

Vandanam – Adoration/Reverence

1. Values/Subvalues

1. Gratitude
 - a. Ceiling on desires
2. Mindfulness
3. Humility
4. Surrender
5. Reverence

2. Swami's Words

Sathya Sai Speaks

Develop the feeling of total surrender

Man today has achieved eminence in the intellectual sphere and in scientific and technical knowledge. But he cannot realise God through these accomplishments. 'The Divine is attained only by those who have pure, selfless devotion. The Lord responds only to such pure one-pointed love and total devotion. What is to be cultivated by seekers is such total devotion. Today people tend to remember God when they are in distress and forget Him when they are happy and comfortable. Indulging in such part-time devotion men aspire for the fruits of full-time devotion.

How can they get those fruits? They have to develop the feeling of total surrender to the Divine and dedicate every action to the Divine.

What is the inner significance of the yagas and yajnas we are performing now? The purpose of performing these ceremonies is to realise the omnipresent Divine through various activities, rituals and media. The devotional part of Bhakti has nine forms of worshipping the Lord. Sravanam (listening to the stories of God), Keerthanam (singing His glories), Vishnusmaranam (remembering His names), Paadasevanam (service to the Lord's feet), Vandanam (prostration), Archanam (offering worship to the Lord), Daasyam (Service), Sneham (cultivating friendship), Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). If any one of these forms of worship is done in full faith, the Divine can be experienced. The primary requisite for realising God is pure and intense love.

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EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Devotion means seeking unity with the Divine through purity in thought, word and deed and concentrating on the oneness of the Godhead. Devotion aims at acquiring friendship with God through this triple purity.

Devotion is of three kinds: Saamaanya Bhakti (Ordinary devotion); Ekantha Bhakthi (Devotion in Solitude) and Ananya Bhakti (Exclusive, one-pointed devotion).

Saamaanya Bhakti has nine forms: Sravanam (listening to the glories of God); Kirthanam (Chanting the praise of God); Vishnu Smaranam (ever remembering the name of the Lord); Paada Sevanam (Worshipping the Lord's feet); Vandanam (Prostration); Archanam (Worshipping the figure of the Lord); Daasyam (Service); Sneham (friendship); Atmanivedanam (Self-surrender).

Virtues alone can elevate one in life

The puranas have described the lives of the great exemplars of nine forms of Bhakti (devotion). They are Parikshit for Sravanam (listening to the glories of God), Narada for

Keerthanam(singing the praises of God), Prahlada for Vishnunama smaranam (remembering the Lord'sname), Prithu for Archanam (offering worship), Akrura for Vandanam (prostration), Hanumanfor Seva (service), Arjuna for Sakhyam (friendship), Lakshmi for Padasevanam (worshiping thefeet of the Lord) and Bali for Atamnivedanam (total surrender).

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Embodiments of Love! This Bharat is the land of sanctity and chastity, which has given birth to such great women of exceptional character, who lent glory to Bharat as a nation of heroic women.

From ancient times, the presiding deity of Gayathri mantra, Gayathri Devi, has been worshipped as the Mother of the Vedas, which are held as the most ancient and authoritative

scriptures of wisdom. Gayathri mantra originated in this holy land. The glory of this mantra has spread all over the world. The people of Bharat have worshipped Gayathri in several ways and have redeemed their lives. Gayathri has been worshipped in four forms: (1) Sathyavathi, (2) Angavathi, (3) Anyavathi, and (4) Nidhanavathi. All the four are equally sacred, and elicit limitless grace of the Divine. The first one, Sathyavathi, signifies the existence of Atma in every being, just as butter is present in every drop of milk. It proclaims, "Ekatma sarvabhutantaratma (One Atma is present in all beings)." There is one Sath (truth), which is spoken of in many ways by the wise. The second one is Angavathi, which signifies the five elements present in all beings and also the five senses of hearing, touch, vision, taste, and smell. There is nothing in this world that is not composed of the five elements. This Angavathi is pancha bhuta swarupa (the embodiment of the five basic elements). The third one, Anyavathi, refers to the attributes of the different forms of the Divine. For example, Lord Siva is associated with trident, three eyes, etc. Vishnu is always described as having conch, discus, mace, and so on. We call him Sankhachakra gadapani. Ganapathi is identified by his elephant face and big belly. He is first to be worshipped in all rituals. Saraswathi is described as one with veena in hand, through which she is teaching the Divine sound principle as Nadabrahma. Thus Anyavathi signifies the different constituents of the forms of the Divine.

Nidhanavathi, the fourth, teaches the nine types of worship, namely, 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).

The world is symbolised by these four forms of Gayathri. That is why it is described as Nature (Prakriti), a female form (Sthri). We refer to our native country as motherland.

Sathya Sai Vahini

Chapter XXIII. Modes of Worship

Step by step (nidaana-vathi). This path is slow, but progress is always achieved when each step is successfully

negotiated. Below are the eleven stages through which the seeker has to pass to win the final consummation in

bliss. Therefore, the name for this path is "slow and sure (nidaana)".

1. Listening to the glory of God (*sravanam*)
2. Singing His unique graciousness joyously (*kirtanam*)
3. Always keeping in memory and recapitulating the majesty and mercy of the Lord (*Vishnuh smaranam*)
4. Aspiring to fall at the feet of the Lord (*pada-sevanam*)
5. Offering prayers to the image or idol of the Lord (*archanam*)
6. Offering gratitude for blessings received (*vandanam*)
7. Surrendering to the will of the Lord (*dasyam*)
8. Confiding completely in Him (*sakhyam*)
9. Dedicating thought, word, and deed to Him (*Atma niVedanam*)
10. Longing to merge in Him (*thanmaya-aasakthi*)
11. Agony at the slightest separation from Him (*Parama-viraha-aasakthi*)

Each of these four paths (truth-based, manifestation-based, symbolized-divinity, and step-by-step) is more commendable than the previous ones, as far as simplicity and practicability are concerned. In the end, they award oneness with the Universal Will.

Experiencing Oneness with the Divine - Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on Onam day, 12-9-1989

<http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume22/sss22-28.pdf>

Worshipping the Lord by constant prostration was the form of devotion exemplified by Akrura, a devotee of Krishna. Namaskar (the act of worshipping the Lord with folded palms) signified the total offering of the body and the senses to the Divine as a mark of complete surrender to the Divine. It signifies the elimination of the ego and seeking merger in the Lord wholeheartedly.

Reverence (Sub-Value):

Love and reverence

THE Glory and Majesty of the Lord is immanent in the Universe, as fragrance in the air, of heat in fire, or as butter in milk. He is the string that passes through and holds together all the beads. To know Him as such, to realise that He is the source, sustenance and summum bonum of all this Creation is the end and aim of human life. That is the sum and substances of the teachings of all the scriptures that man has inherited from the past, in all languages and in all climes. All religions are but essays at demarcating the path towards that consummation. All moral codes regulate human speech, action and feelings in order to enable man to see the path more clearly and to make his steps firmer thereon. India is the land where this precious knowledge was gained and spread by ardent seekers and sages. But, today, we have to deplore the decadence of these ideals, and the downfall of Indians who have descended to the level of ridiculing the heights of spiritual bliss, these sages attained. The time has come now

to revere the Culture that granted them that vision and that victory, to rededicate yourselves to the pilgrimage towards Truth, to discover in the jungle of manifoldness the basic Unity, which is the reality. As equipment for this arduous journey, the sages have laid down various regulations, disciplines, practices and paths; by adhering to them, man is able to remind himself constantly that he is destined to realise his essential Divinity. The fast and vigil prescribed on Shivarathri Day are examples of such disciplines; for, the fast and the vigil are intended to lead the mind away from the senses and towards the Lord. Five yajnas to be done by every man

The sages have laid down, for the same high endeavour, five yajnas for every human being, wherever he may be, to whatever denomination he may belong. These yajnas are not elaborate ritual exercises, accompanied by Vedhic recitation, prescribed for the attainment of specific states of Bliss in after-life or specific victories of a worldly nature. They are simpler and more democratic. They are being performed, casually and without the awareness of significance, by man everywhere. These yajnas do not ask for complicated credentials from those desirous of doing them. Any one can enter upon them and succeed. They are indispensable steps in spiritual progress.

The five yajnas (sacrifices) are: (1) Sacrifice for God; (2) Sacrifice to propitiate the sages; (3) Sacrifice to propitiate the progenitors; (4) Sacrifice to propitiate the visiting fellow humans; and (5) Sacrifice to propitiate the animal companions. They are called Daivayajna, Rishiyajna,

Pithruyajna, Athithiyajna, and Bhuutha-yajna, in Sanskrit.

1. Daivayajna · It is commendable practice, the allotment of one small room for the shrine, while building houses. In every Hindu home, we have a domestic temple or altar or shrine, where the members of the family, singly or all together, can adore God. Usually, there is a picture or idol placed there to remind them of the Vast Immeasurable which it represents. Daily worship is offered at this shrine, prayers are poured forth before it, meditation is done in that quietness, the Name of God is taken on the tongue and its sweetness enjoyed. This is the Daiva-Yajna; it purifies the household and brings God into the consciousness of man through all his activities. Activities to propitiate the sages 2. Rishiyajna is the term used for the activities of man that propitiate the sages. They are mostly: the study and practice of sacred scriptures, that are the treasure of wisdom gained by the arduous

asceticism of the sages. The Vedhas are the earliest, the most compendious, philosophically the deepest, texts, the most practical of all the scriptures, and the most universal. Then, we have the Raamaayana, the Mahaabhaaratha, the Bhaagavatha and other narratives of the eternal struggle between right and wrong and the everpresent Grace of God which helps the triumph of the Right. These and other books cleanse and console, elevate and uplift, correct and convince, and fill the mind with courage and humility. It is indeed a tragedy that these vitalising springs of strength are neglected and people read, instead, books that are rabid and ribald, debasing and vulgar, describing the insane behaviour of demented unfortunates, without being aware of the harm they are causing to their own progress and mental health. These books slowly bog man into the mire of sex and sin; they turn man back into bestial ways. Asserting that you are "men" is only half the task of life; one has also to prove through one's actions, speech and thoughts, that one is not a beast! That is the obverse of the first assertion; it cannot be ignored. Be human; keep away the beast; control your senses, passions and emotions with the reins of discrimination and detachment. That is what the good books teach. Go to them for counsel and inspiration.

Parents have to be cared for and obeyed

3. The third sacrifice is on behalf of your parents, the Pithruyajna. The command of the Vedhas is "Maathru dhevo bhava; Pithru dhevo bhava"---"May the Mother be your God; may the father be your God." The stanza is repeated ad nauseum today, but, there is no sign of reverence towards the parents anywhere. A generation that does not respect and foster its parents is bound to end in disaster. Parents suffer great hardships, and deny various comforts for themselves in order to put their children through school and college; but, the children are ungrateful; they taunt and tease, they cause mental pain and physical hunger to their parents by ridiculing their habits and attitudes, and dismissing their advice with neglect. When the creators of your physical equipment and mental make up are thus treated with sacrilege, how can one expect you to adore the Creator of the Universe, God who provides for all? Honour your parents, so that your children learn to honour you.

There is a fine story mentioned in the Puraanas about this. The Divine Parents, Shiva and Paarvathi, once laid down a test for their two sons---Ganapathi and Subrahmanya. They were to go round the whole world and return to them; he who does it quicker will win the prize. Subrahmanya started quick and fast, and was pacing through highlands and lowlands; but, Ganapathi walked quickly round the Parents and claimed the prize. He said, the Parents are all the world--and the statement was accepted as correct. Ganapathi was installed as the Deity supervising the acquisition of knowledge and as the Deity who shall save all aspirants from obstacles on their path.

The moral of this story is that parents have to be cared for, and obeyed. That is the real Pithruyajna. They represent renunciation, tradition, the accumulated culture of the past, the permanent values, as contrasted with the fleeting vanities. That is the reason why Shiva is addressed as Saamba-Shiva, Sa-Amba-Shiva, Aruba meaning Mother and Shiva, meaning Father, and Sa indicating Sathya, Sarvavyaap (Omni-presence), Sarvajna (Omniscient) and Saashaathkaara (Self-Realisation). Treat the stranger seeking food as God-sent

4. Athithiyajna means acts done to please and comfort the A-thithi (he who comes only for a day), that is to say, the Stranger, who comes to your door seeking food or shelter. Give him these, as an act of worship. Treat him as having been sent by God or as God Himself. This is a sacred rusk enjoined by the Vedhas. Share your meal with whomsoever asks for food when you are about to eat it. Appease his hunger before you appease your own.

5. The last of the yajnas is the Bhuuthayajna--steps to comfort and keep happy the animal collaborators and companions one has around him--bullocks, cows, goats, horses, which help you by their toil, and dogs, cats and other pets which make your home pleasant and full of joy. You should not keep them hungry or overwork them. If any animal depending on you for love and care sheds a tear in your home or farm, remember you will suffer greatly therefor.

Love and reverence--these are the real springs for sacrifice or yajna. Let all your acts, words and thoughts be filled with Love and Reverence. Then, you will have unshakable peace and joy.

Prashaanthi Nilayam, 15-2-1969

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Controlled pride/Humility (Sub-Value)

THE awareness of the Aathman (the Divine In man) can neither be gifted to another nor be accepted from another. It is there all the time, hidden behind the veil of ignorance. When the false image disappears, the Truth shines in all its Glory. It is like the Sun

behind the passing cloud. Your duty is to deny this veil and let the Sun of Awareness shine forth and illumine your thoughts, words and deeds.

As Andhras, it is desirable that you revere your native region and native language. But the reverence should not lead to Irreverence towards other regions and languages. Be proud of your language and culture---In that there is no harm. But let not that pride lead you to dislike other languages and cultures. The languages by which thoughts are expressed may be varied, but the thoughts, emotions and feelings are the same. The language of the heart is the same, but when it comes to the tongue, it may take various forms. When it is known and appreciated that the One

manifested itself as the many, and that the One is known by many Names, there is really no scope for hatred or irreverence. Sathsang helps to develop freedom from delusion

Attitudes of tolerance and reverence can be cultivated only along the spiritual path. That is the one path for attaining peace and harmony in this world of ceaseless striving and never-ending despair. The sathsang, the gathering of Godward-bound seekers, is a must for the sprouting of spiritual desire and its fulfillment. Even the tardy will soon develop a keen enthusiasm for the spirit through the influence of sathsang. A piece of string may be bright and white, but no one will wear it on the hair and round the neck. However, let it get entwined through some fragrant flowers and make of them a garland, and people will love to have it in their hair or round their

necks. The sathsang of flowers gives it that high status. A boulder, lying neglected and in-treated beside the road, will receive the adoration of millions if through association with a sculptor it becomes an Idol for a temple. The common rat, despised as a pest, becomes holy when worshippers of Ganesh find it associated with Him as His vehicle. On

the other hand, fire, which is worshipped as Agni dhevatha, becomes the target of the hammer when it enters a ball of iron. That is why Shankaraachaarya has sung in Bhaja Govindham, "Through sathsang you develop freedom from delusion, through freedom from delusion you develop faith in Truth and through faith in Truth, you attain Liberation itself." Egoism is the crown of all evils

We become what we feel and act. Karma (action) shapes the future as it has shaped the present. Karma is the supreme maker of one's destiny. So one must seek sathsang in order to purify one's

Karma, which otherwise might act as a shackle. It is impossible to escape from the consequences of one's karma. The shruthi (revealed sacred text) requires you, therefore, to prostrate before every karma that you do, praying that it may not bring harm to any one or to yourself. As child of Immortality, man is entitled to live a noble life and realise his Reality. The lotus takes birth in slush, rises through water, and dies when thrown out of water. It cannot survive for long when deprived of water. Man, too, is born in the world, lives in it, and has to exist in it. You must have heard the dictum, "All honour rendered to man reaches God." Hear also another statement, "All dis-honour inflicted on man reaches God." It is the law, as inescapable as the law that makes this piece of cloth that I hold in my hand fall to the ground when I release the hold. Only when man is able to have the Grace of God and the reinforcement of dharma (righteousness) will he not be led into disaster. He will then be led along the path of spiritual progress, for dharma protects its protector. So long as man lives a life devoted to objective pleasures and objective victories, he cannot escape sorrow, fear and anxiety. Only the Inner Vision can grant him Aanandha (divine bliss). For the Aathman is the fountain head of Aanandha just as egoism is the crown of all evils. Man must develop humility and a sense of proportion as regards his aims and ideals. You have fostered this educational Institution. You must lay emphasis on universal ideals in the field of education. You must encourage those who talk the language of the Aathman, and not merely the language of the

Andhras. The latter provides food for the stomach; but joy for the eye and bliss for the heart--these are given by the former. Man is not merely body; he has a mind, a heart, many levels of consciousness and a thirst for the Reality. Many practise dhyaana (meditation), but the evidence for progress in dhyaana is to be sought in a more universal outlook, greater steadiness, peace, forbearance and more eagerness to serve fellow-beings. Dhyaana must reveal the Divine in man and thereby induce self-confidence, self-sacrifice and self-satisfaction.

So regulate your lives in such a manner that you do not dislike others nor have others dislike you. Love all as embodiments of the same Divine Principle. Demonstrate by your lives, these ideals among the Maharaashtrians. Let them speak of Andhras as broad-minded and warmhearted. With the co-operation of the Maharaashtrians you have built up this Institution, and I am happy to bless it and give all guidance and help. You are Mine; I am yours. When it is an educational Institution, I take special interest in it, and I am ever ready to visit it and bless the students.

Andhra Educational Society Junior College, Bombay, 30-12-1977

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Swami's Words on Bhakti and 9 forms of devotion

<http://www.sssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume19/sss19-22.pdf>

3. Examples / Illustrations

3.1 Story - 1

http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_03/12DEC01/ssps.htm

This is the story of the Shirdi Sai avatar. When Baba is about to shed His mortal coil, he calls Lakshmi Bai and gives her 9 coins. He says:

Hold out your hand.....(*gives coins*) Do you know why I am giving you these coins? These nine coins signify the nine paths of devotion. *Sravanam* [Listening to sacred things], *Keertanam* [singing the glory of God], *Vishnu Smaranam* [chanting the Name of the Lord], *Charana Sevanam* [service at the Lotus feet], *Archanam* [ritual worship], *Vandanam* [offering salutations], *Dasyam* [servitude], *Saakhyam* [friendship], and *Atma Nivedanam* [surrender]. These, my dear, are the nine prescribed paths of devotion. Lakshmi Bai, you have offered to this Baba during His Shirdi sojourn, these nine forms of devotion with so much love! That's why, my dear lady, that's why I am giving you these coins. Keep them carefully!

4. References / Resources

[Please be specific as much as possible. Ex: Article title, pages, sub heading, web link]

Suggested Sources: Discourses, Vahinis (books written by Swami), Sanathana Sarathi, Pathways to God, Compendium, Radio Sai)

4.1 Swami's Discourses

1. <http://www.ssbpt.info/ssspeaks/volume22/sss22-28.pdf>

Experiencing Oneness with the Divine - 12-9-1989

5.1 Articles from RadioSai / Other official sites

1. http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_06/01NOV08/07-Mani.htm

MY SOULMATE AND I

Ms. Priya Mani

An alumna of the Sri Sathya Sai University, Anantapur Campus, Ms. Priya Mani came under Bhagavan Baba's fold as a young girl of eleven years, when she joined the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School for her sixth grade. She later went on to complete her graduation and post graduation in English Language and Literature from the Anantapur Campus, securing a Gold medal in both the courses in the years 2002 and 2004 respectively. She currently lives in Dubai and works as a freelance writer.

The author describes how she practiced the Navavidha Bhakthi (9 forms of devotion) with Swami during her daily life in the Primary School as well as on the Anantapur campus.

Here is an excerpt...

One moment, it would be *Vandanam* (obeisance), where I would be all delight and gratitude for Him at having responded to my prayers. At another moment, when I thought He had turned a deaf ear to my pleas, Swami was in for a session of a different kind of *Archanam* (worship) – wherein after having ventilated my grievances, I would start berating and scolding His photo, then walk away in a huff after the tiff with Him. Tempers cooled, I would return, remorsefully, to my Divine Companion.

To me, then, I was sharing my thoughts and feelings with Him as a friend would to another. Not that He needed to be told in order to know. He is privy to every thought, good or bad, the moment it manifests in the mind. Just that my act of telling Him gave me satisfaction and happiness. I wished, I aspired, I prayed. Prayers came in all shapes and sizes. And Swami answered or didn't answer them. At least that was what I thought.

2. Sai Scotland

<http://www.saiscotland.com/resource/nineforms/lordpray.pdf>

6 Suggested Action Items / Practices

6.1 Offering gratitude

One of the meanings of vandanam(ref 1.2) is offering gratitude for blessings received. If every moment of our life, every experience is a blessing from Swami, then we must be grateful every moment.

6.2 Offering salutations, prostrations and veneration

The second common meaning of vandanam is offering prostrations or salutations.

1. Sandhya vandanam:

“The Gayatri is a prayer for the development of your intellect, so that you might reach this Vision. So let Me advise the elders who are here, this. You have brought your sons or grandsons or wards here, to My presence, for **Upanayanam** and **Gayathri-upadesam**. You are happy at their fortune; but they will repeat the mantra only if you also repeat it, sincerely. And it is good for you also. Repent, therefore, that you have given up taking that priceless drug; start the **sandhyavandanam** (morning, noon, and evening prayers) from today. Learn it from your son or grandson, keeping aside your sense of superiority. When you have the royal road to reach the Goal, why scramble through thorny jungle tracks? Do the **sandhya** as prescribed, and you will find a calm descending inside you, a calm that will not be shaken by any storm. You need not flee to a Himalayan valley; you can make your heart that Valley, by the discipline of the **sandhya**.”

<http://www.sathyasai.org/discour/1965/d650426.html>

2. Sathya Sai Ashtothrashathanamavalli

3. Rudram chanting/Vedam

4. Offerings to ancestors

5. Sun salutations

6. Saying “Namaste” or offering salutations to all fellow beings.

7. A nice example from a blog:

(http://saiswaroop.net/archives/practice_of_navavidha_bhakthi)

“1. Daily meditation and prayer.

To show our gratitude to the creator, who has created the universe and provided us the infrastructure to make our life simple and easy, we need to pray and meditate on Him. In a way **meditation** can be referred to as **concentration of thoughts**. In deeper sense this consists of **3 stages: Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi**. **Twelve seconds of uninterrupted concentrated thought on swami can be called Dharana. Twelve Dharanas make one Dhyana and twelve Dhyanas make one Samadhi**. In real sense Samadhi means equanimity of mind. To maintain cool with pair of opposites like pleasure and pain, heat and cold, etc implies equanimity of mind. This code of conduct can be compared to **“Vandana” of Navavidha Bakthi**.

Uddhava, the friend of Krishna, thought he always remembered Krishna and there is no one to better him. But when Krishna sent him to Mathura, he was humbled by the devotion of Gopikas towards Krishna.”

7.1. Spiritual masters

Swami Sivananda:

(<http://www.dlshq.org/teachings/bhaktiyoga.htm#types>)

Vandana is prayer and prostration. Humble prostration touching the earth with the eight limbs of the body (Sashtanga-Namaskara), with faith and reverence, before a form of God, or prostration to all beings knowing them to be the forms of the One God, and getting absorbed in the Divine Love of the Lord is termed prostration to God or Vandana.

Thich Nhat Hanh : Peach Is Every Step.

Great resource for content on mindfulness.