

Satyam Śivam Sundaram



Swami Tejomayananda

२१०

Satyam Sivam Sundaram

Swami Tejomayananda



Central Chinmaya Mission Trust
Mumbai - 400 072

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

PROLOGUE

Words are the tools used in society to convey meaning. We find that prevalent and frequently used words are very often used superficially. Their deeper meaning is not paid much attention to and is sometimes even forgotten. Sometimes they are partially understood, misinterpreted or wrongly used. With the aim of giving deep thought and thereby reviewing and taking a fresh look at such words, we have chosen the topic, 'Satyam, Śivam, Sundaram' – Truth, Auspiciousness, Beauty.

As Indians we have heard this phrase from our early childhood. It has been with us from ancient times. In recent times this has been made more popular by a film and title song by that name.

The Chinmaya Mission, Houston, USA arranged a four-day lecture series on this subject on the eve of 1998. This gave me a chance to reflect on this topic. Those talks are now being presented in a book form. May the readers benefit by its study and fill their lives with Truth, Auspiciousness and Beauty.

The Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Chinmaya Mission at the Vishwa Sammelan (24th to 31st Dec. 2001) inspired me to compose and set to tune a New Year song based on this very theme. It is also included on the inside front cover.

* * *

INTRODUCTION

On the eve of 1998, I wish you all a Happy New Year! We all wish each other a happy new year, but we really do not know how to be happy! If we are told, 'you can be happy by making others happy', our next question is, 'How to make others happy?' We may be able to make a person happy for sometime, but we know from experience that it is impossible to keep another happy all the time. Our likes and dislikes, moods and thoughts are in a constant state of flux. What makes us happy today may not do so tomorrow. After trying in vain, a woman asked her friend, "How do you make your husband happy?" The latter replied, "Honestly, I do not know. I have never tried!" Most of us have tried, but have not succeeded in making either others or ourselves happy.

Habitually we seek happiness in objects, relationships, power, fame and so on. So we think that we can make others happy by giving them these. But our experience has shown that this does not work. It is then that we begin to wonder whether we can really be happy or make others happy all the time. Further, we seek to find out whether the direction of our seeking has been right? On deeper inquiry we realize that the direction of our seeking has, indeed, been faulty. We realize that the only true source of happiness is the Self.

Knowing the Truth and abiding in It alone can make us happy always. Only those who have known true joy and radiate happiness can make others happy. Only the one who is truly happy can make another happy.

When a flower blossoms, it emanates fragrance. Its very presence has the inherent power of giving happiness to others. Beauty has an innate quality – it captivates and attracts by its very being. The flower does not invite us. We naturally gravitate towards it.

Why do we feel that acquiring objects, relationships, wealth, power and so on will make us happy? Have we not experienced happiness in the deep sleep state when none of these are present? Have we not felt happy when our mind is quiet and free from desires? Have we not, at times, felt totally at ease with the world and ourselves when attuned to nature? The answer to all this is – yes, we have. Yet we are unaware of the true source of happiness!

Here comes the role of scriptures, the Guru and satsaṅga (company of noble souls). They draw our attention to this source within us which is our own true nature – Satyam, Śivam, Sundaram. Let us now think about It, experience It and abide in It.

* * *

Satyam (Truth)

Satyam (Truth) can be defined and experienced at various levels. Mahatma Gandhi experimented with different levels of truth in his life. (Refer *My Experiments With Truth* by Mahatma Gandhi). It is only when we are ready to experiment with the Truth, wish to experience It and are willing to verify in our own life what we hear about It, then we benefit from It.

A student attended a discourse by a Master. The Master was saying, "... speak the truth ...". The student, on hearing this, immediately left the place. After a few weeks the master met him in the market-place and enquired why he had left during the discourse and had not returned. The student said, "I am trying to follow your instructions in my life. Once I gain mastery in speaking the truth, I will come for the second lesson!".

Some people are sceptics or have only a scholastic interest in spiritual matters. Some say without even trying, 'It is good to listen, but not practical to live'. Yet others opine, 'Such knowledge is useless and has no practical application. Even if it is practical, I cannot practice it. Even if I can, I will not! Without knowing the Truth my life is going on comfortably. I am considered successful and am reasonably happy. What is the use of

this knowledge? Why should I know the Truth? Why should I initiate this inquiry?’

Presently, people are more interested in topics like Practical Vedānta, Vedānta – the Means to Personality Development, Vedānta and Business Management, Vedānta for Better Relationships, Vedāntic Tips for Better Health, Vedānta – The Key to Success and so on. They are willing to know or learn about Vedānta only if assured of being better professionals, having better relationships and acquiring more wealth, power and fame. We are completely absorbed in the rat race. But let us be warned that ‘in this rat race, even if you succeed, you still remain a rat!’

The knowledge of the Absolute Truth has an immensely greater scope. It transforms the finite individual into the Infinite Reality. It puts an end not only to our immediate sorrow, but destroys all sorrows for all times to come. Becoming successful in the worldly sense, acquiring more wealth and such achievements are only its minor side-effects. We are somehow more interested in the utility of Truth than the Truth itself. This is because we have more value for material achievements than for the Truth.

Truth should be known for the very joy of discovering It, experiencing It and living It. When the Truth is not known, untruth is mistaken for the Truth, unreal for the Real and the not-Self for the Self. We remain

Satyam (Truth)

immersed in illusions, false notions, the unreal and the untruth. Such ignorance is not bliss. It is the root cause of all our misery. When the Absolute Truth is known, it removes our misery forever (ātyantika dukkha nivṛtti) and we gain supreme Bliss (paramānanda prāpti).

Who then is a fit person for knowing the Truth? The following acid test would reveal our fitness to know the Truth:

- a) If required, am I willing to do what I do not like and give up what I like, in order to know the Truth.
- b) If I am told that the Truth would disturb or put an end to my present way of living and thinking, am I still willing to know it?
- c) Am I ready to face the Truth even if it is discovered to be terrible or bitter?
- d) Am I willing to pursue it, whatever the cost? I may even have to face death like Naciketa.

If the answer to all the above is 'yes', then I stand a good chance of knowing the Truth. Unpolluted by thoughts of utility, let us begin the inquiry into the nature of Truth at various levels.

I. Absolute Truth (Pāramārthika Satyam)

The Reality is Truth. Now, what is real? What is unreal? If asked, 'Is the world real?' we answer in the affirmative. We are undoubtedly of the opinion that it is so. We have carried this impression for a long time. But how did we determine that the world is real?

We have mentally formed a definition of reality and when the world is tested against this, it is found to be real. What is this definition? What are the criteria by which we determine the world as real?

We find that most of us believe the following:

a) Perceptibility (dṛśyatvam): Seeing is believing. That which is perceived by our senses or experienced by our mind is considered real. I see this book, smell the flower, taste the food, hear the bird, feel the pain, hence the book, flower etc. are real. My experience of them makes them real to me. We argue that if they were unreal, we would not experience them.

b) Utility (upayogitā): I can read this book and gain knowledge, I drink water and quench my thirst, I hear the chimes of the clock and know the time. The book, water and the clock can be transacted with. They have their own function and utility and therefore real to us. On the other hand, the unreal object cannot be transacted with. For example, you cannot drink mirage water.

c) Durability (sthīratā): That which is experienced again and again, for a long period of time is considered real. We see the sun rising each day, we live the pain of a chronic disease for a lifetime, the mother-in-law nags us for years..., hence they are real. If they were unreal they would disappear in a short while or disappear after an experience, like a dream. Therefore, fleeting experiences have a dream-like unreality.

Satyam (Truth)

d) Majority (bahumattvam): The majority, in fact every one we know takes the world to be real. Therefore it must be real. If it were unreal many would have thought it to be so. The educated, rich, famous and powerful have always thought of the world as real. We feel that the Truth cannot be determined based on the words of a rare few who differ from the majority even though they talk from the scriptures.

All of us accept the above as the criteria for determining the reality of the world and ourselves. Based on these we conclude that the world is real. Now let us see if our definition is correct. Do the above criteria always hold true?

On delving further, we find that an object may be perceived, can be used, is durable and the majority consider it real, and yet, it may be false. In Biblical times, in the West, the earth was considered to be flat. It was believed that the sun moved around the earth. It was considered a blasphemy to oppose this erroneous notion of the majority and the church. Yet the truth was proven to be different.

We perceive the rising and setting of the sun, the waning and waxing of the moon, mirage water in the desert, blueness in the sky and so on. We act based on these perceptions. We wake up when the sun rises and paint the sky blue, in a painting. Yet we know that the sun never rises or sets and that the sky is not blue. So what we perceive as true may not be true. That a voice is

heard is true, but what is spoken could be a lie. In the court of law also, the judgement is passed based on the evidence placed before the court. Even if a person is guilty, if he has a smart lawyer or if there is insufficient evidence, he could be acquitted. Once, a man accused of stealing shoes was taken to the court for trial. The judge, finding him innocent, passed the judgement 'not guilty'. He immediately asked the judge, "Does that mean I can keep the shoes!" Hence, what is seen or shown to us by others or by our own mind need not be the truth.

Also, the dream world is perceived, but the dream water does not quench one's thirst in the waking state. The dreamer may experience lifetimes in a dream and considers the dream world real. Yet we know it is not real. It is evident that the above criteria cannot determine the truth conclusively. Then what is the determining factor?

Why is the dream unreal, even though it seems real to the dreamer? On waking, the dreamer and his entire dream world are negated. Therefore, uncontradictability (abhādhyatvam) conclusively determines the reality (satyatvam) of an object. When a person's words get contradicted, he is said to be lying.

King Janaka dreamt that he was a beggar, dying of hunger. On waking up, he asked the wise men in his court, "Who is the real Janaka – the beggar or the king? Both seemed very real when experienced." Sage Aṣṭāvakra told him that neither the beggar nor the king

was real, as each was contradicted by the other. That which remained ever present in both these experiences is real.

A flower is seen and it emits a fragrance which is smelt. It is taken to be real. But when one touches, it is found to be of paper. The experience of the eyes and the nose gets negated by the touch and vice versa. Therefore which means of knowledge should we believe in? In this case, touch is the determining factor in deciding the reality of the flower. Even though, the two senses (eyes and nose) say it is real, touch proves it to be unreal. Touch is called the powerful means or authentic means (prabala pramāṇa) in this case. Therefore, **Truth is that which gets confirmed by authentic means and does not get contradicted by any other means.** A doctor declares a patient dead but thereafter the patient gets up! Whose experience is more authentic? Naturally, the patient's, even if the doctor has a lot of degrees and years of experience!

In determining the absolute Truth which is beyond the mind and the senses, the Vedas (Śruti) are the authentic means. They are the declarations of Truth, realized by the great Seers in their seat of meditation. This can be arrived at through logic (yukti) and confirmed by our own discovery of the Truth (anubhūti).

The *Gītā* (2.16) says, 'The Seers have determined the Truth and understood what is real and unreal. That which

is unreal has no existence and that which is real has no non-existence.'

*nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ,
ubhayorapi dṛṣṭontas-tvanayos-tattvadarśibhiḥ.*

The Truth never gets negated nor does it become absent. It is not subject to appearance and disappearance. That which ever is and never ceases to be is real.

What is that which ever is? We see that a tree exists; when cut, logs exist; when chopped further, sticks exist; when burnt, ashes exist. In and through all the changes in the name, form and attributes, the Existence – the 'Is-ness' of the object is ever present. Let us consider another example. I am a husband, a brother, a father and a son. In and through all my relations, 'I am' remains unchanged. **Existence which is my true nature remains uncontradicted. Hence it is the absolute Truth.**

Ādi Śankarācārya defines **Truth as that about which our thoughts do not change** (*yad viṣayā buddhiḥ na vyabhicarati tat sat*) and untruth as that about which our thoughts change (*yad viṣayā buddhiḥ vyabhicarati tat asat*). Take a block of gold. All kinds of ornaments – bangles, rings, chains and so on are made from it. In and through all the thoughts of gold ornaments (this is a bangle, this is a ring, this is a chain and so on) I experience the gold thought – this is gold. The gold does not change. Hence in this example, gold is real. The names and forms are only relatively real, not absolutely so.

The names, forms and attributes do have a function and can be transacted with. In fact, without them no transaction is possible. I cannot wear a block of gold; I can only wear a chain. Similarly I need to use a clay pot to carry water. I cannot carry water in a clod of clay. Even though transaction is not possible without a name and form, we actually experience the substance or the essence alone. When I touch the ornaments I touch only the gold. When I touch the pot I touch only the clay. Its value is also because of the essence. We may give a sentimental value to the chain; but the goldsmith sees only the gold in it and values it accordingly.

We can define the Reality or the Truth as being that which has an independent existence. Its existence is not because of any other object, being or experience. All exist because of Existence; without Existence none can exist. In *Saddarśana* Ramaṇa Maḥarṣi says, 'Can there be thought of existence of any object without the Existence Principle, the 'Truth?' (*satpratyayā kiṁ nu vihāya santam*) Even the concept of non-existence cannot exist without Existence.

What then, do we consider as unreal? The unreal is that which has no independent existence. All gold ornaments and clay pots exist because of gold and clay respectively. But gold and clay can exist even without the various shapes and sizes of ornaments and pots. Before the ornaments were made, gold existed. When all the ornaments are melted, gold alone remains. Its

existence is independent of the presence and absence of the ornaments. Similarly, the Truth is independent of the presence or the absence of time, space, objects, names, forms and attributes. It existed before creation and will exist even after the dissolution of the world. It ever exists. All else exist because of It.

To know the absolute Truth as my own true nature is the very goal of human existence. Knowing it, man becomes immortal, fearless and totally free. The seeker thus prays, 'The Truth is veiled by the golden disc of glittering names and forms. Oh Lord, remove this veiling and reveal Thyself to me, who am the seeker of the Truth' (*Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*).

Muṇḍakopaniṣad says that 'the path to the highest Truth is led by (the empirical) Truth' (*satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ*). By following the principles of truth in our daily life we become fit for gaining the Absolute.'

Now we move on to the discussion of truth at the empirical level.

II. Empirical Truth (vyāvahārika satyam)

Truth has a very important role to play in our day-to-day life. It is a fundamental value and its adherence is considered the common duty (*sāmānya dharma*) for all of mankind, all through life. It is said that God is Truth. Truth in philosophy is called God in religion. All religions of the world give importance to truth. It is the very

foundation for a good life. Following the principles of truth makes us strong within, integrates our personality, endows us with peace of mind, confidence, fearlessness and gives us credibility and respect from others. It spreads goodness in society and helps to integrate it. A truly honest man has the strength to make mighty powers bow before him. Even the phenomenal powers change their nature in front of him. When Sītājī entered the fire to prove her purity (agni parīkṣā), even fire changed its nature and became cold.

Now we shall discuss some interesting aspects of Truth.

A. Speak the Truth (satyam vada):

From early childhood we are told to speak the truth. Religion too advises us to do the same. Even in court we take an oath, 'I will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. Yet this value seems so difficult to follow. Why?

To state facts as they are without exaggeration or hiding is 'to be honest'. Half-truths or exaggerated facts are also untruths. When facts show us in a bad light, deny us some material benefit or lead us to discomfort, we generally resort to untruth. If I tell others I do not pay taxes, I would be known as a cheat; so I lie. If I lie about my caste, I would be eligible for admission in a good college even without getting good grades; so I lie. If I confess I have stolen, I would be jailed; so I lie.

Popular opinion holds that 'Honest people suffer. The dishonest become rich, succeed, come to power and are respected. Therefore dishonesty pays. There is no place for honest people in the present day...' Is this true? Superficially dishonesty seems to win. But if we take a closer look, we realize that it has disastrous consequences. When we lie, there is a 'doer-knower split' within us. I know what I speak is not right. This causes agitation, tension, fear of discovery, more lies, low self-esteem, disintegrated personality, lack of confidence, weak will power and so on. Also one who lies generally distrusts others as well. 'A sinner always suspects others of sinning' (*pāpī sarvatra pāpam āśankate*). Unfortunately we never realize how much harm untruth does to us. We somehow believe that dishonesty pays. So we continue to harm ourselves through untruths.

Also when a person lies, he swears that he is speaking the truth. The lie succeeds only when it is considered to be the truth. All criminal activities too survive because of truth. Gangsters have their own code of ethics. They also have to be honest and trust each other's words to be able to do their criminal work. Untruth has no face to show. It presents itself in the garb of truth alone.

It is a strange phenomenon that though we may lie, we always want others to speak the truth. We may be doing wrong business, but we wish to employ honest people. The lawyer expects his client to tell him the truth even though he may lie in order to prove him innocent.

We generally want others to follow values. That by itself shows that we value values like truth.

Spoken truth should have the following characteristics:

i. Speak verified words (pramāṇa bhūtaṁ vākyaṁ): The words that we speak should be authentic, verified and valid. In case we do not know the truth of a matter, we should say so. Our opinions should not be passed on as facts. A teacher asked a student, "How do you spell 'table'?" The student replied, "t-e-b-a-l". The teacher said, "The dictionary does not say so." The student retorted, "You asked me how I spelled it, not how the dictionary spells it!"

Many a times parents and teachers give wrong information to children because they do not wish to appear ignorant. In the *Praśnopaniṣad* there is the story of a great king approaching Sage Bharadvāja and asking him a question. The Sage confesses that he does not know the answer. The king does not believe that such a great soul would not know the answer. The Sage said, "If I knew, why would I not tell you? However, if I lie, my entire family will be destroyed and the great name of my ancestors will be tainted. I shall therefore, not lie." The Sage later asks Sage Pippalāda to remove his ignorance.

ii. Speak sweet words (priyaṁ brūyāt): Sometimes the truth may be bitter and unpleasant. If however one has

to speak or convey an unpleasant fact, it should be spoken sweetly, pleasantly, gently and softly. Śrī Rāma was exiled to the forest on the day of his coronation. He broke this news gently to his mother saying, 'My father has given me the kingdom of the forest (*pitā dīna mohi kānana rāju*). He stated this without bitterness, sarcasm or blame.

One should prepare the other person before speaking a bitter truth – 'I am going to say something which may not be very pleasant...' To be rude and blunt is not in keeping with the spirit of speaking the truth. We should therefore pray to the Lord – May my words be noble and sweet (*jihvā me madhumattamā*).

iii. Speak for the well being of others (*hitam brūyāt*): It is said, 'The words of truth are good. But nobler still is to speak words in which lies the well-being of others. That alone is the truth.'

*satyasya vacanam śreyaḥ satyādapi hitam vadet,
yad bhūta-hitam-atyantam tat satyam iti matam mama.*

Yudhiṣṭhira prompted by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra said that Aśvatthāmā was dead. He knew that Droṇācārya understood it to be his beloved son (and not the elephant of that name which had died). Śrī Kṛṣṇa acted for the well-being of all and therefore this was not dishonesty.

At times, a doctor has to lie to a patient if he feels that the patient cannot take the bad news. The motive is the well-being of another, hence it is not untruth. One

should however not compromise one's value for truth due to selfish interest projected as the well-being of others. Well-being should be understood as that in which lies the good of all.

iv. **Speak measured words (mitam brūyāt):** Speak only what needs to be spoken. A person who talks too much tends to exaggerate and sometimes lie. A disciple was about to pass on the latest gossip in town. The Master asked him a few questions, "Is it true? Will it benefit anyone? Is it pleasing? If the answer to all this is – no, then don't speak it!"

B. Fulfilling your words (satyavrata):

To take a vow or make a resolution and fulfil it or to fulfil the promise given to another, come what may, is called satyavrata. We take on religious vows and try to find loopholes in fulfilling them. We make resolutions about dieting and then break them. People have a habit of giving false assurances and promises. Sometimes they do not mean it even as they say it. We often hear, "I will definitely come to your house" even when the person means he definitely will not. Before elections politicians promise, 'If elected I will give jobs to all', an impossible promise to fulfil. Sometimes the words are meant when they are spoken, but, later, people change their resolve as it proves too much trouble to fulfil it. They also change their minds out of selfishness or indifference. Many even forget that they have given their word. If they remember, they lie about it or say that they never meant it!

Śrī Rāma's famous words on this are – 'It is the tradition of the Raghus that they will fulfil their promises even if they have to give up their lives in doing so' (*raghukula rīti sadā cali āyi prāṇa jāyi para vacana na jāyi*).

The noble king Hariścandra was called Satyavratī Hariścandra, as he underwent immense difficulties in order to fulfil his words. Devavrata was called Bhīṣma (one of great vow) when he took the vow of life-long celibacy.

In India, performing the Satyanārāyaṇa pūjā and reading the Satyanārāyaṇa kathā is quite common. Therein are stories of people who promise to perform the pūjā in order to gain something. When the Lord fulfils their desire, they forget to keep their promises. They are subjected to the Lord's anger and lose everything. In repentance, they fulfil their words and the Lord is gracious again. People ask, 'Why should the Lord get angry? Why does He need our worship?' They are mistaken. They miss the point altogether. They do not think, 'Why did the person forget his promise?' The Lord is compassionate enough to remind him of his unrighteous act. He sets the man on the right path. If everyone fulfilled their words, then, written agreements, affidavits and courts would have no role to play. The spoken word itself would be enough. But we see that even after writing, people go back on their words.

One should however, think well before taking a vow or making promises. Bhīṣma took a vow that he would

be loyal to the throne of Hastināpura. This was one of the causes of the Mahābhārata war. If he had vowed loyalty to righteousness, the great disaster could have been prevented.

C. Intellectual Honesty (ṛtam):

The truth ascertained by the study of the scriptures, at various levels is called ṛtam (*śāstra nirmitam satyam*). Our conviction about the absolute Truth, its nature and role, about truth as a value to be followed in life, the truth about ourselves as we are – is all ṛtam. To manifest that in life is satyam (*tasya āviśkaraṇam*).

D. Honest conduct (sadācāra):

Intellectual honesty, good motives and noble thoughts manifest as righteous behaviour at the body level. To be honest and steadfast in following one's duties, however unpleasant they may seem to be, is sadācāra. To act with the belief that 'the truth alone wins, never the untruth' (*satyameva jayate nānṛtam*) is sadācāra. For such a person dishonesty is worse than death. 'To be good and do good is our supreme duty' (*ācāraḥ paramo dharmah*). Śrī Rāma loved everyone. But he loved dharma above all. He was therefore called 'the very embodiment of righteousness' (*rāmo vighrahavān dharmah*).

When we speak what we think and do what we speak and think, there is an integration within us. An evil man may speak out his evil intentions and act

accordingly also, but he is not called an integrated person, as he knows well that his deed is wrong. Also there is no unfolding of his personality due to his seemingly integrated behaviour. The cunning, distracted or selfish man thinks one thing, speaks another and acts totally differently. An honest man thinks, speaks and acts in an integrated manner. His efforts are therefore single-pointed and rewarding. The seeker thus prays, 'May my speech be established in my mind and my mind in my speech. May the Truth reveal itself to me' (*vāñ me manasi prathiṣṭhitā, mano me vāci pratiṣṭhitām, āvīr āvīrmā edhi*). To such a noble soul of honest conduct, the knowledge of the absolute Truth is easily attained.

The topic of Truth is endless in its scope and depth. We have touched a few of its aspects. In the end, we conclude by stating that the Lord resides in the heart of each, and the Lord is the Truth and hence, each one knows within, what is truth and untruth. The inner voice prompts us to be always honest. In some it is clear, in others dullened and ignored, but present all the same. It is heard when you are alone with yourself, when you face yourself or look within.

Satyam itself is Śivam. Hereafter we shall discuss what is Śivam – auspiciousness.

* * *

Śivam (Auspiciousness)

Śivam (auspiciousness) also means Consciousness (caitanya), Peace (śāntam), Purity (śuci), Final Beatitude (mokṣa), Sacredness (pavitratā) and well-being (kalyāṇa). We shall explore a few of these meanings at various levels.

Śivam is Satyam (Truth): From the absolute stand point Śivam is Satyam. Satyam, we have seen, is that which ever exists, never gets negated, is imperishable, unchanging, the very Existence Principle because of which all else exists. How does one realize this Truth?

We experience this world through the equipment of the body, mind and intellect. The limitations of the body and senses, the likes and dislikes of the mind and the concepts and capabilities of the intellect colour our vision of the world. Also our cultural, religious, educational, economic, social, political and national backgrounds influence our perception of the world. We realize that we do not see the world 'as it is', but as shown to us by our equipment. To see the Truth of the world and ourselves 'as it is', we would have to withdraw the body-mind equipment. *Kāthopaniṣad* (2.6.10) declares, 'When the five senses along with the mind and intellect are stilled, then one experiences the supreme goal – the Truth.'

*yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha,
buddhiśca na viceṣṭhate tām āhur paramāṁ gatim.*

The Truth experienced as pure being is itself Śivam, my own true nature.

Śivam is Consciousness (caitanya): The *Kaivalyopaniṣad* (1.18) says, 'That which is different from the three states of consciousness and the experienced, experiencer and experience – the witness-Consciousness, is the ever-auspicious Self.'

*triṣu dhāmasu yad bhogyam bhoktā bhogaśca yad bhavet,
tebhyo vilakṣaṇaḥ sākṣī cinmātro'ham sadāśivaḥ.*

The three states of consciousness that each one of us undergo each day in our life are the waking, dream and the deep sleep. Each state is negated by the other. The waking is not experienced in the dream and vice versa and both are not experienced in the deep state. All the three states are illumined by me. I remain a witness, apart from these three states.

The triad of the experienced, experiencer and experience are finite, inert, ever changing and inter-dependent. The witness of these three is of opposite nature. It is infinite Consciousness, immortal and independent. This witness- Consciousness is called Śiva Tattva – the very principle of Auspiciousness.

Śivam is the life giver: Just as light is one of the manifestations of electricity in the filament of the bulb, life is one of the manifestations of Consciousness in our

inner equipment (the mind-intellect or the subtle body). It is this association with the Śiva Tattva as life that makes this body alive, dynamic, sacred, beautiful, worshipped, precious, pampered and loved. When life ebbs away, the same body decays, stinks, bloats and becomes inauspicious. The body is made up of inert matter. Its components like blood, bones or flesh when seen individually, only fill us with disgust and repulsion. Yet when put together and infused with life, it becomes capable of great thoughts, words and deeds. Our ability to act, think or feel is only because of the life within us. Yet how much we take it for granted! We rarely turn our mind to life or its source or the Consciousness, which is our own true nature. How precious is life and how auspicious is its source! Even dead cells (nails or hair) as long as they are attached to the body, grow and are considered beautiful. The minute they dissociate from life they are rejected. In the Hindu tradition, the dead body is considered inauspicious and removed from the house as soon as possible.

Śivam is ever pure (śuci): The body even when alive, by its very nature becomes impure. It has to be kept clean daily. It is a bundle of filth well packed and sustained by life. Once the main switch (life) is put off, the system stops and it decays.

The mind harbours its own impurities of anger, jealousy, lust, greed and the like. The intellect carries its own prejudices, crookedness and so on. The

Vivekacūdāmaṇi says, 'As long as man worships (identifies with) the body (inert matter) so long he remains impure' (*śavākāram yāvat bhavati manujaḥ tāvat aśuciḥ*). The witness of the body, mind and intellect is free from their impurity and is ever pure.

Śivam is Peace (śāntam): 'Consciousness is one without a second and is all peace' (*śāntam śivam advaitam*). Only when there are two objects can there be discord, noise or agitation. In the non-dual Consciousness, there is peace alone. This peace is not the inauspicious or fearful peace of the cremation ground. It is an auspicious and joy-giving peace that 'passeth all understanding'.

Agitation, tension, restlessness, desires, fear and anxiety are the cause of disquiet. All these occur in the mind. Consciousness which illumines the mind is beyond the mind and is therefore ever peaceful, truly auspicious.

Śivam is Liberation or Final Beatitude (mokṣa): Sorrow is bondage. Finitude gives rise to sorrow. 'There is no joy in finitude' (*na alpe sukham asti*). When we identify with the finite body-mind-intellect we experience sorrow and bondage. To falsify this identification and know our own true nature is called liberation – Final Beatitude. This state is Śiva.

Meditation on the form of Śiva (saguṇa upāsanā)

Those who are born in the Hindu culture associate the word 'Śiva' with the form of the Lord Śiva. Meditation

on the form of Lord Śiva can lead us to Śiva Tattva and we can also appreciate the great qualities of the one who ever abides in Śiva Tattva. We shall therefore focus our attention on a few aspects of the Lord.

Śiva as pure Consciousness: Śiva is Consciousness incarnate. His wife, Pārvatī symbolises prakṛti (matter) or māyā (the power of the Lord). When Śiva wields his māyā He is called Īśvara – the Lord of the universe. Māyā creates this world of innumerable names and forms, in the presence of Śiva. He is the illuminator and the enlivener of the universe. Māyā has no existence apart from Śiva. Śiva however exists even without māyā. Let us now review the symbolism attached to Śiva in his saṅga form.

Śiva's family: The family of Śiva, Pārvatī (wife), Gaṇeṣa and Kārtikeya (sons) is indeed mighty. Each has immense physical and spiritual prowess, which are used for the welfare of the universe. The children respect and revere their parents and they live together in harmony. Despite living in the family, Śiva is ever absorbed in meditation. That is, He performs His spiritual practices and day-to-day activities whilst remaining centred in His true nature.

Śiva's servants: The blind, lame, ghosts, one-eyed and such others who are rejected and shunned by the world are employed by the compassionate Lord. They live in harmony with each other whilst serving Him.

Family vehicles: Certain animals have a natural enmity with each other. But due to the presence of Śiva they give up their enmity and live together in peace. The lion eats the bull, the peacock kills the snake which in turn preys on the mouse. But in Kailāśa the lion (Pārvatī's vehicle), the bull (Śiva's vehicle), the snake (Śiva's ornament), the mouse (Gaṇeṣa's vehicle) and the peacock (Kārtikeya's vehicle) live together.

Śiva's vehicle: Śiva rides the bull – Nandi. Nandi symbolizes dharma or righteousness. Only one who rides the path of righteousness will reach perfection. In every Śiva temple Nandi faces the Lord. There is no obstruction between him and the Lord.

Śiva's ornaments: Snakes of all sizes and shapes form the ornaments of Śiva. That which normally creates fear and revulsion, when it comes in contact with the Lord becomes His glory.

Śiva's make-up: The Lord smears ashes from the cremation ground all over his body. He has burnt to ashes the identification with the body in the fire of knowledge. Also, the final destination of the body is the cremation ground. One should always remember that the body we pamper so much will one day be reduced to ashes. We should therefore, not get attached to it, accept the changes in our body without resistance and learn to age gracefully.

Śiva's eyes: The Lord has three eyes.

- a) With two eyes, He sees the world of names and forms. With the third eye of wisdom He sees the Truth behind the names and forms.
- b) The two eyes are the eyes of compassion and justice. Compassion out of context of justice would lead to chaos. While justice without compassion could lead to cruelty. With the third eye of wisdom the Lord dispenses justice with compassion.
- c) The two eyes represent the sun (intellect) and the moon (mind). The third eye stands for the fire (of knowledge) which burns away ignorance. It is with the third eye that the deity of passion (Kāmadeva) was burnt. The Lord opens this eye at the time of the dissolution of the universe.

The crescent moon: Śiva wears the crescent moon on His head. The moon is the deity of the mind. Śiva is one who has controlled His mind.

The holy Ganges: Śiva bears the Gaṅgā in His matted locks. She symbolizes knowledge and devotion. Śiva gives the highest place to knowledge and devotion. He manages to keep His head cool under all circumstances!

Śiva's neck: Śiva's neck is blue since He swallowed the poison that emerged from the churning of the milky ocean. Only the brave and mighty can swallow difficulties without perishing. It becomes their glory.

Also, He did not allow His head or heart to get poisoned or embittered. He went through difficulties with great fortitude and forbearance, with a smile on His face.

Śiva's residence: Śiva lives at Kailāśa with His family. Nature is at its best there; serene, elevating, beautiful, picturesque, sacred... and at its harshest, snowbound and without any foliage. They do not have a roof over their head, yet they are happy and content. Having destroyed His body identification He remains unaffected by the cold.

Śiva with Gaṅgā and Pārvatī: With Gaṅgā on His head and Pārvatī by His side Śiva continues to meditate. He has won over passion.

Śiva's trident: The trident represents the three states of consciousness (waking, dream and deep sleep), the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal), the three qualities of knowledge (sattva), activity (rajas) and inertia (tamas) and the three periods of time (past, present and future). Śiva is the witness, the Lord, the weilder and the illuminator of all.

Contradictions: Śiva lives amongst opposites, yet is above them. He meditates in peace and yet destroys the world. He meditates at one time and dances at the other. The necklace of skulls around His neck represents death and the nectarine rays of the moon, immortality. He wields both. Pārvatī is beauty incarnate and His

Śivam (Auspiciousness)

servants (Śiva gaṇas) are ugly. Pārvatī is dressed in her best and Śiva has barely any clothes. Being centred in the pure Self, He is beyond the pairs of opposites (dvandvātīta).

These are just a few aspects of the Lord. The more we meditate on His auspicious form, the more our mind gets purified, single-pointed, and subtle and closer we come to the realisation of Śiva Tattva, the Self within us.

May our minds always have auspicious thoughts'
(*tanme manah śiva saṅkalpamastu*).

* * *

Sundaram (Beauty)

From ancient times, man has been fascinated with beauty. From the Vedic times to Leonardo da Vinci and even in modern days, philosophers, artists, poets, scientists, musicians and other thinkers have tried to define beauty. But beauty in absolute terms is difficult to define. We shall try to examine a few aspects of beauty.

Satyam is Sundaram: Truth is Beauty

Truth is unchanging, timeless. It ever exists and has a timeless beauty. It is the most ancient, but is as new and beautiful now, as it was in the past and will remain so always. It is therefore called purātana – purā api nava – old yet new. Seekers on the path of Truth have beautified their life. The life of those who have attained the Truth is beauty personified. God is Truth and Beauty incarnate (*madhurādhīpateḥ akhīlāṁ madhuram*).

Śivam is Sundaram: Auspiciousness is Beauty

That which is auspicious and sacred is truly beautiful. The form of the Lord or the ambience of a holy place, has a great beauty. Also it is the manifestation of Consciousness as life that makes every being alive, dynamic and beautiful. A dead body is no more attractive or beautiful. It decays and falls apart.

A. Aspects of outer or physical beauty:

Beauty delights the senses and the mind: The senses and the mind are pleased when an object, being or situation is proportionate, symmetrical, rhythmic, conducive, in consonance and in harmony. The scriptures on art, architecture, music, dance, literature and the like have guidelines regarding the same. Students in the present day too are taught how to manifest beauty in their field of work.

A master had two students learning Saṁskṛt. One day, as they were going, they saw a snake perched on a dry tree. The teacher asked both to describe the scene. One, said in matter-of-fact words, "*śuṣka-vṛkṣo'sti tadupari, sarpo'sti*". The other said it poetically, "*nirāsa taruriha rājati purataḥ, tadupari rājati phaṇipati rājā*". Both mean the same but the latter delights the heart.

That which is striking, fascinating, attractive, awesome, wonderous, gentle, delicate, soothing, harmonious or natural is beautiful. Nature in all its aspects is always beautiful. There is so much beauty in the innocent face of a child, softness of a flower, grace of a tiger, flight of a bird, sound of the ocean, strength of an elephant, dew drops on a leaf or the sunrise over the mountains.

There is also the beauty of the Taj Mahal, sound of the flute, vast scope of technology, grace of a gymnast,

sight of a painting or a sculpture, a handsome person and good clothes. Man-made beauty too tries to excel itself all the time, but nature makes no effort. It excels effortlessly. Beauty also lies in perfection and in striving for perfection.

Beauty is ever new: Kālidāsa, the famous poet said, 'That which is fresh and new every moment is beautiful' (*kṣaṇe kṣaṇe navatām upaiti, tadeva rūpam ramaṇīyatāyāḥ*). A child gets up looking so fresh and rejuvenating. Each day, the sunrise and sunset are new and beautiful. Nature reveals new aspects each day. It has an inherent ability to rejuvenate itself and is therefore always beautiful. The Rāmāyaṇa says that when Lord Rāma came to live in Pañcavatī, each day Nature became more and more beautiful (*dina dina prati ati hoyā suhāe*). It is indeed the presence of the Lord that gives beauty to all.

There is charm and beauty in a relationship when there is freshness and newness. Otherwise it becomes repetitive, boring and stale. Freshness remains with the discovery of new aspects of a person or relationship and deeper beauty of the mind and soul.

Health is beauty: Only a healthy person looks beautiful. In spite of the best clothes and make-up, we do not look our best, when ill.

Beauty creates love within: Etymologically 'sundaram' means – perceiving or thinking about which

our heart melts in love is beauty. Beauty creates love and love creates a beautiful feeling within. A person in love looks beautiful and a beautiful person invokes love. When we love a person, we think everything about him or her is beautiful. Others may wonder, but after all, 'beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder'.

Beauty invokes love, which in turn makes us happy, soft, gentle, caring, peaceful and pure. A strong man melts within at the sight of his new-born child or even the thought of it. His face softens and his words are tender when he talks of his child.

Beauty prompts movements towards the object of beauty: Since beauty is joy-giving, man is naturally attracted mentally and physically toward that which is beautiful. Even great Sages meditating on the formless Truth were irresistibly drawn to the beautiful form of Śrī Rāma as he was passing through the forest. The gopīs followed Śrī Kṛṣṇa wherever He went. Ugliness, on the other hand, creates disgust and revulsion and a movement away from that which is ugly.

Outer or physical beauty can be sāttvic, rājasic or tāmasic. Sāttvic beauty is natural, more lasting, refreshing, elevating, peace-giving and soothing. It can unburden and quieten us, whereas rājasic or tāmasic beauty is more fleeting, superficial, exhausting, artificial and degrading. It creates craving, passion, agitation, greed and tension and it completely enslaves us.

The world gives great importance to outer or physical beauty. The beauty industry with its beauty clinics, beauty parlours, fashion houses, cosmetic industries, health clubs, jewellery shops and so on is prospering. Every one is out to conquer the world through their looks, smart clothes and fast talk. It does have its impact. Many fall in love at first sight and live to regret on second thought.

B. Inner Beauty

The inner beauty of the mind and intellect is something which is generally neglected. This concept is elaborated in the following Samskr̥t verse:

*narasyābharāṇaṁ rūpaṁ rūpasyābharāṇaṁ guṇaḥ,
guṇasyābharāṇaṁ jñānaṁ jñānasyābharāṇaṁ kṣamā.*

The ornament of man is his physical form, the ornament of the form is his inner virtues, the ornament of his virtues is his knowledge and the ornament of his knowledge is forgiveness.'

The ornament of man is his physical form: It has already been mentioned that the first thing that attracts us to a person is his or her physical beauty. It is said that a girl chooses a husband for his good looks (kanyā varayate rūpam), even though her mother looks for wealth (mātā vittam) and the father, for education (pitā śrutam) in a son-in-law. But outer beauty is not lasting. It is only skin deep. Physical attraction wears out.

Something deeper is required to sustain the love and attraction.

The ornaments of the physical form are virtues: Virtues like humility, compassion, accommodativeness, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, non-injury, truth, self control and charity add beauty to a person. Even an ugly person is considered beautiful if he or she is virtuous. These virtues can grow as one ages. They give lasting beauty and joy to man.

The ornament of virtues is knowledge: Virtues are good, but without the right understanding of life, the knowledge of the goal of life, the discrimination between the good and the pleasant, bondage and liberation, do's and don'ts, it does not create a feeling of respect in others. People with right understanding conduct their own lives beautifully and also become ideals for others.

Ādi Śankarācāryāji says that 'Knowledge is that which quietens the extrovertedness of our mind and senses' (*tad jñānaṁ praśāmakaraṁ yad indriyāṇām*). When man stops his mad rush towards sense gratification, he is called wise and mature. It is also said that the result of knowledge is the elimination of wrong notions and withdrawal from false pursuits (*vidyā phalaṁ syāt asato nivṛttiḥ*).

A person sees a shining object on the beach and mistakes it to be a piece of silver. He looks around and

proceeds cautiously towards it to take it. Finally when it is in his hands, he discovers it to be a worthless bit of mother of pearl. Knowing its true worth, he has no hesitation in throwing it away.

The ornament of knowledge is forgiveness: Forgiveness, patience, tolerance and fortitude are great virtues in anyone. When they adorn a man of perfection, a wise man or an intelligent and capable person, they are even more beautiful.

It is normally seen that a perfectionist is impatient with the imperfections of others. The intelligent man is intolerant of a dull-witted one. Most get angry when a servant fails to understand them. The healthy man is insensitive towards the sick. And artistic person looks down on one without an aesthetic sense. But to forgive, withstand, tolerate and accommodate the weaknesses of others with love and compassion is indeed rare, especially if one is himself of great knowledge, talent, might and virtues.

Śrī Rāma forgave Kaikeyī and Mantharā who plotted against him and sent him to the forest for fourteen years. He embraced Kaikeyī even before he met his own mother Kauśalyā, on his return.

It is generally believed that people would call us weak if we forgave others. But we know that it takes greater strength to forgive than it does to retaliate. That

is why forgiveness is considered the ornament of the strong (*kṣamā vīrasya bhūṣaṇam*).

The highest form of forgiveness is when you do not even consider the harm done by another as something wrong. Ekanātha Mahārāj thanked the person who spat on him for giving him a chance to bathe again and again in the holy river. Some forgive and forget not only the hurt but also the incident. A friend met another after many years and said, "I committed a mistake years back; I am sorry." He was told, "I have forgotten what I forgave!" Some forgive and forget the hurt, but remember the incident. A wife kept reminding the husband how he had hurt her. When he said, "Have you not forgiven me?" She replied, "I have forgiven and forgotten. But I don't want you to forget!" Some harbour the hurt within but do not retaliate, while yet others plot ways of avenging the hurt.

Tulasidasji says, 'There is none like Lord Śrī Rāma. He is beautiful, full of knowledge, compassionate, loves even the weak, gives generously to others without any selfish motive, liberates even His enemies and by a drop of His grace, even a dull-witted person like me has gained supreme peace.'

*sundara sujāna kṛpānidhāna anātha para kara prīti jo
so eka rāma akāma hita nirvāṇaprada sama āna ko,
jāki kṛpā lavalesa te matimanda tulasidāsahurṁ
pāyo parama visrāmu rāma samāna prabhu nāhīn kahūn.*

When one looks at such holistic beauty (which has physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual beauty) one's mind is elevated. Khara and Dūṣaṇa, enemies of Śrī Rāma, came to attack him with an army of 14,000 soldiers. But when they saw Him, for a moment, they forgot their enmity and were completely fascinated by the Lord. Their hearts melted as they wondered how they could ever harm such perfection with their hard arrows!

Also, one whose heart is filled with inner beauty does not degrade himself or get attached to outer beauty. A saint was staring at a beautiful woman. Some of his devotees gently told him that it was not decent to stare at a woman. He said, "I was admiring the Lord who created such beauty. How much more beautiful must He be!"

Another Saṁskṛt verse says, 'The ears are beautified by satsaṅg (company and words of noble souls) not by ear-rings. The hands are beautified by charity, not by bangles. The body of good people is beautified by the good deeds and not by sandal paste.'

*śrotram śrutena na tu kundalena dānena pāṇī na tu
kaṅkaṇena,
vibhāti kāyāḥ khalu sajjanānām paropakāreṇa na tu
candanena.*

A lady was admiring the ear-rings given by her husband. She thanked him profusely. He said, "Don't just thank me. Thank the Lord who gave you the ears to hang them on." Outer decoration beautifies the body. However

the purpose for which each organ and limb is given to us should be fulfilled. Then alone is there true beauty.

The ears are meant to listen to noble thoughts, to gain knowledge, which blesses others and ourselves. It is not meant for listening to gossip and trash. The hands are meant to give what we have to the needy and the weak. A man was resisting the persuasion of a lady to buy a ticket for a charity show. Finally he said, "I cannot come for the show as I am busy, but I support your cause in spirit." The lady was quick. She said, "Then buy a ticket for your spirit." People, we find, generally avoid giving in charity.

It is good deeds, done without selfish motives, which are the true decorations of man. Make-up, ornaments and clothes are merely superficial adornments. Someone said, 'Your inner beauty gets reflected in the smiles on the faces of people around you.'

A young man belonging to a particular Parish never attended Sunday mass. He was labelled an atheist. The priest however, was not convinced and delved further. He found out what he did each Sunday and declared to the congregation, 'This young man is the most devout believer. An old man in the far off village is abandoned by all to attend Sunday mass. He goes there to serve the old man.'

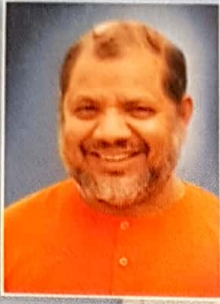
When we say that ear-rings, bangles and make-up do not adorn a person, we are not criticising physical

beauty. We only point out its limitations and praise inner beauty. The scriptures too say that a thing should not be criticised for its own sake, but to praise another, so that man will take to the good and leave the opposite (*nahi nindā nindyam ninditum pravartate, kintu vidheyasya stutyartham*).

In conclusion, let us pray to the Lord that each day of this year be filled with greater inner and outer beauty and auspiciousness, taking us closer to our true nature which is Satyam Śivam Sundaram.

* * *

Om Tat Sat



Swami Tejomayananda, Head of Chinmaya Mission, reveals in this book the meaning of the famous phrase – Satyam Śivam Sundaram (Truth Auspiciousness Beauty). As the truth and beauty of each word unfolds, the practical application of the subject in day-to-day life and its deeper philosophic meaning is realized by the reader.



Cent

CENTRAL CHINMAYA MISSION TRUST, Mumbai - 400 072