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VIRTUAL SATSANG SWAMI ATMANANDA

My humble salutations at Amma's lotus feet, my salutations to all my sisters and brothers who are watching me.

There is one thing I would like to confess, but I am not sure whether I should say it. Why? Because, my situation is quite similar to the doctor; there was a doctor and he went to see a patient. The patient had a difficult operation scheduled and the patient was very worried, so the doctor went to lift his spirits up. The doctor told him, "Why are you worried?" The patient said "this is my first operation in my life, so I'm worried." Then the doctor said, "That's no reason to be worried, you should always be cheerful and you should be very courageous when you're facing something for the first time in your life; look at me I am so courageous." And then the patient asked, "Doctor, what is that you are doing for the first time?" The doctor said "well you are the first patient on whom I'm going to operate on."

So you can imagine what would be the condition of the patient. Instead of being encouraged he would be discouraged. Similarly the confession which I was weighing whether I should say it or not, is, but I will say it, with Amma's Grace everything will be fine, the confession is, this is my first virtual satsang.

I am used to speaking, seeing people, seeing their reactions, and modifying the talk accordingly. So with your grace, and blessings, and cooperation, let's just proceed.

What is a topic for the satsang? Basically we'll be having a look at five questions which are quite relevant for the times we are facing today. We see suffering everywhere.

1. So the first question would naturally be; who is the most qualified to guide us on the path out of suffering? That is one.
2. Question number two would be; what do we do in the current situation that we are facing?
3. Question number three would be; what is the cause for human suffering and what is the solution for human suffering, according to spiritual principles?
4. Question number four would be; how do we apply spiritual principles in our life on a long-term basis?

5. Question number five would be; what are the benefits of a spiritual approach towards life?

Question 1 - Who is the most qualified person to guide us out of suffering?

Let's take a look at it. Who is the most qualified person to guide us out of suffering? Let's take a look at a person whom to us, we may feel when you look at that person, that person is suffering a lot, but in fact that person is not only managing suffering easily, She is also relieving millions of people from their suffering. There are no prizes for guessing who She is. Let us look at Amma's life.

We have a concept about Amma, but let's take a look at the facts that we see, what is Amma doing? Take a look at Her life; for the past 48 years, what has she been doing every day? Hard physical work: She is hugging thousands of people every day, it's not easy. If you and I were to just shake hands with just ten people our hands would start paining, and we would have to go to the chiropractor. But Amma is hugging thousands of people every day, that's hard physical work. And She doesn't take any food, before darshan, She always says "I will do my work and then only eat". So She has food after darshan. And when you observe Amma, you can see that most of the time Amma is talking, when She gives darshan, hugging people for 15, 16, 18 hours a day. She is also talking to people all the time; either to the person who is receiving the darshan or to somebody from the side who is coming and asking questions. It's not easy to talk continuously. If you speak for an hour you'll be quite tired, but Amma is speaking 15 or 18 hours or more daily.

Then what is the other thing that She is doing? She is listening to all the sorrows that we unburden on her. Everybody comes to Amma with the sorrows that they have, they tell her their sorrows and they go away relieved. When we look at psychiatrists or psychologists, who also do a similar work, they listen to people who are troubled, but you will see they may just listen to five or eight people a day. More than that they cannot handle, because it will affect them mentally; but look at Amma, She is listening to the sorrows of literally thousands of people every day.

Then, She also has to manage so many people around her, most of us who are quite disobedient at times. She has to handle the stress of that. And She is handling, managing multi-million dollar charitable projects.

On top of it There is no salary for such work. You may say I may do all this but at least I will get a good salary, there is no salary.

So this person is Amma. When you look at Her life, it seems like it is suffering, but internally Amma is not suffering. And She's showing us how to handle suffering. But still some of us may say, yes we have seen Amma but still there is no change in us.

Here I'm reminded of an incident in the Ramayana, the ancient epic, which is the story of Lord Rama. In this incident Lord Rama and the Guru Vishwamitra, they enter into an ashram which is deserted, there's nobody there, but there is a huge stone there. The Guru Vishwamitra tells Rama, "Place your foot on the stone so that the dust of your feet falls on the stone." Lord Rama does it, and immediately that stone becomes transformed into a lady, Ahalya. There was a curse on Ahalya: that she would become a stone, and whenever the dust of the feet of Lord Rama falls on her, she would transform back into her original form. This story is highly significant, because, it has a relevance to us.

Before meeting Amma, when we were here in this world, when we encountered this world, most of us, all of us in fact, would have come to this conclusion: there is nothing called selfless love in the world. Everything that we see, all love, when people say they love you they expect you to be in a particular manner, so no love that we encounter in the world is selfless. But when we see Amma, we encounter a being who is a hundred percent selfless all the time. That very glimpse of pure selfless love transforms us. This is the significance of the dust of Rama's feet; the dust of Rama's feet means a glimpse of selfless love. So when we see Amma, and see the selfless love that She exudes, an irrevocable transformation happens on us, because now the world is a place where selfless love can exist.

If you look at Amma, I am reminded of the pole star, we call it in India the Dhruva nakshatra. The ancient travelers used the pole star, or the Dhruva nakshatra, as a means for guidance, because, when they look up at the sky the position of everything else, all the other stars would keep changing, but it was only the pole star or the Dhruva nakshatra which remains fixed. Looking at that it would guide them on their onward journey. Similarly when we look at Amma; Amma is always guiding us. Everything else around Her changes, but She doesn't change. Every action that She does is purely out of selfless love for others. This is something which inspires us.

Why do we speak so much about the Guru and the qualities of the Guru? Because the qualities, or the siddhis of the Guru, become what is known as our sadhana or spiritual practices.

If you look at the hundred-and-eight names of Amma, we will find so many of Amma's qualities enumerated there. In fact I have been told that the Sydney satsang group is beginning a class in which they are going to explain the meaning of the hundred-and-eight names of Amma. And this is really incredible. Why? Because, what is the benefit of practicing these qualities, the qualities that Amma has? If we try to absorb it and implement it in our life, what is the benefit? The ancient Sanskrit poets Kalidasa and Bhartrhari have mentioned this as part of the spiritual process. They use a simile of a drop of pure rainwater falling into an open oyster. When that drop of rainwater falls into the oyster, the oyster shuts and after some time when it opens that drop of rainwater has been transformed into invaluable pearl. Similarly if you are able to take one quality of Amma, one teaching of Amma, imbibe it, absorb it, make it part of us, it will transform us and we will discover something extremely valuable within us.

Some of us may say, but we are physically very far away from Amma. How is it possible for us to imbibe Amma's qualities or Amma's teachings?

I would like to share an experience which I had a few years ago. I was conducting a retreat in a country outside India. And, in between the retreat, one lady came to me and shared her experience. She said "I'm going to tell you something and then I have a question." I said "please do". This lady told me that she had some bad addiction and she couldn't get rid of it. Every day, at night before going to bed, she would stand before Amma's photo and pray and say "Amma, Amma please cure me of this addiction." And she said nothing happened. Then one day she said the addiction got so bad she did something and she was absolutely disgusted with herself. And that night she became so angry that she stood in front of Amma's photo and she said, "I literally yelled at Amma's photo and I told Amma; Amma, if I am your daughter you have to cure me of this addiction." And then she didn't feel anything. She went to sleep, and next day morning, when she woke up, she said "that addiction was gone. It went away completely it has never come back. Amma removed my addiction." I told her "very good, that's a good experience", and I knew what the question was going to come. She said, "I have told you my experience, I have a question." I said "okay please tell me the question." She said "all the time

when I prayed to Amma's photo, nothing happened. When I yelled at Amma's photo She cured me of my addiction, why is that Swami?"

Now we all know that Amma's ways are very, very mysterious. With our limited intellect it is not possible to guess why this happened. So I prayed to Amma, I said, "Amma you helped your daughter, now you help me so that I can answer her question." The moment I prayed sincerely to Amma, in my mind, a story came, which I had heard in a satsang long ago, and that was pretty apt, and the story was this:

There was a man who was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna and he used to do a lot of meditation and prayer in front of Krishna's idol; his only goal in life was to have a vision of Lord Krishna, but Krishna never came in front of him. So after sometime, after a long time, he got tired, he got angry at Krishna and he said, "I have heard that Lord Shiva is easily pleased," he is known as *kshipra prasada*, that means the one who is easily pleased, "so let me instead take a statue, idol of Lord Shiva and keep it and worship, maybe I will get Lord Shiva's vision, (darshan.)" And so he brought the Lord Shiva's idol, kept it in front of him, moved the Krishna's idol to the side, and then he lit an incense stick, put it in front of the Lord Shiva's idol and he closed his eyes and started meditating, and praying.

He thought now Lord Shiva would appear in front of him, but after some time nothing happened, so he opened his eyes and he looked and he got very angry. Why? Because the smoke from the incense stick, it was coming up and instead of going towards Lord Shiva, the smoke from the incense stick was wafting towards the left and it was entering into the nostrils of the idol of Lord Krishna. When the devotee saw this he got extremely angry and he looked at the idol of Lord Krishna and said, "Krishna not only are you a liar, you have said that if you pray you will appear in front of me, appear in front of your devotees; not only are you liar, you never did that. At the same time you're also a thief, this incense smoke is meant for Lord Shiva and you are stealing it. I will fix you." And he looked around and he got some cotton wicks which were kept in the puja room, he took that and with full anger, he stuffed the nostrils of the Krishna idol with the cotton. The moment he did that, Lord Krishna appeared in front of him and graced him with the vision of his Divine self. The devotee was in total joy; then he remembered what he had done, so he asked Lord Krishna, "O Lord forgive me, I've insulted you, I have put cotton in your nostrils, but tell me, all this time when I prayed to you, you never appeared in front of me, now when I am stuffing cotton in your nostrils you appeared in front of me, why is that?"

Then Lord Krishna told him, “all the time when you were praying in front of this idol, mentally you were thinking this is just an idol, and you were doing your prayers mechanically, but at the instant when you were stuffing cotton into the nostrils of the idol, you were not thinking this is an idol, you really thought, you felt, you believed, you visualized that this idol, is me Lord Krishna. So when you visualized me so perfectly, I had no other option but to appear in front of you.”

This feeling of intense visualization, is a spiritual feeling, its called bhavana. Bhavana is a feeling in which, it's an intense feeling, visualization, in which we sense and make manifest that which is present, but not manifest to the senses. We will speak a little bit more about bhavana later on because bhavana is the most important quality for bhakti or devotion.

Question 2 - What do we do in the current situation?

Now, having known who is the person to guide us, what do we do in the current situation? Which is the second question. Obviously the current situation is a situation in which we need to impose lot of discipline on ourselves. We have to follow all the instructions given by the respective authorities and the governments, especially on isolation and social distancing, since that is the only way to contain the spread of the virus. We could also volunteer for activities which are initiated by the government and the local authorities. Whatever is possible, volunteer and help with us, as it is permitted by the law.

Donate, in-kind or money, to help people who are suffering, we can do this in the current situation.

Normally when we face adverse situations we lose hope, but if we rise up to the challenge, even adverse situations can be turned around.

Once there was a man, he had a horse and the horse died, so this man wanted to get rid of the horse somehow. He went to the local miser and he said, “I will give you my horse for \$1,000.” The miser argued, he said, “no, I'll buy the horse only for \$200.” So the man said, “okay give me the \$200, you can go to my home. You will find the horse lying down, you can take it.” And this man who sold the horse, he vanished, he just went away for a long time.

But after a long time he had to come back to his hometown, so he was a bit embarrassed, he didn't know how to face this miser because he had cheated him of \$200. But he finally gathered up his courage, he went to apologize to the miser, and he said, "I'm very sorry about the horse." And the miser said "that's fine there's nothing, you did what you wanted to do, that's fine." "Please don't be angry with me." The man told the miser, the miser said, "I am not at all angry with you, in fact I'm very happy because you gave me an opportunity to make a lot of money." And this man was surprised; he said "What happened? How did you make money out of dead horse?" The miser said "It's very simple. I just advertised in the local paper, that you can buy a plate for one dollar from me, (he had a shop selling plates), and you get a chance of winning a horse as part of the raffle, a lottery. If you win the prize, you get one horse. So people loved the idea and I sold 10,000 plates making \$10,000. I used a raffle system, I selected one winner and I gave him the horse. And the man objected; he said "this horse is dead" so then I refunded him his money. I gave him back his dollar." So you see, this miser, even though he came across a situation which was very adverse, he had the ability to turn it around and make it into profit.

Similarly there is one advice which Amma gives; She tells us always, "be a miser". Does Amma say that? Amma says "be a miser with respect to time". Amma says that every second is important. Be careful how you spend each and every second. If we are very careful with the time that is with us then even adverse situations can be made very advantageous.

What are the things you can do in the current situation? First thing, you can maintain your health, which is very important, and our immunity. You can do exercises, you can do yoga. You can lose all the excess weight that you've been planning to you lose, when you had time to do a lot of exercises. You can use the time that is available when you're sitting at home unable to go outside. You can do something, which you can learn, which will help you in your career. A lot of universities, lot of institutions have opened up their courses. You can do free online certification courses and increase your professional ability.

You can also do something which you have been wanting to do for a long time but you have been postponing for lack of time; learning singing, writing, cleaning up the house, getting rid of unwanted stuff which is piled up in the attic, so on and so forth.

Last, but not the least, that which is actually the most important thing that we can do in the current situation is, deepen our spiritual practices. Amma has said "if all of us pray sincerely

then this current situation with the virus will subside". But Amma has said that all of us have to pray and we have to pray sincerely. So each one of us can take a sankalpa, a resolve, that I will faithfully do one particular spiritual practice till this situation is resolved.

For example, you could chant the Mahamrityunjaya japa 108 times daily, thousand times daily, depending on your taste. If we take the sincere effort and surrender, then grace will definitely come and we will overcome the current situation.

Question 3 - Why do we suffer?. What is the reason for suffering?

There's an incident which happened a few years ago. About 24 - 25 years ago, when Amma used to travel abroad, She used to combine the US and the Europe tour. When She was going She would be gone for three months. For those of us who were in Amritapuri, waiting for Amma to come back, the pain was unbearable. And when Amma came back that particular year and She came out, I was standing near Her room and She was about to go for darshan. When I looked at Her a mixture of emotions came up within me. All the feelings of sadness, the pain of separation welled up and tears started coming out of my eyes. At the same time, Amma was in front of me so there was a smile in my face also. So Amma looked at me and She said with so much love, "My son are you laughing or are you crying?" And I couldn't reply anything. Tears started... continued to pour out of my eyes. Then Amma looked at me... She didn't say anything. She just made a gesture and looked up like this. The feeling that I got, the message that Amma wanted to convey to me, the feeling that I got was: "Son if you want to cry, you cry. What can Amma do, because Amma is already here, in front of you?"

Later on, after years, when we started studying the philosophical texts, the scriptures, I found that the essence of the Bhagavad Gīta, there is a particular verse in the 6th chapter which says:

*"Uddhared ātmanātmānam nātmānam avasādayet ātmaiva hy ātmano bandhur
ātmaiva ripur ātmanah"*

What does it mean? It means: lift yourself by yourself. Don't allow yourself to come down. It is your mind, which is your best friend. It is your mind, which is the worst enemy.

So lift your own self up with your mind. So the mind is the most important thing. If you learn how to handle the mind then, you will be able to overcome sorrow.

In the Mahabharata, which is an ancient epic written thousands of years ago, there is an interesting dialogue between a mystical being called a Yaksha and the king Yudhisthira who is extremely righteous and knowledgeable. This Yaksha, mystical being, has cursed the brothers of the king and he tells the king Yudhisthira, "you have to answer my 18 questions correctly. If you answer these 18 questions, only then, the curse will be lifted." King Yudhisthira was extremely noble, extremely righteous and extremely well knowledgeable. He answered all the questions and the curse was lifted.

Among these 18 questions, the last question was extremely interesting. The Yaksha was asking Yudhisthira in Sanskrit "*Kim Aascharyam*"? "What is the most astounding thing?" Yudhisthira says "*ahani ahani bhutaani gachanti iha yamaalayam*" which means "Everyday countless creatures are going to the boat of Yama, the god of death; every day thousands of beings are dying. (*Shesha sthavaram icchanti*) And yet those who remain behind believe themselves to be immortal."

kim ascharyam atah param? "What can be more astounding than this?" Every day, whether we are aware of it or not, about, on an average, about 150,000 people die. We are not aware of it, so we are not affected. So the mind doesn't get affected. So it is not that we suffer because of the facts of life.

Spiritual science says that we suffer because of incomplete understanding about who we are, what is the nature of the world, and what is our relationship with the divine.

Amma says, "The spiritual way to get completely rid of suffering, to completely eliminate suffering from our life, we have to understand the relation between three things:

1. Jiva, the individual soul,
2. Jagat, the world around us,
3. Ishwara, the Supreme Lord, the creator of this Universe.

Amma clarifies this further. She says, "We have a permanent nature and a temporary nature and we suffer because we focus exclusively on our temporary nature and we avoid looking at our permanent nature". To paraphrase Amma, these are not Amma's words, but the essence of what She is saying is: we believe that we are material beings, who sometimes have spiritual experiences; but the truth is that we are spiritual beings having temporary material experiences.

This is very, very beautifully illustrated in what is known as the Mundaka Upanishad, an ancient text on the path of wisdom, where it is mentioned: “as from a fire which is fully ablaze, thousands of sparks, which are in essence the fire itself, fly off and fall back into that fire. Similarly from that divine being, that imperishable being, thousands and millions of creatures emerge and they merge back into him”. So, this is the essence of spiritual wisdom: that we have a permanent nature, which we completely overlook and we just focus on our temporary nature.

Question 4 - So what do we do on a permanent basis or on long-term basis? How do we focus on the permanent? That becomes the question that arises in our mind.

Once, a man went to the doctor and he told the doctor “I am not happy with the treatment that you are giving to my wife. The doctor asked him “Why?” And the man said “doctor, before my wife started your treatment, before she started coming to you and getting whatever treatment that you are giving, she used to tell me: You're so handsome, you're so good-looking, I'm lucky to have married you. After coming to you and after getting whatever treatments that you're giving her, she has changed completely. Her behavior has changed. She looks at me and says, you are not handsome at all, you are ugly. So doctor, I think the injections you are giving her, maybe that's upsetting her hormones or something, and she has changed completely. So please stop giving her those injections”. The doctor smiled and he said “it is true that I was treating your wife but I didn't give her any injections, any treatments that way. All I did was to prescribe contact lenses for her because her eyesight was weak. Now she has put on contact lenses and she can see things as they are”.

Now this is exactly what happens to us: we look at the world, we look at ourselves, we focus on the temporary. But when we hear the words of wisdom of the Guru, they act like the contact lenses; they adjust our focus and enable us to focus on what is permanent within us.

Amma always says, “know the nature of life, don't know the nature of the world, then you will know how to deal with it.” The nature of life is such that there will always be good times and there will always be bad times. Amma always talks about the bird which is sitting on a dry twig of a tree. The bird is sitting on the twig, it is enjoying himself, the breeze is coming; it is fluffing his feathers, it is basking in the sunshine; it is resting on that dry twig. But it knows that this twig

is dry, it can break any time and the moment that twig breaks, the bird flies off. The bird doesn't depend on the twig, it uses the twig.

Similarly, in life there will always be bad times, there will be good times. So success in life comes when we start to occupy ourselves to overcome each bad situation.

I was recently reading an interesting article written by some scientists in Columbia University. One of the scientists was very active in discovering medicines for the AIDS virus. So they are trying in Columbia University to find a medicine, which will cure, not only the corona virus, but they are trying to find a medicine which will cure all the viruses which can ever come. The scientists were saying "we have to be proactive; we must not be in a position of playing catch-up ever again." This is what is known as a long term strategy.

So as a long term strategy on a spiritual life, you also have to start focusing on what is permanent in us. Why? Because when we focus on that which is permanent within us, nothing can affect us.

Look at Amma; so many different things are happening around Her. Nothing shakes Her composure, because She is settled in that which is permanent. And She is guiding us, showing us, how to reach that permanent nature. What is preventing us from focusing on that which is permanent? Amma says "The true source of happiness is in that which is permanent in us".

The example used in the Indian tradition is that of the sandalwood. Sandalwood is a thing which is inherently very fragrant. But if you keep it in a place where it is moist or damp, thick layers develop on the sandalwood, and because of these layers, a foul smell starts coming from the sandalwood. Then, when we remove the thick film on the sandalwood by scraping it, the inherent fragrance of the sandalwood comes out.

Similarly, Amma says that our true nature, or that which is permanent within us, our inherent nature, is love, beauty, peace, bliss. But we don't experience that. Why? Because the coverings on our true nature, which are three tendencies of the mind, have to be purified. This is the goal of all spiritual practices.

The first layer that we have to purify is known as *tamas*. *Tamas* means the stubborn likes and dislikes, which are in our mind. How do these stubborn likes and dislikes go? They go when we practice what is known as selfless service, *seva* or *karma yoga*. When we practice *karma yoga*, selfless service, we go beyond our likes and dislikes.

In the *Devi Mahathmyam*, which is an ancient epic describing the glory of the goddess, this removal of *tamas*, this removal of stubborn likes and dislikes, is characterized by the killing of the demons *Madhu* and *Kaitabha*. *Maha Kali* becomes instrumental in their killing.

In the ancient epics, we have a lot of stories of gods killing demons. What it means is purifying of the negative tendencies within us. *Maha Kali* represents what is known as the *kriya shakti* within us. *Kriya shakti* means the power to do action.

The second layer which prevents us from experiencing the bliss of our true nature is what is known as *rajas*, the inability of the mind to focus on one point. And this is represented in the *Devi Mahathmyam* by the killing of the demon *Mahishasura* by *Maha Lakshmi*. That is the inability to focus our mind. What is the remedy for that? The remedy for that is what is known as *upasana*. *Upasana* means all the spiritual practices which we do, which help in developing concentration. Things like doing a *puja*, singing *bhajans*, chanting 108 names, chanting your mantra, meditation. So when we do *upasana* we purify the *rajas*, we bring the mind under control. *Maha Lakshmi* represents the *iccha shakti*, the power of will within us.

The third section of the *Devi Mahathmyam* describes the killing of the demons *Shumba*-*Nishumba* by goddess *Saraswathi*. *Maha Saraswathi* is the goddess of knowledge. *Shumba* and *Nishumba* represent the third layer, which is the wrong concept about me and mine. It represents the wrong knowledge. Knowledge is called as *sattva*. When you have wrong knowledge we have to purify that and make it right. So *Shumba* and *Nishumba* mean the concept of me and mine and they can only be killed by goddess *Saraswathi*. Goddess *Saraswathi* represents the *jnana shakti* within us. That means the power of knowledge.

Those of you who chant the thousand names, you know there is a mantra: *iccha shakti, jnana shakti, kriya shakti*. Now we know when we invoke these three *shakti*, their power within us, when we invoke the *karma shakti*, we can remove the *tamas*, the strong likes and dislikes. When we invoke the *iccha shakti* in us we can make the mind calmer, focused, by doing

upasana. And when we invoke the *jnana shakti*, the light of knowledge, we can remove the wrong concepts about who we are. And when we do that, we will attain to what is our true nature.

I have seen Amma in action as Maha Saraswathi, when I saw Her destroying concepts. She does that all the time. Once I was watching; one lady came to Amma for darshan. She was crying, because her husband had passed away. So Amma hugged her, consoled her, gave a lot of attention, stroked her back, kept speaking to her and she was calmed down a bit. Then after some days, she came back again. And when she came for darshan, I was thinking maybe Amma will again speak to her for a long time, console her for a long time. But I saw that when she came near Amma, Amma hugged her and just whispered something in her ear. And that was all. It was a few seconds, that's all. It was not a long darshan, but the moment Amma said something, her face became very calm, very peaceful and she stopped crying. After a few days I met her and I asked her: "What did Amma tell you?" Then that lady said: "The first time I went to Amma, I really needed Amma's love and she gave it without any limit". The second time when I went to Amma I was not sorrowing so much. I was thinking "why me? Why did my husband go?" So that time Amma just said one thing. It was a small sentence, but the truth of that sentence reverberated within the core of my soul.

And what Amma told her was very simple. Amma looked at her and said "my daughter, if he was really yours, would he have gone without your permission?" That statement is simple, but it contains an immense wealth of knowledge.

The lady said "I understood that time, that nothing is really mine. Whatever is in my life is a gift of God. It's God's wish that this person was with me for some time. Because, when do we say we have control over something? When do we say something is mine? When we have control over it. The more control I have over something, the more I can say it is mine. But, I have no control. The person who manifested as my husband, had his destiny. He played it out. I was grateful to God for having given me such a wonderful husband but when the time came he had to go, because he was not mine, he was a gift of God". That understanding dawned in her and gave her immense peace.

To summarize, what is a long term practice? To make it a bit more simple; in the Indian households, if you see, there's a practice of lighting a lamp in the morning and keeping it lit

throughout the day. It is highly symbolic, as lighting the lamp means lighting our heart up with love. So practically what it means is, when you get up in the morning, light up your heart with love. Don't get out of bed till you have a feeling of love reverberating throughout your entire being. Then, in the light of the lamp do your actions. That is, from this feeling of love every action that we do will be compassionate. It is considered to be inauspicious if the lamp goes off in an Indian household. Then, people will make sure that the lamp is kept lit. If the lamp goes off, the flame goes off, it is considered to be inauspicious. Similarly, this is what we need to do. Once we light the lamp of love in our heart and we get up and move and start doing our daily activities, we have to ensure that this love doesn't fade away. It will not fade away if every action that we do is based on compassion.

See when we say compassion, what does it mean? Literally when you look at the Latin word roots of compassion just "com + pati". "Com" means "with". "Pati" means "you suffer". So when you literally suffer with someone, when you become one with the other person, when you feel the suffering of the other person, then, you don't think, you act. And this is what we see Amma doing every day.

Question 5 - So what is the benefit of approaching, adopting the spiritual approach in our life.

If we look at our life, we come into this world crying and we leave this world crying. But if we adopt the spiritual approach there can be a different way we leave the world.

I will just narrate an incident which one devotee told me. It was so touching. This devotee told me that his wife was diagnosed with a terminal illness and she was in the hospital. The doctors told the family she has only a few hours to live. So the husband was devastated, the children were devastated. But this lady was extremely spiritual. She had spent her lifetime following Amma's instructions, doing spiritual practices. What she did was she told them "Don't cry. I'm not leaving you, I'm going to merge in Amma. So as I go, what you should do, is sit near me". She made them sit around her and said, "now chant the Lalitha Sahasramana, let me listen to Amma's names". And she was listening to the chanting and she passed away with a smile in her lips. This is what leading a spiritual life can do. We can come into this world crying, but when we leave, let us go smiling. Like a flower: when it blooms, it spreads fragrance all around while it is there and, when it dies, the flower becomes a fruit and this fruit benefits the generations to

come. So let our life be such, let us spread the fragrance of love and compassion, and let our life be an inspiration to others.

Hundreds of years from now, when people will look, they will see that there was a great spiritual being called Amma. And when they look and they ask what was Amma's message, what was the message of Amma's life, we'll all say "It was love and compassion". Then they will ask "What is a message of the disciples of Amma, the devotees of Amma, what is a message of their life?" So let the message of our lives be: "Thank you Amma."

May Amma's grace be on each and every one of us so that we are the source of inspiration to all those around us."

Let us conclude this satsang by chanting *Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu* nine times together. As you chant *Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu* feel the vibrations of peace and love which are emerging in your heart, spreading out, giving solace, comfort and peace to all those who are suffering, to the relatives of all those who are suffering, and may these vibrations of peace help those who have left the mortal coil and let them move forward in this spiritual journey.

"Aum Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu (9x)

Aum shanti, shanti, shantih

Om Sri gurubhyo namah, hari om"