



# SATHGURU AND SARANAGATI INVOLVED Q & A



HER HOLINESS SRI SATHGURU  
SWAMI GNANANANDA SARASVATHI

Saranagati is a state of mind where there is total freedom from ego. When it is abandoned without hesitation, and all is placed at God's feet, grace and guidance comes our way.



# SATHGURU AND SARANAGATI

Few words...

The life of Her Holiness is an inspiring example. From Her life as a grahastha to that of a Vidwat Sanyasin and a Jagathguru, Her Holiness has always believed that surrender is the first step towards God. With surrender comes bhakti and the humility to place everything at God's feet. In many of Her teachings, and while sharing Her experiences, Her Holiness has stressed the role of Saranagati as a the most relevant way of heading God-ward. In outlining the universal relevance of Saranagati, Her Holiness has pointed out several facets. Gurubhakti, the need to live a clean good life, adhering to dharma and always being in a state of absolute surrender. Drawing relationships between each of these facets within the core concept of Saranagati, Her Holiness constantly reminds us that when you call Him earnestly He will come.

But we have to call Him, only then will He come. To call Him though, we need to surrender our ego, selfishness and notions of human infallibility. Therein lies the eternal relevance of Saranagati as taught by Her Holiness, who is Saranagati personified.

This question-answer session captures the concept of Saranagati as Her Holiness sees it, teaches it and believes it to be the primary lesson to mankind. The answers touch several facets. Saranagati significance, how to do it, the relationships it has with gurubhakti, mukti, dharma and day-to-day life.

**Q. How can Saranagati help people today in their character building, work, and as they discharge different roles in their lives?**

**A.** It is written in the Sastras that in Kaliyuga there is only bhakti yoga. You can't have gnana yoga or any other yoga in that time because nobody can practice it. In gnana yoga they say Aham Brahmasmi. It is not possible for people to practice it in this yuga. So they have bhakti yoga only. In your life you find that there are so many mistakes that you commit and all because of your own quality of arrogance and inability to be unselfish.

So, when you surrender, you find that automatically you give up all these things. You segregate yourself from others. You don't get embroiled with them. You do your duty to perfection (He said). You do your duty to perfection, but that is all.

Not more than that. He says, character building is very important because it purifies you. Most important is the purification of the mind and the soul. Once it becomes washed : washed out of all evils, like kama, krodha, moha.

Krishna says “these three are the three gates of hell” anger, greed and desire.

Once you surrender to God you will find that all these things disappear automatically, because in your mind looms only God, and not anybody else or anything else. The mind becomes so lost in Him. You are not interested in the world. There is no desire. You don't want to attain fame or desire or money or position. Nothing of the sort. You just somehow or the other manage to live the remaining days of your life but with complete surrender towards Him. So you build your character on those lines and you become automatically saintly. Unknowingly.

You have different roles in life. Each person has different roles in life. It doesn't matter what it is. You just do it. It is your duty to do it, (so) you do it. And you do it to perfection. There is no laziness about it. Or no anger about it. Nothing. You do it wholeheartedly and happily. But then you are not attached to it you don't tie yourself up. You do your work that is all. And if there are some things which are far beyond you, you place it at His feet. Samarpanam. And He will look after you. You will find how much of a difference there is!!

The whole person changes. Step by Step only we can go.

**Q. We have different roles in life like student, leader, politicians, corporate manager (etc.) How difficult it is to do Saranagati in all these different roles?**

**A.** It is because they are getting involved in it that they are finding it

difficult. There is no need to get involved like that. They can continue to do their duty. Just because it is your duty, you do it. The fruits that come, whether it is good or bad is offered to God only. You don't do it to get something out of it. You do it because it is just your duty, and you have to hand it (the fruits) over to God. That's all.

So you don't get attached in any manner. There is no selfish attachment of any type either to money or power or name or fame or wealth of any type and possession.

People attain so much of contentment. Because they are not running after fame or name or anything. There is nothing that they have to run after. There is only God. And He is always there. There is no problem. He is there with us always. And we have nothing to be discontented about.

**Q. While practicing Saranagati, do you need a guru to get discipline of the mind?**

**A.** In the ordinary sense you do need a Guru to tell whether you are right or wrong and which path you must go. In my case I had nobody. Of course, my mother was a very very pious person. We were taught to say our prayer morning and evening. All this was there. But this was inward growing, you see. She herself was very convinced about it. I used to be very happy. I was only 7 years old, and some of my mother's friends, some north Indian ladies commented to my mother "this child of yours looks very happy". She replied "yes she is always like that". After sometime, they called me and asked "are you happy my child". I replied "If God is happy, I am happy". They were taken aback.

That connection with God was so close. For them, God was someone far away. And they will go to some temple only to get something out of Him, or when they have a problem, that is when they will remember God. Here it is (a situation where it is) God alone here. I used to say He is G-O-D, and I am d-o-g dog, (Laughs). He is God and I am His dog. For a long time (used to say this) till I was 8 or 9 years old).

You don't actually need (a Guru). It is not everybody who needs a Guru, you know.

In the early stages: there are three stages and the last is the third one. In the early stages (for disciplining the mind) you need somebody who can guide you, help you, show you the way, and all that. The mind must be disciplined, because there will be evil thoughts which must be brought down. (it must be) made to understand "you are not to think like that". That it is wrong. Think only good things.

If you think evil things, it is only going to hit back on you. You must remember the law of karma.

It has its reaction. Every action has a reaction, isn't it? So if they play with the law of karma, it comes back. That is all. The disciplining of the mind should be natural. Do you need a Guru? Yes a Guru is needed in the early stages. I am not talking about everybody (for example) I did not have a Guru at all. That was different.

**Q. What are the qualities of a Saranagathin?**

A. One who surrendered, will be calm, will be contented, peaceful. And he will be ready to help anybody or anything which crosses your path. He doesn't want to get anything out of you. He does it free. That's all. His eyes are fixed on God and he wants to reach him, that's all.

He doesn't want to get anything else. He wants to reach God's feet. Anybody who is born must die isn't it? That you must remember. Everybody born, must die. If people remember that, then there is no difficulty. No difficulty. Whereas people are not ready to accept it.

**Q. Does Saranagati help us to lead a good clean life?**

A. Definitely. Saranagati will help us, because, it is dedicated to God. So how can you do any act: thought, word, or deed wrong. You can't do anything wrong, nor accept anything wrong if other people do it, because you have surrendered at God's feet. You must remember that. And you have complete obedience to Him. And unshakeable faith. So when such a person comes, you can see that person, his characteristics.

It (saranagati) helps you to lead a very clean, a very good life, because there is nothing you want to attain in this world. There is complete vairagya. When there is complete vairagya, you don't want to attain anything. If it comes your way, well and good. If it doesn't come, that is also well and good. Makes no difference.

**Q. These day, for householders, there are so many materialistic desires, so many temptations. Everything is happening at a very high speed. So many things are going on. In this context, from Saranagati, what can be gained?**

**A.** It is only by Saranagati that everything can be gained. You must remember this. Without this nothing can be gained. From there only you get everything. The (divine) power, grace, divine protection, everything comes through that. Everything comes through that.

You will find that persons far away (i.e. staying at a distance, in other places) even they get divine blessings and protection. Even if they are not able to be near here.

You know what happened after the Kurukshetra war. Whole acres of land were empty (of life and full of the) dead, broken chariots, and things like that. Krishna took the chariot with Arjuna in it, far away. And He told Arjuna, "get down". Arjuna requested Krishna to get down first. He was showing respect. He requested Krishna to get down first, saying he would get down afterwards. Krishna got very angry. It is written there "He thundered 'get down at once'". Arjuna got scared, and he jumped down. (laughs). And then Krishna came behind him. The whole chariot caught fire and was burnt to ashes. It was a special chariot which had been given from heaven, I think Indra. It was meant only for the war.

When the war had been won, it would not last even for a minute more. This, Arjuna didn't know.

This is why there must be unquestioning obedience to the Guru. The Guru may not go on giving explanations. You will get no such explanations from Him. You want to ask Him "why should I do it. What will I get out of all". If you ask like that, "Don't do it, He will say." That is all. (Laughs).

It is very important. That unquestioning obedience is very important. If the Guru says something, (you must) understand that "I mustn't ask anything". For instance, on 30th of last month (August, 2010), I was coming away from Guruvayur. Everything had been decided. Many people came and asked me, can you stay one more day. They went on asking me. I asked (God).

The divine answer was “There is no question of your delaying your trip. You go at once. Don’t change your plans.”

I did exactly as He said. Soon as we came halfway, we found a terrible cyclonic thunderstorm. If we had been there, we would have got caught in it. It would have been very difficult for us to get out. It was a cyclonic thunderstorm, you know!

What happens is we come to know only afterwards why He said it. In the beginning, it is just an order. That is all. Just obey it. You will find it is in your own interest. You must remember that. When God says to do this or that, God is getting nothing out of it. It is we who are benefitted, you must remember that.

In my case, as I grew older, there was no question of even drinking a glass of water without getting permission from God. If He tells me not to drink it, I won't. That is all. When there is a bad time for us, He will tell us "don't do this at this time it is not good". Instead of listening to that, you want to change it according to your convenience, you will be the sufferer. Stick to what He said and you will be the one who is protected. See what I told you: this happened only last month. If I had not come away, I don't know what would have happened to us. We would have been caught in the terrible cyclone.

**Q. How does Sri Sathguru view Saranagati in her own life? What did Sri Sathgurudo to achieve that continuous state of Saranagati?**

**A.** For me, it was not something which I read from any book, or practiced. My mother was a very pious person, and a Sanskrit scholar also.

In the evening time, we were all made to sit in a row and say prayers. The training was there, but that alone was not (enough). In my life I did not do anything special for this. It came naturally. Very naturally.

Even when (people) asked “will you do this, will you do that”, I would say “I don’t know, I will ask God”. (Laughs).

There is nothing special done to achieve this. It came naturally. I didn’t do anything at all. I didn’t do anything consciously. It came naturally. I did nothing to attain it.

### **Q. Does Saranagati lead to mukti?**

**A.** It definitely does. When you get totally purified. When the ego gets totally purified. In all yugas, they teach that the ego must be dispensed with. It creates all this trouble. They have different ways Gnana Marga, Bhakti Marga, Karma Marga, and so on.

In Saranagati we totally surrender at His feet and you don't ask for anything, and you don't want anything. And there is perfect, peaceful, contentment of mind. As you go closer and closer to God, the mind becomes more and more purified. The ego becomes so purified it becomes pure white, and it gets merged with God's feet. This is self realization: to become one with Him.

**Q. In Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan says, tameva sharanam gachha, sarva bhavena bhārata. In the context of what Sri Sathguru has said: Saranagati leading to mukti – can Sri Sathguru guide us?**

**A.** When you take refuge, you must do it 100%. All parts: your mind, physically and materially and in every way. You must feel that “nothing belongs to me if it is not for God's grace”. If not for God, you would not have got it.

So therefore the thankfulness and gratitude goes to him. We should not be selfish and forget God altogether.

**Q. Sathguru said true knowledge comes from experiences not bookish knowledge. What is this aspect of your teaching that can be understood by the world. Is Saranagati one continuing experience?**

**A.** Saranagati is one continuous, long experience, till it goes step by step, becomes purified, and at last when it becomes so completely purified (merges with God). See the life of Meera. She had everything. She was a queen. She was totally dedicated to Krishna. She would stay in the temple at His feet. The on the last day she just merged into Him. They could see like a flame, the atma going and merging with Him. Here also, in the Andal story, it is the same.

Not by bookish meanderings.

There are lots of people who study, take degrees, even in spiritual life. They read all the books in Sanskrit, everything. They learn all the books. But then, what is the use? What have they got out of it? They must understand the meaning and the essence of it they must absorb. Absorb right into the soul. Manasa vacha karmana: it must become that. That is surrender.

Instead of this, if you keep it at the level of teaching or showing off your knowledge through books, it is not as if you have attained anything at all. Actual attainment will not come by books reading alone. It comes by book reading alone. It comes by perfect practice. You must give up all your impurities. That is very important.

And the more pure it is, the closer it goes to God. It becomes closer to God. Finally it becomes so close it merges in Him. That's how it happen. Step by Step.

**Q. You are a householder before you became a sanyasin. Is Saranagati different in these two stages?**

**A.** No, saranagati is the same in both. There is no difference in both. The inside person does not change. Outside, you might be a householder or not. But that is your duty and you do it, that's all. You don't consider that you are doing it. It is something like that,. It is only that you feel that "it leads me to God". That goes on inside you, and you are not waiting for somebody else to come and help in it. There is nobody who can help except God. So you just do your duty and leave it.

But one thing is very important, and that is our duty must be done to

perfection, and we must lead a clean, dharmic life. Yatho dharmas tatho Krishna. You must lead a clean, good life. And pray to Him, surrender to Him. And you will find that He is there always with you. You will get all the help you want.

**Q. How does Sathguru teach Saranagati?**

**A.** I explain all these things to them, and I tell them to practice it in their homes. It is not enough just listening to it and going away. You have to learnt it, and practice it in the homes. When you practice it, you get the result. You get the result only when you practice it. Otherwise you can (get the result).

**Q. Is Saranagati something that only evolved souls can obtain? Are there different levels?**

**A.** There are different levels, of course,

there is no double about that. Saranagati (is something that) people will be attracted to only if they are simple. Otherwise, they will be proud, so they won't be able to surrender. They will be able to surrender only because they are humble. And they are aware of their own faults, their own mistakes, shortcomings. They remember all that. But they don't think that they are doing everything. (They don't feel that) "if I am getting something today it is only because of myself. I am doing it. It is my cleverness."

It is God's grace, they won't think!

**Q. Do Saranagati and gurubhakti go hand in hand? Does one lead to the other? Is gurubhakti first, or Saranagati first?**

**A.** Gurubhakti comes first, and from that you do surrender. Once you have that Gurubhakti, automatically you get

attracted towards God. Once you are attracted towards Him, you surrender. Slowly you surrender. “Let Him show what He wants me to do, and I will do it.”

Then you will find that you are doing, it well, and by the grace of God you are rising higher and higher. It will take time. Most of the trouble is the attractions of the outside world, and the desire for money and wealth and power and possession, all that. And the greed for food or other things. All these things (attractions) are there. Because of that, like Krishna said, these are the three gates to hell. The more gurubhakti you have, all these things are washed out. You become cleansed. Once you become cleansed, you will find that you are able to get more surrender.

Automatically, there is surrender then. “Let Him say anything. I will do it. I am here to carry it out.

**Q. Sri Sathguru has often said that God’s grace comes only by doing Saranagati. Can Sri Sathguru please explain that to us?**

**A.** It (God’s grace) can come in other way like Gnana marga. But then, that person must have been born on a very high level spiritually. That is, he must be able to say “I am Brahman”. Aham Brahmasmi. That is the highest stage, to say it. But to come to that level, automatically that person would have surrendered. For instance, Ramana Maharshi, was one who was going on teaching only Gnana marga. There is one full chapter on which he has written on surrender.

You can’t surrender unless you know about God. Only then you will be able to surrender.

**Q. Did Arjuna do Saranagati and only after that he got atmabodha from Lord Krishna?**

**A.** That is true. Because first he had to surrender. And only then, did he get the knowledge. Sometimes the knowledge that God and I are one, the feeling exists. But it does not come (just) like that. That simplicity, that humility, must be there. And then automatically you pray at His feet. “whatever you give, I will take”.

You must remember that each one is born with their own destiny. Their own destiny. That has to be worked out, (both) good and bad. So if you surrender to Him, and you find that something bad is happening to you, (you may say) “see I surrendered to God see what happened to me”. You shouldn’t think like that. What you have to say, is that “I surrendered to Him, and because of that, what would

have been a much greater tragedy, has come as a small little accident.” That’s all.

**Q. Your friend Kamala Pandian wrote in an article in the Voice Divine “when you sang the bhajans of Meera, we never thought you would attain God, like her”. Just to seek Sri Sathguru’s guidance on this. How did Meera’s bhajans, Meera’s life, have any influence on Sri Sathguru?**

**A.** Yes, I was deeply impressed with that, you know, with Meera’s life. It was so nice to see how she had everything, and she left everything, and went to Krishna. It had a great influence. When I was about seven or eight years old, we had been to Annakara. That is my sisters, and brothers, together six or us. About two months before that, I had a dream in which some of these devilish types came, and were frightening me terribly, I let it off.

In the morning, when I got up, I told my mother. That again, I had a dream that myself and some anglo-Indian friends of mine (I was in an naglo-Indian school, with many anglo-Indian girls (students) were running about and playing under a neem tree. It was a huge compound, and a big house: it was the Pudukottai Palace. We were playing there around the tree. There was a boy who brought the cow and small calf and tied it to the tree. They used to come in those days and milk the cow and give the fresh milk. The small boy was there, and he tied the cow to the tree opposite to the neem tree. We were playing. Suddenly from the ground a frightening, black, rakshasa type of person came out of the ground. Small at first, he grew and grew to about 7-8 feet tall. I was scared and did not know what to do. My friends also. He was trying to catch and kill me. All of a sudden, that cowheard, the little boy came running. .

He stood near by, and started to grow and grow and became taller than that other fellow. He put his leg on this fellow's head and he sank into the ground. It was horrible.

That was in January. We went in march/April (to Annakara) for holidays. In the nearby temple, they have the "anveshini" (God gets into a person). We came there, and all of us were standing there, and the person possessed with the spirit of God was there. He had a sword in his hand. My mother was holding us. We were a bit scared. It was a man, dressed like a woman. He went around the big Tulasi madham (Tulasi Plant). He came near and said "I have shown myself to one of the children who were able to see me". My mother had clean forgotten since my dream was more than 3 months back. The man was very angry, but did not know how to express it. Then the man went round and round the Tulasi madham. "Let me see", he said.

He took his sword and slowly brought it in front of each child. He caught me by the hand and pulled me out, and said “this is the child”. I got so scared, being pulled by this man with the sword! He said “she is the person who has seen me. You think back.” Then he described the whole dream. How the rakshasa came, tried to kill me, how he grew so huge, how the small cowheard boy came running, grew big, put his left on the rakshasa’s head, and the rakshasa sank into the ground”. He hadn’t seen me, and hadn’t heard anything before, (yet) clearly he said (about) the whole dream. Then my mother remembered. Then he said “you understand that this is a very good possession that you have” (referring to me).

I couldn’t understand anything. But even then, I used to live like that. That was not something which I made myself do. I came very naturally to me.

**Q. What is Sri Sathguru's message to the world? What does Sri Sathguru want the souls and people to be aware of, do immediately, and practice as a daily routine?**

**A.** You must remember this in Kali Yuga. As this period of time, adharma is 75%, and dharma is only 25%. So it is very difficult for dharmic people to live in this world today. Even then, as long as you stick to God, and have God's blessings and protection, if you have surrendered to Him, He will look after you, whatever difficulty is. However hard it is. This surrender is a message to the world. Everybody must do it willingly and knowingly.

That does not mean they can shirk their duties. You must do your duty willingly and correctly. But inside of them they should have that detachment. Understand? Inside them there must be that detachment.

Understanding that today they are here, tomorrow morning when called they have to go. You can't be sure when you have to go. So people must be aware of that (surrender) and practice it as a daily routine.

When they finish their prayers, they must pray for complete surrender.

Because, if you ask for it. He will give it to you. But it must come from a full heart, sincerely. Absolutely and sincerely it (the prayer for surrender) must be there. And you will find that He gives it to you and you will change.



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