

# **PREMA VAHINI**

*Stream of Love*

**SATHYA SAI BABA**

#### **54. The four stages of liberation**

Worship, with fixity of consciousness and purity of feeling and free of all extraneous thought, becomes itself mental union with the Divine (*bhava-samadhi*). As a result of this mental union, the Lord appears before the inner eye of the devotee in the form that he has chosen for worship. The vision is not merely a matter of imagination; it is a “face-to-face” experience. Without changing location, the devotee can abide in the presence of the Lord in the self-same place. This is called “being always with God (*salokya-mukthi*)”. Besides being always with the Lord, devotees realise all that they see as the glory of the Lord. The experience is referred to as “seeing always the glory of the Lord (*samipya-mukthi*)”. Existing ever with the Lord, witnessing always the glory of the Lord, and becoming suffused with God-consciousness is merger in the divine form (*sarupya-mukthi*). This is the final fruit of devotional scriptures.

But at this stage, there is still a trace of differential feeling. So, the nondualist won’t admit it as the highest. Simply because a devotee has the same form as the Lord, we cannot assume that the devotee has the powers of creation, preservation, and destruction that the Lord has. Only when all trace of difference disappears and unity is attained is the highest stage reached. This is called union (*sayujya*). This comes of divine grace won by the essence of the spiritual practice of each; it cannot be claimed as the fruit of effort.

The devotee will aspire to this merging (*aikya*). The devotee wishes to serve the Lord as he pleases and to experience the joy of the form that he has attributed to the Lord. But the Lord, out of His grace, gives them not only existence with the Lord, witnessing always the glory of the Lord, and being suffused with God-consciousness but also union (*sayujya*)! The path of devotion (*bhakthi marga*) results also in attainment of knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jnana*). Even if the devotee does not crave it, the Lord Himself vouchsafes it to the devotee. Union-with-God liberation (*sayujya-mukthi*) is also referred to as absolute liberation (*ekantha-mukthi*).

## **55. Perform all actions in dedication to God**

**F**or delusion-constituted (*maya*-constituted) hn beings, there are two gates of illusion: the appetite for sex and the appetite of the tongue. These two have to be conquered by everyone; as long as they persist, they cause sorrow. All worldly desires are comprehended by these two, so only those who have mastered these two can be said to have successfully waded through the world. These two are the causes of all sins, and sin is the manure on which illusion (*maya*) thrives.

Really speaking, this world has to serve only the purpose of sustaining the body. Those aspiring for liberation have to subdue the senses. “Food for guarding the body, dress to ward off the cold,” says the later (*uttara*) *Gita*. However, if one gets immersed in these pursuits, one will forget the purpose for which one has come and the goal of all activity and holy endeavour. Instead, whatever activity a person may be engaged in, the person must, as automatically as breathing, be contemplating on and always aware of this: “I am born to serve God and to realise my true self.” All acts —wearing, eating, walking, studying, serving, moving— should be performed in the belief that they take one into the Presence. Everything should be done in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.

A farmer clears and levels the land, removes the stones and thorns, ploughs and prepares the field, manures and strengthens the soil, waters and fertilises it. Then, after sowing, transplanting, weeding, spraying, and waiting, he reaps the crop. After winnowing and threshing, he stacks the corn. All these various processes are for the sake of the stomach. So, too, one must feel that all hunger and thirst, joy and sorrow, grief and loss, suffering and anger, food and appetite are but impulses helping us toward attaining the presence of the Lord. When one has this attitude, sin will never tarnish these activities. The appetites will also vanish, without a vestige of name or form.

On the other hand, if the appetites are treated as important, one can earn only sorrow, not joy. It will be impossible to acquire peace. Mastery of the sensory desires can't be learned at schools where the arts of sustaining the body are taught systematically.