

There are nine types of devotion: *shravaṇam* (listening to the glory), *kīrtanam* (devotional singing), *vishnusmaraṇam* (contemplating), *pādasevanam* (worshipping the Lord's feet), *vandanam* (adoring), *archanam* (worshipping), *dāsyam* (being a servant), *sneham* (cultivating friendship) and *ātmanivedanam* (surrendering). In whichever way you offer worship, God responds in the same way.

SSS 27.1: January 1, 1994

The *Purāṇas* (scriptures) have described the lives of the great exemplars of nine forms of *bhakti* (devotion). They are Parikshit for *shravaṇam* (listening to the glory), Narada for *kīrtanam* (devotional singing), Prahlada for *vishnusmaraṇam* (contemplating), Prithu for *archanam* (worshipping), Akrura for *vandanam* (adoring), Hanuman for *sevā* (service), Arjuna for *sākhya* (friendship), Lakshmi for *Pādasevanam* (worshipping the Lord's feet) and Bali for *ātmanivedanam* (self-surrender).

SSS 22.1: January 14, 1989

God, who is pure love, can be attained only if we cultivate pure and unsullied love. Everyone has this spark of love. This tiny spark of love has to be kindled and nurtured before it can grow into a flame that encompasses the entire creation. To foster this flame we must always keep good company and cultivate good thoughts through constant and disciplined practice of *nāmasmaraṇa*, meditation and self-inquiry. Swami shows us different ways to expand our love and to become worthy of receiving Divine Grace.

Foster love through love
Love for love's sake
Perform duty with love
Keep good company
Cultivate good thoughts
Eliminate ego
Seek God's love
Practise meditation
Practise *nāmasmaraṇa* (constant remembrance)
Develop unity of thought, word and deed
Discriminate between Divine Love and worldly love

StudyGuide Love - 1st Paragraph of Intro

Everyone must strive to fill the heart with true devotion. Constant contemplation on the form of the Lord and frequent repetition of the Lord's name are the means by which the heart is filled with the love of God.

SSS 19.1: January 19, 1986

Meditation is a process that takes place beyond the senses. Between the concentration at the sensory level and meditation that is above the senses there is a border line where *chīntana* (contemplation) takes place. Contemplation is the second half of *chitta* (consciousness), whose other function is discrimination between right and wrong. An illustration will make this clear. There is a rose plant, with branches, leaves, flowers and thorns. Locating a place where there is a flower calls for concentration. At this stage we are

concerned only with locating the flower. But the flower has to be plucked without touching the thorns. Love is the flower. Lust is the thorn. There is no rose without a thorn. How to get at the flower of love without touching the thorn of lust is the problem. This is where contemplation is needed. Having plucked the flower, how shall we use it? By offering it to the Divine. Meditation means offering the flower of love to the Divine. In the rose plant of our body, there is the rose of pure and sacred love, emitting the fragrance of good qualities. Below the rose, however, there are thorns in the form of sensual desires. The purpose of meditation is to separate the rose of selfless love from the senses and offer it to the Lord.

SSS 17.6: March 11, 1984

Bhajan (devotional singing) and meditation are only exercises for purifying the mind (*chittasya shuddhaye karmañe*). Develop love which is your life breath. When a tree is full of green leaves, branches and fruits, you are attracted by it. When it becomes dry, you destroy it because there is no life in it. A person without love is akin to a dead tree only. Love is as vital for a human being as fire is vital for a lump of coal to sparkle.

SSS 30.15: July 17, 1997

Two attainments mark out the *sevak* (service volunteer), especially the Sathya Sai *sevak*—absence of conceit and presence of love. Service to those needing help makes you the comrade of all, irrespective of other considerations. Be looking all around you, all the time, even beyond the horizon of your allotted tasks for any extra chance to serve. An old man may be stranded in the hot sun. A paralytic may be casting his eyes for a chair. A child may be wailing for its parent. A mother may be clamouring for water to slake her thirst. Watch for these and run towards them with a smile and a word of cheer. It may be that someone has swooned or fainted. Get the doctor or take the patient to the dispensary, with loving care and with gentle alacrity, instilling courage and confidence. Let them go back to their places and say that not even their nearest kin could have dealt with that situation as lovingly and as intelligently as you did. Have compassion, love, readiness to sacrifice personal comforts and patience. Then you can be a successful *sevādal* (volunteer service corps).

This means that you must be engaged in constant *nāmasmaraṇa* (remembering God's name) yourself so that you remain a true servant of God while claiming to serve others, or rather so that you may see in others the God that is their real nature. If you have not acquired that vision, you will not find unity among these diverse representations of the Divine. You will get confused by the multiplicity.

SSS 11.10: February 21, 1971

You are all the Divine packed into human skin and bone, the Self encased in evanescent flesh. Know this and you become fearless, happy without limit. Get rid of the ego-enclosure in which you now feel you are shut. Then you are liberated from the non-existent prison which now enfolds you as hard as an existent one. This is the higher wisdom, the knowledge of the spirit. The lower one is that which adheres to the mind, which cleanses the mind and calms its agitations, which is earned by *japa*, *dhyāna*, *nāma-saṅkīrtan* (recitation, meditation and singing of God's names) and such other meritorious activities. I must tell you, however, that *sevā* (selfless service) is a process through which the lower wisdom, and after that, even the higher wisdom can be gained. *Sevā* can instil more intensely than any other activity, the sense of the basic One.

SSS 11.28: July 8, 1971

Service activities in all lands can thrive only through selfless dedication. Fanfare is a sign of insincerity. Silent, unsullied work alone can appeal. The villager has enough common sense to see through the show. Remember that, though illiterate, the villager is aware of the ideals propounded by the scriptures, saints and sages of this land, of the core of Bhāratiya (Indian) culture. Clever propaganda may achieve some temporary results but, in the long run, it will bring disappointment and disillusion. Like the “rockets” lit by children on *Dīpāvali* (Festival of Lights) night, it will flare up and fizzle down. God is enshrined in your heart. He is ever ready to guide you. He does not appreciate external pomp and exhibitionistic behaviour. He does not calculate the number of hours you did *bhajan* (devotional singing) or *japam* (repetition of Lord’s name), or the number of miles you walked during *nagar-sankīrtan* (devotional singing in streets). He examines the purity of your heart, as evident from your words and deeds. Today, we are confronted everywhere by statistics parading quantities and reports in glowing terms. Do not bother about adding to the number or achieving a target. I value quality not quantity. Genuine, intensive, devoted service offered in a few villages is more fruitful than casual contacts and superficial service offered to a large number.

SSS 19.25: November 21, 1986

We require today those who take delight in selfless service, but such humans are rarely seen. You who belong to the Sathya Sai *Sevā* (service) Organisation, every one of you, must become a *sevak* (servant), eager to help those who need it. When the *sevak* becomes the *nāyak* (leader) the world will prosper. Only a *kiṅkara* (servant) can grow into a *shaṅkara* (master). Of course, one has to eliminate the ego totally. Even a trace of it will bring disaster. However long you may do *dhyāna* (meditation), however constant your *japa* (recitation), a little ego will render them barren of results. *Bhajan* (devotional singing) done with egoistic pride will be as harsh as the crow’s caw. So try to avoid the ego marring your *sādhanā* (spiritual discipline) even to a small extent.

SSS 15.31: November 19, 1981

Practise Nāmasmaraṇā

The Avatars in the four *yugas* (ages) incarnated to teach what was appropriate for that age: *dhyāna* (meditation) for the *Kritā Yuga*, *tapas* (penance) for the *Tretā Yuga*, *upāsana* (worship) for the *Dwāpara Yuga* and *nāmasmaraṇam* (constant remembrance) for the *Kali Yuga*. Common to all these is love of the Lord. In the same way what is common to the nine forms of worship— *shravaṇam* (listening to the glory), *kīrtanam* (devotional singing), *vishnusmaraṇam* (contemplating), *pādasevanam* (worshipping the Lord’s feet), *vandanam* (adoring), *archanam* (worshipping), *dāsyam* (being a servant), *sneham* (cultivating friendship) and *ātmanivedanam* (surrendering)—is love. Common to all of them is the chanting of the Lord’s name with devotion.

SSS 24.23: September 2, 1991

Another special thing about repetition of the Name (*nāmasmaraṇā*) is this. It is possible to acquire various occult powers (*siddhis*) through yoga and penance (*tapas*). And there is every likelihood of the Lord being forgotten when these powers come. Blinded by this pride, a person might even let go the basic victory won by his or her spiritual practices. This is not the case with remembrance of the Name, repetition of the Name and meditation. No such dangers beset these paths. These three paths make love (*prema*) grow in people more and more. Through love, peace (*shanthi*) is achieved. Once peace of mind is achieved, all other

conditions are automatically attained. Through yoga and penance come extraordinary powers. Through remembrance of the Name, repetition of the Name and meditation comes extraordinary love. This is the difference between the two.

DV 7

Speak lovingly, act lovingly, think with love and do every action with a love-filled heart. There is no need for counting beads or sitting in meditation, while your mind is preoccupied with worldly matters. The *japa* (recitation) you have to perform is constantly to remind yourself of the Divine within you. This is the supreme message of the *Vedas*. Realise that the path of Divine Love is the easiest, the sweetest and surest path to God.

SSS 29.28: July 5, 1996

Service activities in all lands can thrive only through selfless dedication. Fanfare is a sign of insincerity. Silent, unsullied work alone can appeal. The villager has enough common sense to see through the show. Remember that, though illiterate, the villager is aware of the ideals propounded by the scriptures, saints and sages of this land, of the core of Bhāratiya (Indian) culture. Clever propaganda may achieve some temporary results but, in the long run, it will bring disappointment and disillusion. Like the “rockets” lit by children on *Dīpāvali* (Festival of Lights) night, it will flare up and fizzle down. God is enshrined in your heart. He is ever ready to guide you. He does not appreciate external pomp and exhibitionistic behaviour. He does not calculate the number of hours you did *bhajan* (devotional singing) or *japaṃ* (repetition of Lord’s name), or the number of miles you walked during *naḡar-sankīrtan* (devotional singing in streets). He examines the purity of your heart, as evident from your words and deeds. Today, we are confronted everywhere by statistics parading quantities and reports in glowing terms. Do not bother about adding to the number or achieving a target. I value quality not quantity. Genuine, intensive, devoted service offered in a few villages is more fruitful than casual contacts and superficial service offered to a large number.

SSS 19.25: November 21, 1986

Of the nine steps in *sāḡhanā* (spiritual discipline), as laid down in the *Bhakti Sūtras* (aphorisms on devotion by Sage Narada), leading to the realisation of the Self, *dāśyaṃ* or the attitude of service to God is quite near the final goal. It is the eighth step. The study of texts, the renouncing of wealth in charity, the repetition of the name or the chanting of psalms and hymns may be good exercises to sanctify the mind and to avoid falling into evil ways and ruinous pastimes but they seldom purify the consciousness of the human being. Instead they serve mostly to bloat the ego and instil pride and promote a competitive craving for superiority. You may be sitting in the *bhajan* (devotional singing) hall and loudly singing in chorus, but your mind may get involved in anxiety about the pair of *chappals* (sandals) you have left outside the hall. Always at the back of the mind there is fear of the loss of the *chappals*. This vitiates the *bhajan* and makes it a barren show.

The *sāḡhanā* (spiritual discipline) of *sevā* (selfless service) is quite distinct. In *sevā* you devote all your energy and attention to the task at hand, for it is a dedicated task. You forget the body and ignore its demands. You set aside your individuality and its prestige and perquisites. You pluck your ego by its roots and cast it away. You give up your status, conceit, your name and form and keep all *chitta* (consciousness) pure. Whatever the task you are performing, renounce your personal individuality and share its travails and troubles, its fruits and benefits with God. You need not bring in God from somewhere outside you. He is in you all the while. This truth must be your own discovery, your own treasure, your own strength. This is the grand purpose of the *sevādal* (volunteer service

corps). That is the reason why the *sevādal* is assigned a high place in the Sathya Sai Organisation.

SSS 13.29: March 6, 1977

How to manifest that love that is within you? You have to engage your hands in clapping as you chant the names of Rama, Krishna and others. Recite the names of the Lord with your mouth. If you really desire to experience God, you must remember the name of the Lord always like Prahlada: “*Om namo Narayanāya*”. Sing the praises of the Lord like Radha and Mira. Worship the Lord like Jayadeva, Gauranga and Tukaram. Shed tears in devotion before the figure of the Lord like Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Then you will experience the Lord. People shed tears over petty things but do not shed a single tear for the Lord. There are two kinds of tears: tears of joy and tears of sorrow. What you have to shed for God are tears of joy.

SSS 29.52: November 23, 1996

Develop Unity of Thought, Word and Deed

There is no point in talking sweetly if there is no sweetness in your heart. Sweetness in speech and bitterness in heart is not the quality of a human being. There should be sweetness in your thought, word and deed. This is the true sign of a human being. You should fill your life with love. There is nothing superior to love in this world. The human being is considered to be most sacred because it has the unique quality of love within. But you are not able to realise the value of human birth. God incarnates in human form in order to spread the message of love. Once you have love in your heart, you can conquer the whole world. There is love in you but you are not able to express it in the proper way.

SSS 36.15: October 17, 2003

Understand the Principle of Unity

I often address you as *bangaru* (gold) because you are the embodiment of *Hirañyagarbha*. The principle of *Hirañyagarbha* is present in your heart. You may change the shape of the jewel, but gold remains changeless. The value of gold decreases when it is mixed with various metals like copper and brass. Likewise, the human being by birth is highly pure and most valuable. But on account of his or her association with evil desires and bad company, the human being loses his or her value.

Tyaja durjana samsargam.s

Bhaja sādhu samāgamam.

Kuru puñyam ahorātram.

Smara nityamanityatam.

(Discard bad company, join good company, perform meritorious deeds day and night and enquire into that which is permanent and that which is ephemeral.) This is your dharma.

Consider All That You See as the Form of God

Embodiments of Love. It is said, *Jantunām narajanma durlabham* (Birth as a human being is the rarest of all births). So sanctify your life by making proper use of your senses. Do not talk as you please. Talk softly and sweetly. Have proper control over your vision. You all know what happened to Kichaka when he looked at Droupadi with evil intentions. Bhima smashed his head into pieces. That is why Buddha exhorted humankind to cultivate *samyak*

drishti (sacred vision). Buddha attained enlightenment only after He cultivated sacred vision. Consider all that you see as the form of God.

Think what is good. See what is good. Hear what is good. Talk what is good and do what is good. Only then can you attain Divinity.

Embodiments of Love. This body is approaching its seventy-fifth birthday. All these years, I have remained blissful because I am aware of the principle of unity. You too can experience bliss if you understand this truth. I do not hate anybody nor do I have any enemies. I have absolutely no fear because everything is My own form. The same *Atma* exists in all. When an innocent child smiles at you, you too smile at it. Likewise, when I smile blissfully, all of you do the same. Have a sacred heart. Cultivate sacred feelings. Then the result also will be sacred. Have faith that God is everywhere. You may have to undergo trials and tribulations, but never lose faith in God. Consider faith as your very life-breath. Each one of you is an embodiment of love, but because of improper food and habits, evil qualities like jealousy and anger arise in you. As is the food, so is the head. As is the head, so is God. So, consume only *satwic* (pure) food. Then you will have only sacred feelings and your speech will also become sacred.

Do Not Become a Buffalo

In order to put you on the right path I sometimes pretend to be angry but in reality I am never angry. The only harsh word that I use is *dunnapota* (he-buffalo). You are truly a buffalo if you do not undertake good actions. You can become a good fellow only when you do good. When there is a heavy downpour, the cow and calf may run away to safety, but the he-buffalo remains where it is because of its sloth and inertia. You should not become inactive like a he-buffalo. Try to transform yourself. Human life is highly sacred. Do not put it to disuse. I love everybody. Love is My true form. All of you are the sparks of My Divinity. So, share your love with your fellow beings, just as I share My love with you all. Then you too will become divine. When all follow the sacred path, the world will undoubtedly attain peace and prosperity.

Embodiments of Love. Give up ignorance. Light the lamp of wisdom within you and ultimately merge with the divine. This is Swami's message for you today. Develop love. Through love alone can you annihilate the mind and through love alone can you get cured of any disease. Only love can eradicate the evil qualities in you. So love all. Love the *hridaya*, not the physical body. Love the Divinity that is installed in your heart. Body, mind, intellect and senses are merely instruments. You are the master. So, master the mind and be a mastermind. Never become a slave of your mind. Contemplate on the Divine day in and day out. You may chant any Name, contemplate on any form; but understand the truth that God is one and only one.

SSS 33.10: July 16, 2000

Exemplars of Divine Love

Introduction

Swami says that He is the embodiment of Love and love is His instrument.. This chapter also includes anecdotes from the lives of saints and devotees such as the *gopis* of Brindavan,

Mira and others, who epitomised Supreme Love for the Lord. Swami says these examples are meant to inspire us to contemplate and intensify our practice of this discipline of love, which leads us ultimately to the realisation of our supreme goal.

Devotees

Mira

The power of love is unparalleled. It is beyond the ken of human understanding. Love can be understood only through love. Mira's husband Rana had built a *mandir* (temple) for Krishna. Being a great devotee of the Lord, Mira was always found in the *mandir* singing His glory ecstatically. Consequently, she earned the wrath of Rana. He commanded her to leave the *mandir*. This came as a great shock to Mira. She thought to herself, "When Krishna is all-pervasive and not confined to this *mandir* alone, how can Rana take me away from Him?" She left her home and hearth and set out to Mathura. Where is Mathura? It is not some geographical location. The heart suffused with nectarous love is Mathura. She sang, "*Chalo re man Ganga Yamuna tīr*" (Oh mind! Go to the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna). Here Ganga and Yamuna symbolically mean *iḍā* and *pingalā* (left and right nerves that carry spiritual currents). The central part of the eyebrows where *iḍā* and *pingalā* meet stands for Mathura. This is the esoteric meaning of the song. She proceeded towards Mathura chanting the name of Krishna incessantly crossing rivers, hills, dales and forests. When she ultimately reached Brindavan, she found the temple doors closed. In spite of her repeated prayers, the doors did not open. Then she said, "Oh Krishna, my heart is Your temple. I have installed You in the altar of my heart". She banged her head against the temple door, calling out to Krishna. She had the vision of Krishna and merged in Him. King Rana repented for having driven away Mira from the temple. He prayed to Krishna for forgiveness.

People these days do not enquire into the inner meaning of certain words they use. They are carried away by the worldly meanings and interpretations. You should take into consideration the feelings that emerge from your heart which is true and eternal. This is how Mira experienced oneness with Krishna. If one wishes to tread the path of devotion, one should hold on to the Principle of Love firmly. Ordinary mortals do not have such firm determination, but a true devotee will never deviate from the path of love under any circumstances. No other path except love can take us to God. Develop love more and more. Wherever you are, love is your sole refuge.

SSS 38.9: April 13, 2005

Vibhishana

How the love of the Divine manifests itself in a devotee is illustrated by the example of Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana. Vibhishana submitted himself to many indignities at the hands of Ravana out of the love he had for Rama. In the battle against the Rakshasas in Lanka, Rama and Lakshmana destroyed many of the great Rakshasa warriors on the first two days. On the third day a formidable warrior stood before them. Vibhishana told Rama: "If you conquer this warrior, the whole of Lanka will be yours. He is a greater warrior than even Ravana". Rama fought with this mighty Rakshasa the whole day, but could not vanquish him. Rama was on the point of giving up the battle for the day. At this stage, Vibhishana, who was behind Rama, said: "This is not the time to give up the fight. You must rally all your strength and destroy the enemy. You should not miss this chance. I am telling this out of my love for You". Egged on by Vibhishana, Rama continued the fight and destroyed His opponent.

The formidable warrior fell on the battlefield. The moment he learned that the warrior was dead, Vibhishana also collapsed on the ground. Recovering himself after chanting the name of Rama, Vibhishana got up and confessed to Rama, "Swami! This is a mark of weakness on my part. I should not have succumbed to such weakness. Having filled myself with your love, how could I succumb to such weakness?" Rama observed, "That's all right. But why did you collapse so suddenly?" Vibhishana replied, "Swami! This happened because of bodily attachment. It was due to parental affection. That mighty warrior was my son".

He was Vibhishana's son. See what Vibhishana did. To ensure the victory of the Lord, Vibhishana did not hesitate to get even his son killed in battle.

Rama asked Vibhishana, "Why did you do this? Is it not wrong on your part? Why did you not tell Me at the beginning that he was your son?" Vibhishana replied, "When you are facing an enemy, you should not worry about any kind of relationship on the battlefield. In this war there is no room for considerations of relationship. When anyone takes up arms against You, he ceases to be a relation. Whether it is mother, father, son or anybody else, when he figures as an enemy especially against God, there can be no question of relationship. I have completely surrendered to You. I am Your servant. I must be concerned primarily about your victory and not about any temporary kinship. The only truth for me is Your will".

It is this abounding love of Vibhishana for Rama, which contributed to Rama's victory. Love for the Divine should be an inextricable bond. All other worldly attachments are impermanent. *Tāmasic* bonds (with qualities of sloth and inaction) are like iron chains. *Rājasic* bonds (with quality of passion) are copper chains. *Sātvic* (pure) bonds are like chains of gold. But whether the chains are of iron, copper or gold, they are chains all the same. The nature of the metals may vary, but the chains are shackles nevertheless. Vibhishana declared, "I have no use for any of these bonds. I am content with the pure love of Rama". It is to demonstrate to the world the supreme quality of total love for the Divine that Vibhishana acted in this manner.

SSS 29.29: July 27, 1996

Rukmini

When Krishna was being weighed in a balance, all the jewels of Sathyabhama could not balance His weight. Rukmini then came and declared that the mere chanting of the name of Krishna would be equal to His weight. By the additional offer of a leaf, a flower or a little water, the scales will be tilted to more than balance Krishna's weight. So saying she placed a *tulasi* (type of basil plant considered sacred in India) leaf on the scale. And lo! It went down. The *tulasi* leaf carried the full weight of Rukmini's boundless love for Krishna. All the jewels of Sathyabhama were of no avail. But Rukmini's invoking the name of Krishna and offering a *tulasi* leaf with a love-filled heart tilted the scales, more than balancing Krishna's weight. Such is the power of the Lord's name and a love-filled offering to the Lord.

SSS 29.52: November 23, 1996

Study Questions: Cultivating Love

1. How do discrimination, repetition of the name and meditation nurture love?
2. How does "unity of thought, word and deed" foster love?

Personal Introspection Question

What factors have nurtured love in your own life?