years after coming to the US, I would attend the 24 hour Global Akhanda Bhajan. One year, I joined the Namasmara for the entire duration with only necessary breaks. When returning home, I was in this unexplainable state of being. Nothing could alter it. It felt like I was floating. During the course of the next few days, the effect began to very slowly wither off.*
- *Recently I was working on a video project and was at the point of giving up and didn't really have an idea of how to shape/edit the video. It was then that I had a brief moment of clarity and came up with the idea of how to put the video together. Looking back, I recognize that it was someone else working through me, but I am not yet at a place where I can associate myself as god all the time.*

Once upon no time, there was a little Soul who said to God, "I know who I am." And God said, "That's wonderful! Who are you?" And the Little Soul shouted, "I'm the Light!" God smiled a big smile. "That's right!" God exclaimed. "You are the Light."

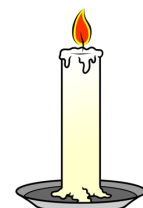


But soon, knowing who it was was not enough. The Little Soul felt stirrings inside, and now wanted to be who it was. And so the Little Soul went back to God and said, "Hi, God! Now that I know Who I am, is it okay for me to be it?" And God said, "You mean you want to be Who You Already Are?" "Well," replied the Little Soul, "it's one thing to know Who I Am, and another thing altogether to actually be it. I want to feel what it's like to be the Light!" "But you already are the Light," God repeated, smiling again. "Yes, but I want to see what that feels like!" cried the Little Soul.



"Well, there is nothing else but the Light. You see, I created nothing but what you are; and so, there is no easy way for you to experience yourself as Who You Are, since there is nothing that you are not." "Huh?" said the Little Soul, who was now a little confused.

"Think of it this way," said God. "You are like a candle in the Sun. Oh, you're there all right. Along with a million, gazillion other candles who make up the Sun. And the sun would not be the Sun without you; for it would not shine as brightly. Yet, how to know yourself as the Light when you are amidst the Light -that is the question." "Well," the Little Soul perked up, "you're God. Think of something!"



Once more God smiled. "I already have," God said. "Since you cannot see yourself as the Light when you are in the Light, we'll surround you with darkness." "What's darkness?" the Little Soul asked. God replied, "It is that which you are not." "Will I be afraid of the dark?" cried the Little Soul. "Only if you choose to be," God answered. "There is nothing, really, to be afraid of, unless you decide that there is. You see, we are making it all up. We are pretending." "Oh," said the Little Soul, and felt better already. Then God explained that, in order to experience anything at all, the exact opposite of it will appear. "It is a great gift," God said, "because without it, you could not know what anything is like. You could not know Warm without Cold, Up without Down, Fast without Slow. You could not know Left without Right, Here without There, Now without Then."

"And so," God concluded, "when you are surrounded with darkness, do not shake your fist and raise your voice and curse the darkness. Rather be a Light unto the darkness, and don't be mad about it. Then you will know Who You Really Are, and all others will know, too. Let your Light shine..."

(To read the entire parable, please refer to the book source!)

How do we attain the state of self-realization?

From the “The Little Soul and Sun,” we learned that we are God. We have taken birth on this planet to only experience our own Divinity. The way to experience divinity is to manifest it in every activity we do. Swami says, “You are a spark of the Divine; you must manifest it in every activity of yours.” Let us read on to see how we can manifest this divinity in our daily lives.

The following is an excerpt from a talk given by Johnima and Kalassu Wintergate on their Interview with Swami.

Johnima: Swami once asked us “Do you know how to be omnipresent instantly? If you have one feeling or thought of love you are instantly and automatically connected to all of creation, on all levels.” We should keep that in mind at all times, not just when we are awake but in our dreams as well, and gradually it will begin to dawn upon us that everything is simply a reflection of love, of the God-self that we truly are. Swami once said to us “It’s so easy to be God, because you are that already. You just have to remember to live like God, to think like God, to speak like God, to act like God. God is all loving, all powerful and all inclusive.”

Kalassu: I have a friend who is a computer whiz-kid. He owns his own company and he works very hard. He once complained to me “How can I be God all the time. I can’t possibly meditate every hour of the day. I’ve got to work.” So I asked him “What do you think meditation is?” He said “Well, it’s when I sit at home after a hard day at work, quieten my mind and try to enter a higher state of being.” True meditation is thinking of God all the time. So how do you balance the need to earn a living and to live in the physical world with thinking of God? It’s so simple. We have to practice at bringing God into our everyday lives. I said to my computer friend, “Rather than working on computers and then hurrying home to meditate, change the way that you work. Think that when your hands are in the computer that God is working on the computer, that you are all powerful and are creating a better computer, and invoke a blessing on the computer that whoever touches it after you will realize the God within them. Say or do anything that you feel will spread your light, your love and your energy to anyone who will use that computer. The reward for your work is not your pay cheque but is how that blessed computer affects people’s



lives. It’s the same with food. You don’t just offer up a prayer to God to bless the food, you pray that your enjoyment of the food be shared with all of creation and that no hungry belly will go unfilled that day. You should become all inclusive and all loving in every aspect of your lives. The more you remember to do this, the more you will lose that identity with the ego-self. The more you will become inclusive rather than exclusive. You just need to remember to do it!”

ACTIVITY:

Self-realization can be experienced at any place, at any time. What does it mean to you? Make a collage of what self-realization means to you, you can include people, goals, places, ideals. Please send us your artwork, info@saiyousa.net!



Essential Components and Paths to the Goal:

Swami mentions that there are three primary paths to Self-Realization: Bhakti (Devotion/Love), Jnana (Wisdom), and Karma (Action/Service). However, Swami goes on to explain, the three paths are not different but one.

“I will not agree that Karma, Bhakthi and Jnana are separate. I do not even like to classify one of these as first, the other as the second and next as the third. I will not accept a mixture of all the three or even a samuchchaya, a merger of the three. Karma is Bhakthi and Bhakthi is Jnana: A block of Mysorepak (Indian sweet) has sweetness, weight and shape; the three cannot be separated, one from the other. Each little part of it has sweetness, weight and shape. We do not find shape in one part, weight in another and sweetness in a third. And when it is placed on the tongue taste is recognized, weight is lessened and shape is modified, all at the same time. Therefore, each individual deed must be full of the spirit of Seva, of Prema and of Jnana. In other words each group of life’s activities must be saturated with Karma, Bhakthi and Jnana.” - Prema Vahini Chapter 7

So, how do we fill our lives with Bhakti, Karma, and Jnana? At a recent retreat in New York, Dr. Srikanth Sola gave a comprehensive talk on the paths to Self-Realization. The following is a compilation of major points from his talk on the 3 paths. For access to his complete talk, please visit <https://www.saicast.org/2012/20121012sola.html>

Service (Karma):

- Service is love in action.
- Service purifies.
- Service, requiring true sacrifice, is most appreciated by Swami.
- If you cannot serve, at least try not to hurt. Swami says "Help Ever Hurt Never".
- Service without any expectation of reward (Nishkama Karma) is the highest form of se

Wisdom(Jnana):

- Swami said 90% of spiritual practice is self-inquiry.
- Keep asking yourself these questions:
 - Who am I?
 - Where did I begin and where will I end?
- Everything is "Reflection, Reaction, Resound". If you want love, you have to BE love. If you want you have to BE peace.

**Unconditional Love and Devotion (Bhakti):**

- In an interview, Swami spoke about the secret to creation: that at the end of our lives, it does not matter how big your house is or what kind of car you drove or how much money you left for your estate. What matters is how much love you have shared with all of creation. Everything else is a by-product.
- In another interview with Swami, someone asked who is the best devotee? Swami shared the following story: Lord Krishna said there are 3 types of devotion and He demonstrated this with 3 different things



- A **stone** – when you dip it in the water, the outside of the stone gets wet but when you break it and look inside it is dry. This type of devotion does not emanate from the core of the being and is very superficial.



- A **silk robe** – The second type of devotion was demonstrated with a garb Lord Krishna himself wore. He dipped the edge of his robe in a river and said, the robe no doubt absorbs the water, but when the sun comes out or the wind blows, it dries it out. So this type of devotee gets absorbed in devotion but is easily distracted by external elements.



- A **cube of Sugar** – The third type of devotion is like that of a sugar cube/candy. When dropped into the water, it simply dissolves and becomes one with the water. This is the best kind of devotion. Be like the sugar cube and realize you are one with God!

Additional Mindfulness and Breathing Techniques

All of us have had instances of beautiful experiences of expanded awareness and oneness with Sai and all of creation. Yet, there are times when we feel disconnected due to fear, doubt, guilt, preconceived notions, undesirable habits or a feeling of some lack or want in our lives. Swami has emphasized on several occasions that a constant reminder of the oneness principle is our very breath. Every inhalation and exhalation is an opportunity for sadhana. Hence, focusing on our breath can not only enhance our mindfulness but also serve as a reminder that we are indeed the pure, divine principle. He has provided the following tips and facts about the benefits of breathing properly. As you become more familiar with these tips, try to incorporate some of the tips, such as the Soham principle, into a meditation routine.



- 1) "When you sit for meditation on the soham principle, you will observe that the "so" comes in and "ham" goes out while inhaling and exhaling. This process has to be watched carefully. Here "so" relates to the Divine Principle and "ham" to ahamkara (ego). Thus, while Divinity enters 'into our body, ego leaves us.'" 'Soham, The Right Sadhana' Dasara Celebrations, October 12, 2002
- 2) "There are a few controls set for the physical body created by God. If we can inhale and exhale a little carefully and slowly, we can live for a longer period. If inhaling and exhaling is done speedily, we live shorter. There are rules for this. Elephant and man inhales and exhales 13 times per minute. If a man can follow this principle, he can live for 100 years.
- 3) "How should one breath? We should not go on breathing out as much as we can. We have to breath out in such a slow manner. Practicing of yoga will help you breath in a slow peaceful manner." -Divine Discourse, June 29th, 1989 in Prashanti Nilayam
- 4) "You could also chant Soham, inhaling So and exhaling Ham. Harmonize the breath and thought. ... If you have some flour on your palm, hold it near the nostrils, it should not get fluttered in the least; the breath has to be soft as that. The mood of relaxation produced by Soham is a precondition for a profitable meditation session." - Sathya Sai Speaks V, "Japa, Sadhana."

Practical Tips:

The focus of this newsletter is to not just intellectually know we are God, but remember all living beings are God and transform our mundane life into Divine Worship. Practicing any one of these tips might be enough to remind us of our true nature (and others' true natures) throughout the day. **Which one resonates most with you?**

Cues to remind us that we are God:

1. We can attend regular Sai/spiritual center events so that God is more likely to be on our mind.
2. We can schedule a recurring reminder in our planner or digital calendar or put a reminder on our bathroom mirror to remind ourselves we are God every morning.
3. We can place Swami's (or respective form one chooses to worship) picture on our desk or computer to remind ourselves we are God.
4. We can place a Japamala (rosary) in our pocket or purse so that when we find it throughout the day we remember to continually repeat God's name.
5. Every month we can choose one of the 9 points in the 9-point code of conduct and focus on practicing that point each month.

Mindfulness:

1. Swami has said, "Make your mind steady and still for as short a period as eleven seconds. You can attain realization even in such a short period. Realization cannot be achieved by becoming restless like a clock. Just eleven seconds of stillness of mind would be enough." This has the power of helping us attain self-realization, as declared by Swami in the World Youth Conference, 2007
2. Instead of leaving late for appointments or walking or driving with distractions (text/talk/email), we can start early and listen to inspiring music and experience "being" (vs. "doing").
3. We can exercise (walk, run) or take a hike in nature to feel the one-ness with God's creation.

Verbal or Mental Repetition/Contemplation:

1. We can repeat, "I am God, I am not different from God," as a prayer every morning and evening.
2. We can focus on the faults within ourselves instead of the faults in others and silently repeat "I love you and am grateful," for any conflict which comes our way.
3. We can keep a journal or think back in retrospect on our ride home every day to recall all thoughts, words and acts, when we forgot our divine self and identified with our ego-self (felt perturbed).

After choosing one tip to practice, contemplate, "How does this tip help me practice self-realization?"

Read Chapters 24-31 from Prema Vahini and answer the following questions!

<http://www.vahini.org/downloads/premavahini.html>

1) In the Prema Vahini, according to Swami, what is the first task of a sadhaka or spiritual aspirant?

- a) To cultivate enthusiasm
- b) To seek the truthful
- c) To point out the mistakes in others
- d) To correct the mistakes in oneself

2) The act of devotion or bhakthi where a sadhaka sticks to one name and form is

- a) Pathivratha Bhakthi or Chaste Devotion
- b) Vyabhicharya Bhakthi or Unchaste Devotion
- c) Namasmarana Bhakthi
- d) Ambarisha Bhakthi or that of surrender

3) How are Brahmanishtas (those in the contemplation of God) of today different from those of the past?

- a) their lack of self-control
- b) their sadhanas are more suited to Kali yuga or the present age
- c) they do deeds for the welfare of all.
- d) they seek solitude

4) Which of the following acts fulfill the adage "Manava seva is madhava seva" or "Service to man is service to God?"

- a) Working on a service project contemplating the divinity of man
- b) Doing any act with Sathya (Truth) and Dharma (right action)
- c) Doing all acts in the contemplation of God
- d) All of the above

5) Fill in the blanks: Here is, in this world, no thapas higher than -----, no happiness greater than -----, no punya (meritorious act) holier than -----, no weapon more effective than -----.

6) What is the biggest enemy of the sadhaka?

- a) Anger
- b) Untruth
- c) Excessive Speech
- d) Lack of discipline

7) Mukti or liberation is of 4 types. Which is the highest form of mukti?

- a) Sarupyamukthi (Bhaktha has the same form as the Lord)
- b) Salokyamukthi (face-to-face with the Lord)
- c) Sampiyamukthi (seeing everything as the Glory of God)
- d) Sayujyamukthi (unity with the Lord)

8) What is necessary to attain Ekantha (unity/oneness) mukthi?

- a) Constant contemplation of the Lord
- b) Practice of "Love All, Serve All" and "Help Ever, Hurt Never"
- c) Constant practice of sadhana with reverence and discipline
- d) Grace of God

(Answers to the quiz can be found in the study circle document!)