



Reference Material for the Sailand Retreat



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I. Introduction to the Silent Retreat and What to Expect

The Silent Retreat offers each individual an opportunity to go deep within to discover the fountain of peace that exists in the stillness of one's own Heart. All the activities will be geared towards facilitating this deep introspection. While many of our activities through the weekend will be conducted in silence, other activities such as listening to keynote addresses and singing multilingual devotional songs in a lead-follow and unison format, help us go within and make the mind more introspective.

While going inward is primarily an individual journey, it can be beneficially conducted in the presence of like-minded devotees. In order to help you better understand what it means to be silent during a retreat, we have included below a discussion provided by a Buddhist monk to attendees of a similar retreat. Also included in this document are quotes from Swami on the importance of silence in daily living, as well as passages from Swami on suggested meditation techniques and an article on Walking Meditation by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist spiritual teacher. We will practice these techniques of walking meditation during the Nature walks that are planned.

As always, we are available to help answer any questions and make your stay an enjoyable and memorable one. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the organizers any time before and during the Retreat.

II. Cultivating the Attitude of Silence at the Retreat

What is an attitude of Silence:

The first step in the Sadhana is the cleansing of the speech. Talk sweet without anger. Do not boast of your scholarship or attainments. Be humble, eager to serve; conserve your speech. Practice silence. That will save you from squabbles, frittering thoughts and faction. (Sathya Sai Speaks Vol II p.34-36)

Practical Tips for the Retreat:

Radio Sai Interview with James Sinclair:
http://media.radiosai.org/journals/Vol_03/03MAR01/coverstory_wabh.htm

Watch. Don't participate in the thought. Be in the now. Don't fool around with the past. Past is past. The future is not our business. Our business is now. And in the now - only 'Watch'. That's the gift that's here. That's the gift you can leave with. Don't try to intellectualize it. Don't take it apart in little bits and pieces. Feel it. Know it. Marry it. Be it. Worship it. But don't try to understand it. Because understanding is what blocks and stops. A gift is being handed to you. Don't argue with the gift. Don't try and make Swami teach some fact or word, Mantra or Yagna, prayer or exercise, diet or whatever. Just keep quiet.

Passage from a Buddhist Monk preparing participants for a similar Silent Retreat

When we go into retreat, we commit to ourselves and those with us to step away — to create a space in which we can see more clearly what our minds and hearts are doing, and to stay with that.



Silence isn't a challenge, or a struggle. Silence isn't a punishment. Silence isn't joyless.

Silence can be a gentleness, a lightness. Silence can be a resting time. Silence is a very rich practice. Silence is a gift to yourself and an offering to others.

How to approach Cultivating Silence Attitude:

SAILENT Retreat offers everyone the opportunity to experiment Swami's explanation on SILENCE. Following are a few quotes from Sathya Sai Baba on Silence. We suggest that you use the Silent Retreat Weekend to pick ONE of these quotes and put a plan on how to integrate that quote in your lifestyle.

Be silent yourself; that will induce silence in others. Do not fall into the habit of shouting, talking long and loud. Reduce contacts to the minimum. Carry with you an atmosphere of quiet contemplation, wherever you happen to be. There are some who live in a perpetual hullabaloo, in a tornado of noise. Whether they are in an exhibition or a fair or in a hotel, or a temple or at Prashanthi Nilayam, they wag their tongues and will not stop. These will not proceed on the Godward road. (SSSpeaks Vol IV p 190)

Practice moderation in speech. That will help you in many ways. It will develop Prema, for most misunderstandings and factions arise out of carelessly spoken words. When the foot slips, the wound can be healed; but when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. The tongue is liable to four big errors: uttering falsehood, scandalizing, finding fault with others, and excessive speech. All these have to be avoided if there is to be shanthi for the individual as well as for society. (SSSpeaks. Vol.1 p. 62)

I insist on silence. Talk less, talk low when you must talk. Do not thrust your sorrows, your needs, your problems into the ears of those who have come here with their own bundle of such things. They are not interested in adding to their troubles. I am here to listen to you, to console you. Do not by loudness of voice disturb those who are meditating or reading or writing the Name of God. (SSSpeaks. Vol. 3 p. 9)

Spend a few minutes every morning and evening in the silence of your own shrine or home; spend them with the highest of all the powers that you know of. Be in His elevating and inspiring company; worship Him mentally; offer unto Him all the work you do; you will come out of the silence nobler and more heroic than when you went in. (SSSpeaks Vol. 3 p. 122)

Each one eats to assuage his own hunger; so too, each one must discover the best way to appease his own spiritual hunger. Do not be led away by the scorn of others, or by the recommendations of others. Contact your own reality in the silence that you create by quieting the senses and controlling the mind. There is a voice that you can hear in that silence. The true witness of your having listened to that voice is your behavior. The tree is held and fed by the roots that go into the silent earth; so also, if the roots go deep into the silence of your inner consciousness, your spiritual blossoming is assured. (SSSpeaks Vol. 4 p. 366)

One of the first principles of straight living is the practice of silence. For the voice of God can be heard in the region of your heart when the tongue is stilled and the storm is tilled and the waves are calm. There will be no temptations for others to shout when you talk to them in whispers. Set the level of the tone yourself; as low as possible, as high as necessary to reach the outermost boundary of the circle you are addressing. Conserve sound, since it is the treasure of the element akasa, an emanation from God



Himself. Reason can prevail only when arguments are advanced without the whipping up of sound. Silence is the speech of the spiritual seeker. Soft sweet speech is the expression of genuine love. Hate screeches, fear squeals, conceit trumpets. But love sings lullabies. It soothes. It applies balm. Practice the vocabulary of love; unlearn the language of hate and contempt. (Sathya Sai Baba, 4/10/91)

III. Select Meditation Techniques as Described by Sathya Sai Baba

A. Discourse on Ekaantha Bhakthi (Devotion to one's Self)

Select passages from the discourse – “Bhakthi, stage by stage”; Divine Discourse, Madras 23rd Jan, 1982

Even though one may be immersed in meditation and experiencing visions of such idols, these have to be classified under this first type since all these experiences arise out of the body, mind and intellect, which are transient and not of a permanent nature. This body has to perish and hence experiences arising out of this body will also disappear with' the body. Nevertheless, this type of Bhakthi is necessary as the first step.

Travelling on this path, we should slowly march to the second step of Ekaantha Bhakthi (Devotion to one's Self). Many people think that Ekaantha Bhakthi means dedication to one idol or form and experiencing mental vision of that one Form, exclusively in privacy. This is not correct. Ekaantha Bhakthi is a subtle state achieved by effective control of the mind and experiencing one's inner self (Antharaathma). It is not correct to think that control of the mind means holding it steady without wandering around. To be able to cleanse the mind of impure thoughts is the correct meaning of 'Ekaantha.'

This is a saadhana (spiritual discipline) to be practiced in a lonely atmosphere, in a quiet place free from noise or disturbance of any kind. The best time for this practice is from 3.00 A.M. to 5.00 A.M. which is called Brahmamuhurtham. Selecting a particular time in this period, closing the door, contacting no one else, one should sit quietly and adjust the rate of inhaling and exhaling of breath. It is important that the pace of inhaling and exhaling must be the same. By gradual practice, the number of breaths per minute must be reduced from eight or ten a minute to two or one. You can take your own time; proceed gradually in the process of reduction of the number of times of inhaling and exhaling. Because of the flow of thoughts in the mind (Sankalpa and Vikalpa---mental resolves and doubts), the breathing also gets affected and disturbed.

To control the breath in this manner and direct it in the proper path, there is a very effective method that can be followed. The tip of the tongue must gently touch the rear of the teeth. When it is kept in this position, the thoughts in the mind become less and one can concentrate on the control of the breath. When you control the sankalpa and vikalpa of the mind and detach yourself from thoughts of the body and things around you, you come to the stage when the mind is without thoughts and desires, when it can concentrate on God.



In the state of Ekaantha Bhakthi, the mind is dissolved and is in a still stage. God is everywhere in everyone; when the mind is rid of all impurities, God's presence alone is experienced by people with Ekaantha Bhakthi. If you take a small tumbler with very little water and place it before the sun, you can see the reflection of the sun in the water. Though the quantity of water is very little, because it is steady and clear, you can see the reflection. On the other hand, if you try to look into the vast expanse of water in the sea nearby, you don't see the reflection because the water is always moving as tides and waves. Nor can you see the reflection of the sun in a well where the water is muddy.

To experience Divinity in this way Ekaantha Bhakthi alone will help you. On any other path you may experience visions of different types. These are nothing but hallucinations and products of imagination. Without virtuous qualities, you cannot control your mind. How can you build a house without brick and mortar? To achieve purity and steadiness of mind, earnest practice is essential. Ekaantha Bhakthi is not obtained by locking yourself in a room and worshipping an idol with devotion. This can only be called Ekaaki Bhakthi; after all, the idol is only a created object. You should experience your Aathma Swaruupa and not a created object. You should have a vision of the Primordial Divinity, whose reflection is your Aathma. Worshipping an idol is necessary as a first step. But do not devote all your lifetime on the first step!

By continuous training and practice of Ekaantha Bhakthi, you will be able to know the 'Aathma' within yourself. The Aathma is in you. You can't see it because of impurity and waves of likes and dislikes hovering round. When you remove these impurities, the mind rests in a pure state. At that stage, if you turn your eye inward you will have the vision of Divinity, the 'Saakshaathkaara'. This is the Ekaantha Bhakthi we read about in books. Ekaantha Bhakthi is realized only when you turn the vision inward, away from sensory objects and experience the pure Aathma.

Ekaantha Bhakthi is anthar dhrishti or inner vision, while Bhouthika Bhakthi is bahir dhrishti or outer vision. After earning Bhouthika Bhakthi and Ekaantha Bhakthi, Ananya Bhakthi will be easy to attain. We have a feeling that Ananya Bhakthi consists in surrendering to God, saying: "I have no savior other than you." We think that simply by declaring "You are mother, You are father, You are friend and You are my savior, Oh God of Gods," we have surrendered and are practicing Ananya Bhakthi. This is only oral Ananya Bhakthi. Real Ananya Bhakthi comes from deep inquiry into the reality of the inner Self.

The experience you have in the waking state and the things you see in the dream and deep sleep states are found to be illusory and transitory when you inquire into them deeply. After such inquiry, the Ananya Bhakthi will come to the conclusion that in all the three states whatever one sees is illusory. He will find that the 'I' which is present in all the three states, is only the Aathma and that there is no difference between this Aathma and the Paramaathma. If the thought of the body is not there, duality too will not be there. Where there is no thought of a second one, it is Ananya. To reach this state of Ananya, you have to go through the stage of Ekaantha Bhakthi.

Members of the Sathya Sai Organizations should attempt to follow the right path and raise their own spiritual effort to the level of Ananya Bhakthi. The world today is in a very bad state. The situation can improve, only through Aasthikas who are believers in divinity. They should become Premaswaruupas or embodiments of Love, and by their saadhana, backed by patience, forbearance and compassion, play their role in serving society and contributing to the betterment of the world. God is present in you and is



viewing with thousands of eyes what you do. Even if no one is seeing, God is always watching your actions. Do everything with this awareness.

Madras, 23-1-1982.

B. Meditation as described in Dhyana Vahini

One's life also assumes a new splendor when one visualizes and realizes bliss in the awareness of the Supreme Reality (satchidananda) through a mind and intellect (manas and buddhi) that is purified and transformed by means of meditation (dhyana). The taste of the fruit is evident when one sees the whole of it is eaten with no portion left behind. So too, when the taste of meditation is once discovered, one will discard all doubt and discussion thereon and engage oneself fully in it. Therefore, begin meditation, each one of you, from today —even from this moment! Meditation should be performed enthusiastically, with full faith and care, and strictly according to the disciplines laid down. If this is done, it will bestow not only all happiness and all victory but even the vision of the Lord. This is bound to the science of Supreme Spirituality (Vedanta) and also to the science of nature (prakriti). These two are different in only one respect. The students of nature (prakriti) are immersed in the objects of life; the students of Vedanta are immersed in the basic truth of life. And people are bound to both of them! Nature is related to sense objects (vishaya); Vedanta is related to one's Self-reality (swa-rupa). If people desire to transform their lives, internal as well as external, into one of splendor, meditation is the best spiritual discipline (sadhana) they can adopt.

The method of meditation

The place for meditation should be a little elevated — an inch or two— from the ground. Place a mat of dharbha grass (a matty, long grass grown in India) on it, spread a deer skin on the mat, and lay a thin white cloth on the skin. Sit on it in the lotus posture (padmasana). The right foot must be above the left and the left foot above the right. The fingers of the hand must be in close touch with one another and the hands should be placed in front. The eyes must be either half open or fully closed. Then, by means of mental massage, relax the neck, shoulders, hands, chest, teeth, stomach, fingers, back, thighs, knees, calves, and feet. **After this, one has to meditate on one's own favorite name and form, with Om added.** When this is being done, there should be no mental wanderings; one must be stable and quiet. No thought of past events, no trace of anger or hatred, and no memory of sorrow should be allowed to interfere. Even if they intrude, they should not be considered at all; to counteract them, entertain thoughts that will feed one's enthusiasm for meditation. Of course, this may appear difficult at first. The best time for meditation is the quiet hours before dawn, between 3 and 5 a.m. One can awake, say, at 4 a.m. First of all, sleep has to be subdued. This is very necessary. In order to keep the hours unchanged, one may set the alarm clock for 4 a.m. and rise. Even then, if sleep continues to bother, its effect can be overcome by means of a bath in cold water. Not that it is essential to bathe; it is needed only when sleep gives much trouble. If in this manner the path of meditation (dhyana) is rigorously followed, it is possible for one to win the grace of the Lord very quickly.

Gauge meditation by its inner impact



The main things to be considered are not at what expense one has prayed to the Lord, nor the number of years one has been engaged in it, nor the rules and regulations one has followed, nor even the number of times one has prayed over. The main considerations are: with what mind one has prayed, with what degree of patience one has been awaiting the result, and with what single-mindedness one has craved Godly bliss, regardless of worldly happiness and delay, with no lassitude and with constant attention to oneself, one's meditation, and one's task. If one examines deeply the success in getting rid of all idea of self, one can oneself gauge the progress made. Instead, if one is engaged in counting the rules and adding up the time spent and the expense incurred, such meditation can belong only to the objective world; it can never come into the subjective and spiritual fields.

Repetition of God's name and meditation (japa and dhyana) should never be judged on mere external standards; they are to be judged by their inner effects. Their essence is their relationship to the Atma. The immortal Atmic experience should never be mixed up with low activities of the temporal world. Such activities deserve to be avoided. If room is given for them, and if one sways between impatience and sloth, and if one always worries oneself, feeling, "Why has it not come yet? Why is it still far away?" Then it all becomes simply repeating the name and meditation done with intent to gain, with an eye on the fruit thereof.

The single fruit of repetition of divine names and meditation is this: the conversion of the out-faced into the in-faced; the turning inward of one's eye, the inward eye seeing the reality of Atmic bliss. For this transformation, one has to be always active and hopeful, regardless of the time taken and the difficulties encountered. One should not count the cost, the time, or the trouble. One should await the descent of the Lord's grace. This patient waiting is itself part of the austerity (tapas) of meditation. Sticking unflinchingly to the vow is the austerity.

The three paths of meditation

There are three ways by which aspirants try to enter the path of meditation: the path of truth (sathwikamarga), the path of passion and emotion (rajasika-marga) and the path of ignorance (thamasika-marga).

The pure, serene (sathwic) path. On this path, one considers repetition of the name and meditation as a duty and suffers any amount of trouble for its sake; one is fully convinced that all this is just an illusion, so one does only good under all conditions and at all times. One desires only the good of all and is always loving toward all; one spends time uninterruptedly in the remembrance and meditation of the Lord. One does not crave even the fruit of repeating the name and meditation; one leaves it all to the Lord.

The passionate, restless (rajasic) path. Here, one craves the fruit of one's act at every step. If the fruit is not available, then, gradually, laxity and disgust overpower the spiritual aspirant and repetition of the name and meditation slowly dry up.

The ignorant (thamasic) path. This path is even worse. The Lord will come into the memory only in times of danger or acute suffering or when one is the victim of loss or pain. At such times, such a person prays and vows to arrange this worship (puja), offer this particular food, or build this kind of temple to the Lord. One will be calculating the quantity of food placed before the Lord, the tribute offered at His



feet, the number of prostrations performed, and the number of times the shrine was circled —and ask for proportionate awards! For those who adopt this attitude in meditation, the mind and intellect can never be pure. Most people now follow only the passionate, restless (rajasic) and dull, ignorant (thamasic) paths in repeating the divine name and meditation. However, the very intention of repeating the divine name and meditation is to purify the mind and the intellect. In order to achieve this, the first path is best: pure, serene (sathwic) meditation. When the mind and the intellect become pure, they will shine with the splendor of the understanding of the Atma. He in whom this understanding shines fully is called a sage (rishi). The knower of Atma becomes the Atma itself (Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavathi). The goal of life, that which makes life worthwhile, is the understanding of the Atma or, in other words, the basis of the individual soul (jiva).

IV. Walking Meditation, Mindful Walking

SAILENT Retreat offers a NATURE WALK that is intended to help participants experience / practice “mindfulness”. Presenting two specific points to dwell on with regard to Mindfulness:

First, in a study circle discussion that was broadcast on RadioSai, the following excerpt touches on the importance of Mindfulness as explained by Sathya Sai Baba:

*“Most of us who perform Sadhana live in water tight compartments. I play a role of a son, an employee, a student, a friend, a mentor, or a sportsman. I may even take a break from my job to do Seva in Prasanthi Nilayam. We are a different set of individuals depending on the type of role we take. Yes, but we fail to focus. I enjoy peace for a few minutes when I meditate. I enjoy peace when I sing bhajans. I feel expansion in my heart when I do Service (Seva) or Spiritual Study Groups (Satsang). All this tranquillity and expansion seem to be momentary. I am unable to carry them throughout the day. **It requires mindfulness and focus. How do we do that?**”*

*In the Mahabharata, Krishna tells Arjuna to fight even as he thinks of Lord Krishna. Sathya Sai Baba has explained this with a very beautiful analogy. He said that even as a driver is driving on a busy road he maybe talking, listening to a song or even looking behind at times, but he is always mindful of what is happening on the road. **Similarly a spiritual aspirant should be mindful and carry the powerful moments of Sadhana into his work.**”*

Radio Sai Study Circle – Swami on Sadhana (SOS):

http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol_11/01JAN13/radiosai_study_circle_on_sadhana_spiritual_practice-radiosai-part-05.htm

Secondly, the following is an excerpt from an article by Thich Nhat Hanh on walking meditation, which can help during our Nature Walks at the Retreat.

“Walking meditation is practicing meditation while walking. It can bring you joy and peace while you practice it. Take short steps in complete relaxation; go slowly with a smile on your lips, with your heart open to an experience of peace. You can feel truly at ease with yourself. Your steps can be those of the healthiest, most secure person on earth. All sorrows and worries can drop away while you are walking. To have peace of mind, to attain self-liberation, learn to walk in this way. It is not difficult. You can do it. Anyone can do it who has some degree of mindfulness and a true intention to be happy.”



In Parting:

We leave you with another inspiring quote from Sathya Sai Baba:

The less you talk, the more will become your mental power. With the increase in your mental capacity, there will be increase in your power of discrimination too. Consequently, you will give up "individual discrimination". Because of this, you will begin to consider the good of the world at large rather than your own individual welfare. You must cultivate such broad feelings from this young age itself. (Discourse. Brindavan, 24 May, 1992)

As fellow spiritual aspirants, we look forward to your participation and energy at the upcoming SAILENT RETREAT and we pray that this weekend of SAILENCE provides encouragement and self-confidence – just enough – to prod yourself to the next step in your Spiritual Journey.

Loving Sairam

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