

Rama Katha Rasa Vahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Sita Amused

When Rama was instructing Sita on her duties, she could not contain her laughter! She also felt a sense of shame at the turn the arguments took. She could not remain silent for long. "Rama," she interrupted, "Rama! you are the son of Dasaratha, the Maharaja. I have not heard at any time words unworthy of that lineage fall from your lips. Mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter-in-law—every one has to experience happiness and misery, in proportion to the good and bad done by each. But, the wife has a special source of fortune, good or bad. That is to say, she has a share in the good and bad, for which her husband is responsible. She is endowed with a part of his joy or grief. So, if the Emperor Dasaratha has ordered you go to into the forest, he has given me too, the order to go. A woman may be fed and fostered by her mother and father; she may be revered by her son, she may be served by her maids. But, they can never be her shield and support. The tricks and tassels with which you try to convince me serve only to arouse amusement in me.

"During the years preceding my wedding, father taught me all the duties that shall guide and bind me. I am neither an ignoramus nor a seeker of self-aggrandizement. And, more than these, let me tell you, I do not cling fanatically to any opinion because it is mine. There is no need for you to point out my special duty to me, for, I know them all. It is only when I decide to remain here, isn't it, that you have to tell me how and in what ways I have to serve the parents-in-law, the sisters-in-law, and the Ruler of the land? But, when I am with you, what chance is there, what need is there, for me to take on the service of others' I am coming with full joy!

Her unfulfilled Desire

"Since a long time, I have an unfulfilled desire to spend some years in the forest. It is my good fortune that I have now the chance to satisfy that desire, in the company of my Lord! I will not give ear, if you insist that I should not express my point of view in this great matter. Don't be angry with me that I disobey you. It is not just and proper for you to throw me aside here, as one throws the water in the cup after quaffing a mouthful. Believe my word! I shall not continue in Ayodhya even for a moment; take me with you."

With these words, Sita fell at Rama's feet and held them tight. "I have not the slightest sorrow that you were not crowned, I hold *you* dear, crowned or uncrowned. Wherever you are, that is the Empire for me. That is my Treasure. That is my Glory," she pleaded and prayed. Rama told her that forest life is fraught with fears and dangers. It is infested with wild animals and wilder men, demonic predators and dacoits. One has to cross rivers, wade through thick thorny undergrowth. He said that she was not used to traverse places on foot and therefore, she will have to undergo great exhaustion. He described various other forms of fear and anxiety she will be encountering.

But, Sita was unmoved. She replied, "Lord! However wild the animals may be, however thick and terror striking the forest may be, what harm can they cause, what injury can they inflict on me, when you are by my side? I know how to walk through the forests; it will be no trouble for

me. I will be happier if you ask me to walk first, preparing the path for you to follow smoothly on. I shall pick and cast away stones, pebbles and thorns from the path, lessen your pain, making your journey easy.

Her chance to Serve

Allow me to follow you, so that I may render this service, and be happy. Here, in the palace of Ayodhya, and in the zenana, I could not get the chance to serve you. I felt so worried and miserable that all services for you were undertaken by attendants and aides. There will be no attendant, no aide, in the forest! So, I can be happy, doing all the services myself. That is my great good fortune! Make my life worthwhile. O Lord, give me that glorious chance!"

Sita prayed in a variety of ways, pleading for mercy and justice. Rama was moved to compassion. He said, "Sita! Living in the forest is not as happy a state of things as you describe now. Think over it well. You will have to suffer greatly in the coming days." Rama expatiated on the horrors of jungles and the sufferings that one has inevitably to meet them. But, Sita stood firm. "Rama, I shall not interpose any obstacle in the observance of your vows. From your words, I infer that you are hiding something from me, some objection which you do not like to raise before me. Why have any secret hidden from me? I shall observe along with you the vows of personal austerity incumbent on a person on the Brahmachari path; I too shall live on tubers and fruits. I too shall discard the use of scents, we shall only inhale the fragrance of forest flowers. You are a scion of the Ikshvaku line, which has saved millions from danger and disaster! Can you not guard me against them? Are you so weak of hand? I can never believe that you are so weak. I won't give you any trouble; through me, you will not have any worry,

She cannot but

Lord! I cannot but follow you. I will Sleep at your feet; that will give me the fullest bliss. Rama! I know none except you. I cannot exist alive for a moment apart from you. Well. If you hold fast to your resolution and proceed, leaving me at Ayodhya, Sita would have drawn her last breath, before you reach the forest. This is the real Truth." Sita's eyes shed streams of tears as she spoke these words.

Then, Rama tried to pacify her. He said, "O Sita, you are highly virtuous, the embodiment of chastity. You are a very righteous adherent of Dharma. It is best for you to stick to your righteous qualities maintaining them at this place. You cannot act as your will dictates; you have no freedom to behave as you desire. Your Dharma is to act in accordance with my words. Therefore, give up this idea of yours. I am saying this for Your own good.

Guarding you will be a burden, certainly. Streams rolling down from high mountain peaks, wild beasts that dwell in the caves, lions tigers etc roaming without let or hindrance amidst the hills and valleys—these have to be overcome. Flooded rivers will have to be forded. We may have to leap down from huge boulders and rocks.

Considering all these difficulties, I had to tell you these words, in such emphatic terms. You have to wear matted hair and wear clothes made out of the bark of trees. We then have to go to some river or lake for the evening rites of worship; at that time who will watch over you against any calamity that might happen? Whatever may be the crisis, we cannot give up those rites; so, you

may have to be alone for some time daily. You know how strict that rule is. We cannot say what will happen when."

She has no Fear

Rama tried to picture before Sita the fearful scenes of forest life, but, Sita was not affected in the least. She said, "Rama! Why tell me these things, as if I am a simpleton of some backward village, or unaware of the teachings of the Sastras, or an ignorant stupid woman. I am well aware of your skill and prowess. Nothing is impossible for you on earth, nay, on all the fourteen worlds! And, when you, this you, are with me, what fear can disturb me? Well, if a wild beast attacks me and I fall prey to it, I will be happy that I am able to die in your presence, rather than anywhere else! I shall die happily there. I shall never accept to live, if I have to spend it without you.

She insists on Rights

You said that I have no freedom to do as I wish. Did you say so, with the full consciousness of its meaning? Or, was it just a remark to test me? I am not able to reason out. I am half of you; it is my right to name myself as your half. You too have the same right. And, that is the truth. You are not fully free, nor am I. I have as much right over you, as you have over me. But, I do not now argue for my right or claims. I am yearning for being near you, being ever in your presence. My words arise from that craving."

Listening to these pleadings of Sita embodying her hard determination, Rama continued, "Sita! You are entangling yourself in the complexities of rights and claims! When I proceed to the forest, the aged parents will be wailing and weeping for me. At that time, you can realise their agony and console and comfort them, with gentle assurances. That is your duty. You must conduct yourself according to the needs of each occasion. Be with them; serve them; that is the way to please me, and give me Ananda." Rama spoke as if his decision was final, and in a tone of command.

Advice to Kausalya Quoted

But, Sita responded only with a smile. "When the son born of these very parents plunges them in deep grief and goes away, clinging with a bear's grasp to his adamant determination, and, when the very son whom they love so much gives everything up and goes into the forest, what responsibility has the daughter-in-law, who has entered this household from her own, a stranger in the family, what responsibility has she to console and comfort those deserted by the son? Ponder over this for a while!" she said.

"You yourself insisted on your mother remaining here itself, serving her husband, though she wept out her eyes in bitter tears, and prayed that she be allowed to follow you to the forest! You told her that her duty of serving her husband is pre-dominant. You declared that it will bring untold disgrace on the Ikshvaku dynasty if she abandons the lord she is wedded to, out of affection for the son she has borne and brought forth into the world! Such moral rules of inestimable value, you dilated upon, before her. But, as soon as you come near me, you have reversed that advice and started telling me that my predominant duty is—service to the parents-in-law, and not service to the husband! Think it over! Which is your correct advice?

For the wife, the husband is the God—this was not laid down for Kausalya alone; it is the guide and goal for womankind, all over the world, without exception. You have, evidently, forgotten this truth, for it suits your present wish. You are unable to explain how the moral rule you quoted before Kausalya does not apply to me.

However long you argue, whatever you may assert, I shall not leave off treading along the steps your feet take. You may kill me, for transgressing; your order, but, I assert I can never be without you.

A childhood Incident

Rama Chandra! No sooner did you speak of the exile in the forest you are entering upon, I had such an upsurge of joy, remembering an incident that took place in my childhood! You cannot understand the extent of that joy! My mother, with me seated in her lap, was immersed in anxiety about the husband, destiny had in store for me whether he will be morally upright, endowed with excellent attributes etc. (She is eminently chaste and virtuous). She was stroking my hair, and lost in her thoughts. The maid put in her appearance just then and announced that a certain woman ascetic desired audience with her. She lifted me and gently placed me on the floor, and went forward to meet her.

I too walked with her. Mother fell at her feet and directed me to do likewise. I bore that order on my head and did as she directed. The woman eyed me closely from head to foot, and said, "Mother! Your child will spend years with her husband in the forest." At this, my mother replied, with a laugh. "No marriage yet! And, you talk of her spending life in the forest!" She did not keep quiet, however. She explained, "After marriage! She will have to live in the forest with her husband, for some time!" And, then, she went her way! Ever since that day, I am excitedly looking forward to the time, when I can go and live in the forest with my Lord! Make me happy, take me with you."

A few Complications

Sita fell at his feet and sobbed out her prayer. Rama was moved to pity. He raised her gently and said, "Sita! To whom else am I to confide the secret spring of my decision? Listen! You are young; in the forest there are many hermitages full of ascetics, hermits and sages. I will have to go to them in order to be of service to them and to offer my reverence to them. Kings and princes too may be present there (since they come to hunt) and honour them and be blessed by them. Their eye may fall on you; and, consequential complications and conflicts may arise And, since I will be wearing the apparel of an ascetic, it may not be proper to enter into bellicose confrontation with them. At least for this reason you will have to remain at Ayodhya.

Sita had her own reasons to deny this request. She said, "Rama! It is not just that you should deceive me, spinning such fictions, as if you are of common stock! When you are by my side, can even the Ruler of the Gods cast his eye on me? If he does, will he not be reduced to ashes that very moment? No. For this reason, you cannot leave me here, you cannot escape your duty and responsibility on this score" Let me also tell you something: if you are not with me, what will be my fate? I will have to be alone, at Ayodhya; and perhaps incidents of the nature you just now dilated upon can happen here! Or else, I may, suffer inner agony, not being able to bear the

conjugal happiness of others! So, do not leave me alone, take me with you, and let your renown and mine, spread for all time over the entire world.

Moon and Moonlight

Let me add: You are Rama Chandra, Rama the Moon! I am Sita, which also means, cool, the cool Moonlight! How can the moon be in the forest and its cool moonlight stay away at Ayodhya? Where the moon is, there its cool light must be! Hence, this separation can never be. The two shall ever be together, never apart! If the two happen to part, it is but the evidence of the approach of some unnatural catastrophe, a world-shaking tragedy. Or, it may come about, for the sake of an epoch-making endeavour to destroy the wicked and save the good from extinction! Since no such crisis is evident now, our separation is impossible. It cannot happen."

Sita, the Mother, spoke these words in a resolute voice, as if she will brook no objection.

(To be continued)

Love Thee Sathya Sai

I love Thee Sathya Sai ...
I love Thy Blessed Face...
I love Thee Sathya Sai
I live upon Thy Grace...
I love Thee Sathya Sai ...
inflaming bliss I sigh,
my heart in longing
cries ... I love Thee Sathya Sai.

I love Thee Sathya Sai
Thy Truth I live to know...
I love Thee Sathya Sai ...
I need Thy Light to grow...
In cycles calm or stern ...
I know just where to turn...
Thy home is in
my heart ... I love Thee Sathya Sai.

This world is just a stage,
a play within Thy Mind...
I, but an actor am,
within Thy Play Divine ...
I act my part with Grace ...
my gaze upon Thy face ...
to Thy Feet let me race ...

I love Thee Sathya Sai ...
I love Thee Sathya Sai
I love Thee Holy Lord

—Denise Eversole
Santa Barbara, California

To The Pundits

Manifestations of the Atma, Blessings.

The wise are those who know the Atma. They distinguish between That and This, Tatta and Twam, the Absolute and the Relative, the Universal and the Particular that is falsely conceived as separate from the Universal. When he experiences the Truth that he is the Absolute Atma, man is endowed with supreme Bliss. It is sheer waste if one has no such experience but has pored over mountains of spiritual texts or earned fame as a deep scholar.

Man alone has the ability to understand the phenomenal world around him. He can grasp the ways and waywardness of the word; he can delve into its evolution and involution, its contraction and expansion. Therefore, he has to give it only a relative value, and follow as his only goal, the search for the Atma and the attainment of the Atma. And, the search has to be through continuous, consistent Sadhana.

Boundless spiritual potential is encased in every being. In man, it expresses itself as Jnana, Supreme Wisdom.

Man is neither a bit of clod, nor a bundle of flesh! He has in him the inexhaustible spring of Divine Bliss, Ananda. A person is not just the body, with its limbs and other mechanisms. The Atma is the Person. The soul is the Personality. And, the Person realises Ananda only when the Atma is cognised. This achievement cannot be won through riches; or authority of office, or scholarship or status, fame or force. Discarding this perennial Ananda, man imagines the sensual pleasures to be Ananda, and he spends his life in fruitless pursuits. He wanders about in the thorny jungles and desert sands. He humiliates himself and crawls and cringes for favours from all and sundry. This is the consequence of the ignorance that blinds.

Man is equipped with a return ticket, when he takes birth! Holding it in his grasp, he earns and spends, rises and falls, sings dances, weeps and wails, forgetting the end of the journey. But, though he forgets, the wagon of life moves towards the cemetery, which is its terminus. It brings no glory to man if he is tied helplessly to the wheel of birth and death. His glory and greatness consist in disentangling himself from that revolving wheel.

Before Death nips life, and thrusts him on to another birth, he must by means of Sadhana learn the mystery of the Atma. When Death comes, one must be glad to meet it, since He comes for the last time, and there will be no more birth for one. Man weeps when he is born; he should not

weep when he dies. He must die triumphant over death. Otherwise, he lives only to consume tons of food, as a burden upon the earth, You seek to escape pain and grief; but, they are inescapable.

Life is as a dream. In the dream, you experience joy and grief; but, when you realise that boon joy and grief are unreal, when you awake into the consciousness of the Atma, you will no more have the thrill of joy or the despondency of pain. You will not have any longer fear or anxiety, fear of death or anxiety about the future.

The mind is the architect of your progress or decline. For the fool, the Mind is a formidable dinosaur! For the intelligent, the mind is an angelic ally. The tainted mind is torn by fear; the pure elevated mind is placid and unruffled, like that of the homeless sage. The Vedas teach how to purify the mind and render it a useful tool.

Nothing is uncaused in the Universe. Every being, object, incident has been caused by the primal Cause, and its direction or guidance. The Sastras yearn for the discovery of that unseen Principle. Through sheer ignorance, and perversity, the Sastras have been ignored and set aside, and man is misleading himself into the belief that his fancies are true, just and beneficial. Man has thrown his "humanness" into the crater of cruelty, forgetting his best interests under the influence of hatred envy, conceit and power. He has cast aside the expanse of his culture. As a result, peace has flown from the heart of man, from the fold of society and the boundaries of nations.

The Pundits and Scholars who have gathered today, under the auspices of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha must promote and set themselves up as pioneers and examples for the task of making people aware of, the greatness of Sanathana Dharma, and of the Vedas and Sastras in which it is enshrined.

They must teach the people the Principle of the Atma, and themselves shine as inspirers, through their own practice of what they teach. Immersed in Sat-chit-ananda themselves, they must communicate that joy and that wisdom to others. Plant in every heart the seed of Truth; I bless that you succeed in leading men into that Bliss of Fullness and Fulfillment.

Bhagavan's Divine Message Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, Siddapur 3/12/72

Taste the Sweetness of the Song

This letter is prompted by Bhagavan's Will; it relates His Glory. I am a House Surgeon, working in the Pediatrics Section of the Hospital. A child was brought to the Section, 8 days ago, with Diphtheria associated with Myocarditis. It had severe respiratory distress, and so, an emergency opening of a hole in the trachea had to be done.

This evening, the child relapsed into severe distress. The mucus had to be immediately sucked off, since it was obstructing the system. Unfortunately, the sucker in the Section was out of

order. So, I and my friend in the ENT Section, took the child to the Operation Theatre, where a Sucker was available.

Everything went on well, for some time. But, quite suddenly, the child stopped respiring! There was arrest of the heart also.

We rushed for the life-saving adrenaline. Most unfortunate of all, the syringe could not be spotted at once! Not that it was not there, but, search as we might, we could not lay hands on it! And, unluckily, the Sucker went out of action!

The child was completely flaccid, showing no sign of life.

In dismay, thinking of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai, I took a little Vibhuti, which I always carry with me, and started to apply it on the chest of the baby. The moment I applied the Vibhuti, something happened, that brought life into ME! Yes. The child took a big gasp! My friend was most pleasantly and gratefully surprised. Soon, the heart was active. The child opened its eyes. I could not but gasp in wonder. Tears flowed from our eyes, for, Bhagavan, the Mother of all, had saved the child and given consolation and joy to the parents.

I must mention here certain events that happened, earlier, when I was preparing to go to the Hospital. I had put on the shirt that I wore in the morning sessions, I was already late for my work and so, I was in a hurry. But, just when I crossed the threshold, I felt I should take that shirt off (!) and put on another that was on the hanger! The desire was over-powering. I didn't know why. "Funny" I thought within myself, and put it on, and rushed to the Hospital.

Trivial things can shift the balance in favour of life, when death calls aloud. The shirt on the hanger which I was compelled to put on had the Vibhuti from Bhagavan in it! I realise now that every incident in one's life, however insignificant or 'accidental' has deep meaning.

Lord Hari has said in the "Sandeha Nivarini": "Can even a leaf move without My Will?"

Next time, I sing Paramam - Pavitram Baba - Vibhutim, (the Song which describes the soul - liberating, wonder-working, miraculously produced Vibhuti), Paramartha Ishtartha Moksha Pradatham, it will not be mere song, mere repeating of the lines. I will dwell delightedly, on the Pavitram, Vichitram, until I taste again the Glory of this Miracle I witnessed in the Operation Theatre today.

M. Jagesh Kamath, M. B. B. S., Mangalore, 11-12-72

“These for the Cat!”

The 108 devotees from Assam, who had come to Prasanthi Nilayam for the Birthday Festival, were asked by Bhagavan to assemble in the Prayer Hall, at 8 P. M. on the 24th, so that He might meet them all together. He spoke to them for over an hour on Sadhana and spiritual progress. He

gave them His Blessings for a happy return journey, and spoke affectionately of the hardships they underwent on their 'way by train, linguistic disturbances in Assam and Bengal whose brunt they bore, the Cyclone in Orissa, Bandhs and Strikes in Andhra, downpour of rain due to the Depression in the Bay near Madras etc.

Then, He moved along the lines of men and women, sitting face to face, distributing the precious Vibhuti Prasad to each one.

He gave a handful of packets to one woman and passed on. A few steps later, he halted; and returned, to where that woman sat. Picking a couple of packets from the basket He had in His left hand, He gave them again to her saying, "Ye billy ke liye"! She looked up, puzzled! Bhagavan repeated, "Ye hilly ke liye" "These, for the cat"!

She was thrilled; she remembered her pet cat, at her home, in far off Gauhati.

O, How Baba loved it! Yes! Eight months ago, Baba had given proof of that. That night, she had some friends for dinner; her sister, the matron of the Government Hospital was there too. The cat was in the corner of the kitchen eyeing what was going on; suddenly, it snatched a piece of fish and ran. She was enraged; she took a stick and gave it a nice good beating.

But, even while she was doing it, all the pictures of Baba on the walls of her home, in the shrine, and on the table began, swaying, swinging and even falling! Two fell on the table from the wall but were luckily unhurt! Her sister and the friends ran out of the house suspecting an earthquake! The woman was plunged in fear.

Recovering gradually, she suspected that it must be Baba's way of teaching her the Lesson of Love. She took the crouching, shivering, cat in her lap; while stroking its back, she found that its fur was full of fragrant Vibhuti which Baba had already showered to alleviate its pain! Tears of repentance filled her eyes; thinking of Baba's presence in the House filled her with joy.

That was the Cat for which Baba gave her the two packets, at Prasanthi Nilayam, eight months later.

O! The Infinite Compassion of Baba, O The Universal :presence that is He

—Gogoi.

Christmas

The lives of great Personalities are lived out, in order to establish the welfare of humanity, the prosperity and peace of the world, and individual liberation from bondage to sensual desires and passions. This is illustrated by the strange phenomena that occur at the time of their Advent. It is believed that when Christ was born there were such manifestations. The ruler of the realm had ordered a census, and each had to be counted in his own village. Mary and her husband moved along the road that led to his native village. Mary was with child; the pains started midway; they

knew no one in the hamlet through which they were passing; so, they took refuge in a cowshed. Joseph made ready the space between two cows, and went out at midnight, into the road to seek some woman who could help. But, soon, he heard the Baby's Cry!

The Aura

And the story says, there was a star in the sky, which fell with a new Light, and this led a few Tibetans and others to the place where the Saviour was born. This story is read and taken on trust by many, though Stars do not fall or even slide down so suddenly. What the story signifies is this. There was a huge aura of splendour illumining the sky over the village when Christ was born. This meant that he, who was to overcome the darkness of Evil and Ignorance had taken birth, that he will spread the Light of Love in the heart of man and the Councils of Humanity. Appearance of splendour, or, of other Signs of the Era that has dawned, are natural when incarnations happen on Earth.

The Aura of Light was a sign that the Darkness will be destroyed. A Master arrives in answer to man's prayer: "Thamaso man jyothirgamaya" (Lead us from darkness unto Light!)"

Use and Misuse

If each one does his duty, in the spirit of dedication, the Light can illumine all; but, if the doors of the heart are shut against the Light, how can darkness disappear? You cannot sit back, and expect the Incarnation to bring Peace and joy into you. The Incarnation comes to warn, to guide, to awaken, to lay down the path, and shed the light of Love on it. But, man has to listen, learn and obey, with hope and faith. There is a tale told of old that Wisdom and Wealth once quarreled loud and long, about their relative importance. Wealth argued that without it, the body will be weak, the brain hazy and wisdom a "will of the wisp." Wisdom retorted that, without it, man cannot even distinguish wealth from non-wealth or know how to earn it and use it. The Soul intervened and told them that they were both equally important, but, only when they are properly used. Wealth without wisdom becomes an instrument of exploitation and tyranny; wisdom without wealth becomes mere fantasy and a bundle of blueprints. Use makes them worthwhile; misuse makes them disastrous. It is like the knife; in the hands of a maniac, it becomes an instrument for murder; in the hands of a surgeon, it becomes an instrument which saves life! Are you doing good with wealth? Are you benefiting others by means of wisdom, that is the test. This day, Christmas, when you celebrate the birth of Christ, resolve to lead lives of Loving Service of the weak, the helpless, the distressed, the disconsolate. Cultivate tolerance and forbearance, charity and magnanimity. Hold dear the ideals he laid down and practise them in your daily lives.

Drink and Dance

The ways in which Christmas is celebrated show how far men have moved away from those ideals, how much ignominy are heaping on his name! The midnight hour is revered; illumination is arranged; the Christmas Tree is set up; and then, the night is spent in drinking and dance. It is a day of Holy Ananda, but, the Ananda is reduced to the level of the poisoning excitement of intoxication! Drink is so pernicious an evil habit, that when man puts the bottle in, he gets himself into the bottle and cannot escape. First, man drinks wine; then, the wine drinks more wine; and finally, the wine drinks man himself. He is sunk and drowned in drink. Liquor destroys the humanity in man! How then can it develop the Divinity in him? One must dance in

Divine Bliss; instead, sensual dance is indulged in, as a deleterious substitute! Make your hearts pure, your activities holy, and your feelings beneficial to all. That is the best way for celebrating the Birth of Christ.

The Lamb

There is one point that I cannot but bring to your special notice today. At the time when Jesus was merging in the Supreme Principle of Divinity, he communicated some news to his followers, which has been interpreted in a variety of ways by commentators and those who relish the piling of writings on writings and meaning upon meaning, until it all swells up into a huge mess. The Statement it-self has been manipulated and tangled into a conundrum. The Statement is simple: "He who sent me among you will come again!" and he pointed to a Lamb. The Lamb is merely a symbol, a sign. It stands for the voice Ba—Ba; the announcement was of the Advent of Baba. "His name will be Truth," Christ declared. Sathya means Truth. He wears a robe of red, a blood-red robe. (Here Baba pointed to the Robe He was wearing!) He will be short, with a crown (of hair). The Lamb is the sign and symbol of Love. Christ did not declare that He will come again; he said, "He who sent me will come again." That Ba—ba is this Baba.

And, Sai, the short, curly-hair-crowned red-robed Baba, is come. Not only in this Form, but, He is in every one of you, as the Dweller in the Heart. He is there short, with a robe of the colour of the blood that fills it.

In All

The great axioms of Bharatiya culture found in the Vedas—Iswara sarva bhutanaam, Isa vasyam idam sarvam, Vasudeva sarvam idam—God is the inner motivator of all beings, All this is enveloped in God, All this is Vasudeva, the Divine are to be interpreted in this way, that the blood-red-robed Baba or Lamb is in every one. This is the inner mystery of Incarnation: God incarnating in all, All are One; the One is All.

There is only one God; He is Omnipresent. There is only one religion, the religion of Love; there is only one caste, the Caste of Humanity; there is only one language, the language of the heart.

—From Bhagavan's Discourse 25/12/72

*In the hour of meditation, the voice of Sai spoke:
Be aware! I am always with thee!
Wherever thou art, where thou mayest go,
I am as Love, to thy search for Me
I am Thyself, Thou art me.*

—A.B.

Baba in New York City

"Bhagavan has inspired many a forlorn soul. To chant His Name is a blessing; to congregate in Satsang and do Bhajan is an unfailing pleasure." Thus writes Prof. B. S. Sharma of the Systems Research International, of New York. Once a fortnight since two years, Bhajans, Prayer Sessions and Meditation Sessions are being held in 50, East 42nd Street, to which place people come from as far away as Long Island, New Jersey. They come in biting cold, in heavy rains, for the wonderful inspiring get-togethers.

Miss Hilda Charlton has Prayer and Meditation Sessions every Thursday, at 865 West End Avenue, and, about 300 people attend. They are mostly young Americans with a fair number of elders, Indians, and others many young people have found Hilda's leadership and guidance, and the blessings of Baba she invokes on all by means of Bhajan, very useful and meaningful.

The Hindu Temple Society of New York City has accepted Baba's illuminating emblem, affirming that all faiths reveal the same Truth, for the temple. The idol of Lord Ganesa is placed right under the emblem taint on the wall, as the backdrop. On 25th November, the devotees of Baba celebrated the Birthday of the Avatar in the beautiful Hall of the Hindu Temple. Miss Hilda Charlton addressed the gathering. When for a local Project the Temple Rituals were filmed and recorded, the bhajan "Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam," which was sung filled everyone with ecstasy.

Swami Jagadeeswarananda of Gujarat, a devotee of Baba, recently performed Gita-mahayajna, in the Gita Temple at New York.

There is an American-born guide, on 86th Street, sitting cross-legged on a bench in the cement sidewalk declaring, "God sent me here." He speaks of Sathya Sai Baba and of His Message. He talks by gestures, and is called by his interpreter, "This One," while the interpreter says that his own name is "That One." Curious? Well. Baba works through this silent instrument too! He has a goodly group directed by him into paths of Love and Devotion. They practise quiet meditation and live in the constant presence of God. The New York Post published an article on this unique man. It wrote "in this age of moneyed and mobile meditation, 'This one' does not expect affluent sufferers to slip him a week's salary, to hear his transcendental secret! Though capable of speech, he spreads the Word without ever using words"!

Prof. Sharma writes, "In this City where crime, mutual suspicion and mistrust pollute the mind as much as the air is polluted by gas smoke and dust, people live in tension fear anxiety and insecurity. Satsangs where Baba reveals His Presence are our only sources of strength and security, peace and joy." "How blessed are we," says, Prof. Sharma, "that Bhagavan in His Infinite Mercy, has given us and is giving us continuously this Grace and this Guidance!"

—Ed

Pretenders

When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhgaya, after the Illumination that revealed to him the Four Noble Truths, gangs of disbelievers gathered around him and poured ridicule and abuse on him. His disciples were enraged; they prayed to the Buddha, "Lord! Give us leave; we shall beat this insolence and ignorance out of these traducers." But, Buddha only smiled at their anger. He said, "Dear Ones! Know you not how much joy they derive from this exercise? You derive joy worshipping me! They derive joy pelting me with abuse. You pour reverence; they pour ridicule, and receive equal satisfaction. Control yourselves: do not hate any one, that is the teaching. This is the ancient ordinance."

Some people cannot tolerate glory in others; some are bled with the venom of envy some are demonic in nature and cannot tolerate holiness and divinity; some are perverted by disappointment and cast the blame on God; such people will indulge in abuse. If you associate with such people and their followers, you will only be contaminating your minds. Even ordinary men will feel ashamed to cast aspersions on the great, but, these expose themselves by their tactics, as lower than the lowest.

You might say, we are the ordinary kind; when the Form we adore is traduced how can we bear it silently? Suppose some one sends you a letter by registered post. When you sign and take it, you become aware of its contents, though you may not accept the contents! If you do not sign the letter goes back to the person who sent it and his purpose in making you aware of the contents is defeated. So too, don't give ear to the abuse; keep cool and uninterested; then, the foulness goes back to the sender, and cannot affect you at all. It will affect him as re-sound, re-action and re-flection! Instead of harming you, it will only recoil on him.

Poundraka

Look into the Bhagavatham. What was the fate of Jarasandha, Kamsa, Shishupala? Shishupala ridiculed Krishna and his hatred reacted on him alone! The Lord is not affected by either praise or blame. He is above and beyond the dualities that agitate man. He has neither favourites nor foes. Your goodness yields good to you; your badness brings about bad for you. Your virtue is your shield; your vice is the weapon that inflicts wounds on you. Happiness and misery are but the reflections of the good and bad which fill your heart and shape your activities.

In the Bhagavatham, there is mention of a certain Poundraka, who sought to become a passable 'imitation' of Krishna! He added unto his name, the name of Krishna, viz., Vasudeva! He announced himself as Poundraka Vasudeva. He got made an imitation Conch and an imitation Wheel (out of wood) and carried them about, in his two artificial extra hands! He discovered the style which Krishna adopted while wearing his yellow silken robe and he scrupulously followed the same. He skillfully imitated the gait and gestures of Krishna. Some fools gathered round him, mistaking him to be the Lord they were seeking! His insanity finally brought about his downfall and humiliation.

In this Kali Yuga also, such imitations are cropping up! Just as Poundraka shaped himself into a Vasudeva, we have today even Sathya Sai Babas! They get the same type of robe stitched!

They strain themselves to cultivate the crown of hair, they study photographs and hold their hands up very nearly like I do, and make themselves ridiculous by frantic attempts to imitate me! They forget that "imitation is only human; but, Creation is Divine" Those who attempt to become Sathya Sai Babas by this ludicrous process of imitation only destroy whatever faith some people have placed in the Divine. They are poisonous pests which injure the peace and harmony of society. They collect around themselves insects of like nature. For, only birds of the same feather can flock together. These `pretenders' fall into ruin themselves and luring ruin on the society where they operate, as the proverbial horde of monkeys that ruin themselves and bring ruin on the forest which they inhabit.

Let me tell you this: There is no need for you to follow to this person or that person in the search for a Guru. The heart full of compassion is the altar of God. Nature is the best preacher. Life is the best teacher. Fill yourselves with awe and reverence at the handiwork of God, the manifestation of His Power and Glory that is called the World. This is enough instruction, and enough inspiration for you.

—*Form Baba's Discourse, Brindavan. 14-1-73*

Rama Katha Rasa Vahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Travails of Forest Life

"Sita! You will have to sleep on hard rocky ground, wear apparel made of fibre or bark, live on tubers and roots. Even this food, it might be difficult to get every day! Their availability depends on the seasons of the year. When they are not procurable, you might have to keep hungry. The forest is infested with demonic tribes who are masters of a million stratagems, and who eat with delight human flesh, O! It is impossible to describe fully the travails of, life in the forest!

You cannot bear those terrors and tribulations. If you accompany me into exile in the forest, people will condemn me and pour abuse on me. How can the Celestial Swan that lives on the ambrosial waters of the Manasa sarovar survive drinking the brackish waters of the sea? How can the Kokil sporting in the mango garden that is full of tender- leaved trees be happy and carefree in a patch of low grass? Reflect on these matters. It is most desirable that you stay at home."

Sita listened to these words of Rama, spoken so soft and sweet; but, all the while, she stood with her eyes on the ground, and tears streaming down her cheeks. She stood like a pillar, unmoved and immovable! Her tears fell continuously on the floor; Rama could not bear the sight of her distress.

Her Sole Refuge

Sita could find no words to answer the objections Rama realised. Finally, she managed to control her emotions, and swallow her grief. She said, "O Lord of my Life! You are the treasure-

house of everything good and auspicious. When I am separated from you, even heaven is as horrible as hell. Parents, brothers, sisters, parents-in-law, sons, preceptors, kinsmen—all these might be resplendent repositories of auspiciousness and goodness; but, for a woman, her husband is the only source of strength and joy and fortune. He alone can grant her happiness and delight. Except the husband, she has none to guide her and guard her; he is her refuge, her only resort.

Lord! When the husband is away from her, the wife will find the body, the home, the city, the kingdom, the wealth heaped around her, everything to be sources of grief and sorrow. They cannot confer joy on her grief-stricken mind. Sweetness will turn bitter when her Lord is away. Delight is curdled into disease.

All the joys I crave for are centred in you. Nothing can equal the ecstasy I derive, when I fix my eyes on your face that shines so bright and cool and comforting like the full moon in autumn. When I am with you, the birds and beasts will be my kith and kin. The forest will be the city I love. The apparel made of tree-bark will be the silken clothes for me. The lean-to with the thatch of leaves will be as delightful a home for me as a heavenly mansion. The fairies and angels of the forest, the sylvan deities will be my parents-in-law. I shall revere them with equal awe, when I am with you, sheaves of grass and heaps of floral petals will give as much softness for the bed as the God of Love can aspire for. And, the tubers, roots and fruits that you speak of will be as sweet and sustaining as Divine Nectar itself! The mountain peaks there will gladden me as much as the towering skyscrapers of Ayodhya. I will come down one mountain slope and climb another, as gladly as coming down the stairs and getting up another. It will be so easy and delightful.

Every day, I will derive the thrill of delight at the sight of your Lotus Feet. Besides, this will be a golden chance for me to serve you at all times in every way. How can I survive the agony, if I am not to utilise this precious chance? O, Treasure-chest of Mercy! Do not leave me here; take me with you! Really there is no need for me to pour these importunities into your ear; for, you reside in all beings and you are aware of all that they feel and think. It isn't proper that you should inflict such pain on me, when you know how my heart is yearning for the chance to be with you.

Lord! I am downcast, miserable. If you leave me and go, it will bring down your name. You have all the noble attributes; why then deny mercy to me? Can I keep alive for fourteen years, separated from you? I find it impossible to keep alive even for ten minutes of separation! Accept my prayer, show me some little kindness. When I am with you, how can any one dare harm or attack me. Why, no one can dare cast his eye on me. Can the jackal or the hare open its eye and dare look at the Lion

Her Right and Strength

I am not a tender fragile person. To speak the Truth, you are tenderness personified! The Earth is my mother. Therefore, I have every right and every strength to traverse the Earth. Really, happiness is your share in life; my share is to suffer. When such is the case, why do you invert facts and cause disappointment to me. It is not correct. I declare that I can execute as easily as pleasant play, tasks which are beyond you! You know full well that I lifted up and placed aside the Bow of Siva, that no king however proud of his prowess could lift. I am

surprised that you doubt my capabilities! My valour and skill are not in any way inferior to yours. So, do not indulge in talk that serves but to delay matters; but, give me permission and, make all further arrangements in great joy.

Come with Me

Sita bowed low, and fell at Rama's feet with these words. Rama felt that it would be improper to continue obstructing her desire. He resolved to yield. "Sita!" he said, "Give up your grief. As you desire, I shall take you with me. Do not give room to sadness in your heart. Engage yourselves quickly in preparing for the journey to the forest!"

Hearing these soft, sweet words which Ramchandra spoke, Sita was elated; she was filled with boundless joy. She said, "Lord! Preparation? What has one to prepare, to live in the forest? I am always ready, with whatever I need, for I need only you; I have no other want. I am following you, this moment. In you I have all I need. You know I have no desire for anything other than you."

With these words, she held Rama's hand in hers and stepped forward. Rama said, "Sita! Consider this. You will not be in Ayodhya for fourteen years. Therefore, to avoid their death out of grief in their own cages, go and release the parrots and birds you rear as pets with such love and care. And the cows you fostered with affection? Give them away to Brahmins, so that they might treat them lovingly. Distribute the various articles of dress, the vehicles, and other things used by you, to the people. Or else, they will be ruined by time. It is better far, that they be used, rather than get disintegrated."

When this suggestion was made, Sita immediately ran towards the cages, and addressing each pet bird in loving accents, told them "Go! Like us, you too roam freely in the beautiful forest." With her own hands, she undid the bonds and set them free! Then, she went to the cow-shed. She fed the cows various tasty foods and talked to the Brahmins who were to receive them as gifts, most softly and sweetly, her charming face beaming with joy. Spectators who watched her giving the things away felt their hearts melt with sorrow at her impending departure.

They shed tears in streams for they were moved by the spirit of renunciation, the large-hearted generosity, and more than all, by her exultation at the prospect of accompanying her husband into exile in the forest. Her ecstasy was beyond the pen of any poet. Meanwhile, Lakshmana joined them, after taking leave of his mother; the three then moved on to the Royal Palace. Citizens who thronged the road could not bear the sight of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, set on going into exile, away from them, for fourteen long years.

People were bent with sorrow, like blooms that had gone dry on the stem: Their minds had gone awry with grief. They stood helpless and forlorn, like bees that had lost the honey they had set their hopes on! They wrung their hands in despair; they beat their heads in sorrow; they groaned like birds that had lost their wings.

The Father's Agony

Thousands had collected in the quadrangle of the Palace. Their grief was immeasurable; it cannot be described adequately by any one. Meanwhile, the Minister went in, and awakened

the Emperor who had fallen unconscious on the floor. He made him sit up, and placed him in position. He communicated to him the news that Sita Rama and Lakshmana had come to have audience with him.

Rama had already come near his father, speaking words of soothing love. When Dasaratha saw Sita and Lakshmana, his grief knew no bounds. He embraced Rama very tight, and fell on the floor. Anguish choked his throat; he pressed his hands on his breast and tried to suppress the agony. Sita and Lakshmana could not look on, at the sight of the suffering Emperor. Lakshmana saw Kaikeyi standing close by, with an air of authority; his eyes became red with rage; he looked daggers at her as if he would kill her on the spot. But, soon, he controlled his anger, and cooled his emotion, watching the serenely calm face of Rama.

Do not Delay

At that time, Kaikeyi said, "Rama! You are plunging your father in deeper grief! The sooner you leave and reach the forest, the quicker will your father be relieved, and rescued from anxiety. Do not delay any longer! Prostrate before your father, and go."

These words, so devoid of elementary kindness seemed to split the heart of Dasaratha into bits. Dasaratha suddenly shouted, "Demoness! Evil Spirit! How hard and adamant are your words! " and fell in a faint. Just at that moment, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at his feet. Rama said, "Father! Bless us and permit us to leave. This is a time fit for rejoicing, not pining and grieving. Over-attachment brings infamy in its train." Rama pleaded that he should be courageous and give up the weakening delusion that makes him fawn for the son. Rama clasped his father's feet, and then, sat near on his knees, caressing and consoling.

Dasaratha opened his eyes and looked full at his beloved son. He sat up with great difficulty and holding both hands of Rama in his, he said, "O my darling Son! Listen to my words! You are possessed of self-control and discrimination. You know what is right; it is proper that you should do only the right thing. Now, it is not right when one person does wrong, for another to suffer from its consequences, isn't it? The play of Fate is unpredictable, it is a puzzle beyond solution."

The Emperor began to pile argument on argument, in his innocence and love, to dissuade Rama from his resolve to leave on the journey into exile.

(To be continued)

Somebody!

I have a precious story to share with you, about Baba's Grace!

Ruth has never seen Baba in the physical. She was very skeptical in the beginning about Baba; but, latterly, she has come very cautiously to know and feel close to Him. She has a

teaching job in Mexico, but, comes back and forth to USA, because she had some serious health problems.

When she is in Santa Barbara, she comes regularly to our Bhajans, on Thursday nights. She has turned more and more to Baba as the Lord.

She was having a bout with periods of extreme pain, for several days. One evening, in her little room, she suffered terrible pain, and was so discouraged that she cried out, "O for some one to help me! Any one! Why am I suffering thus? What shall I do? O, help!"

After the first outcry, the rest was an inner scream! She was hollering as if in an Echo Chamber! "Somebody! Come! Help! O, will no one come?"

Suddenly, a gentle touch on her arm! She stopped short. She turned, and there stood—Baba, beside her bed.

Baba said quietly, "Don't shout so! I'm right here"!

The awareness of His Presence calmed her. She drifted off to sleep. She awoke, with no pain.

Baba's Presence is everywhere, regardless of time and space.

—Muriel J Engle, Santa Barbara, USA

The Renaissance of Love

"I assure you that very soon the dark clouds shall be scattered and you will witness a happy era all over the world." —**Baba**

*When the world in throes of dearth
Becomes a burden dreary
Apace does my soul fly
(Beyond the years of trial)
Into a Radiant Season
That shall not be long in coming
At the tender hand of Sai...*

*The Gardener of Mercy gently tends
Each man, his family, his world;
The dawn of Prema glistens.
A new century is born...*

Sweet human children in millions

*Rejoice about the Father
In one grand loving throng
We cherish one another:
Brothers, Sisters, Offspring of Sai!
We mortals know the Self
At last—O Immortal Soul!
And joy! Our Father walks among us
And makes a Garden for our ploy.
Are we not gods on earth?*

*O Your Great Patient Hands
Have led this angry planet
Into blissful Paradise;
O Symbol of glorious Brahman,
Your Love overwhelms these infants!*

*Countless Hearts have ever prayed
And now it has come to pass:
The world reflects the beauty
Of every dear man's Soul!*

*John's Revelation is Reality: "Behold!
The Tabernacle of God is with men
And He shall dwell among them,
And they shall be His people.
God Himself shall be with them
As their God!" Yea Lord, You are here
In a canticle of praise, magnificent,
Rising above all separation
We thank Thee, Father, Sai!*

*"O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands!
O serve the Lord with gladness,
And come before His Presence with a Song"
(Psalm of David)*

—Karen Shultz, Tustin, Calif

Three Words From the Gita

Kasthwam? Koham? Kutha Aayathah? Who are you? Whither this journey? Where are you coming from? Man spends his life here without being able to answer these three questions! Is it not a big shame? If a man starts on a pilgrimage to Badrinath and halts in a caravanserai at Benares, the people in charge will ask, naturally of course, these three questions. But, he does

not know the genuine answers; he fobs them off with some superficial details. In this Kurukshetra too, the same queries arise and the same ignorance prevails.

The Bhagavad-Gita has in one sloka (11, 54) three words which guide man towards the answers. The first word is—Jnatum (known). The answer, namely, that one is in reality the Atma, which has neither birth nor death, nor the process of temporal life in between, no coming and going, no bandage and no liberation. This answer has to be (known) by means of the instruction received from Masters, or learnt from texts, or by resort to meditation on the Reality.

But, knowing is not enough. You might be able to know that a mango fruit is very tasty, that it is available during certain months of the year and in certain regions of the country. But, that is only dry information. You have to possess it; see it and become its owner. This is indicated by the second word—Drashtum (Seen). As Arjuna saw the Virat Swarupa of the Lord. First He *knew* that Krishna was All; next he *saw* Him as All.

Even this is an incomplete affair. You have to eat the mango and enjoy its sweetness, its fragrance, and imbibe its sustenance and substance. This is indicated in the third word, Tattvena Praveshtum, (Entered into), merged in the core, at—one—ment with the Truth. This is the state when by knowing the Truth and seeing It and entering into it, one becomes the Truth. Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati. This is the Realisation, the Illumination, the Liberation.

—Baba's Discourse: Brindavan 14-1-73

Two—Notable Events

Bhagavan visited the Army Service Corps Centre at Bangalore on Friday, 5th January. He was escorted by Sri Handa, and taken in a flower-bedecked jeep through the long shaded roads or the Campus, lined by the personnel and their families. Baba addressed a huge gathering of soldiers and others exhorting them to endeavour to win victory over the insidious foes of envy, greed, and suspicion. Masters of their own selves are the real heroes, He declared. He spoke of the fundamental unity of All, in the Divinity inherent in every being and advised every one to cultivate Love Brotherhood, and the spirit of self-less service.

On the 13th, Jan, the day of the Bhogi Festival, over 750 children, members of the many Sri Sathya Sai Bala Vikas Centres of the City, gathered at Brindavan in the Divine Presence, and delighted the huge gathering with a two-hour-long Variety Programme of March-Past, Song, Dance, Drama, and Story-telling. Children recited slokas from the Gita, the Vedic Suktas, and hymns. Some Children ventured even to speak on subjects like "The Efficacy of Name-Recitals", "The Role of the Guru", and "The Yaksha Episode in the Mahabharata"! Elders were amazed at the discipline, devotion and skills of the children. Bhagavan blessed them, and advised them to imbibe the great lessons embedded in the ancient Epics and Classics of India. He directed them to revere their parents, and fill the home with love and joy.

Bhagavan told the children that `Bharat' meant, (Bha-Bhagavan, rath-Love) the land where the people live in the Love of God. He asked them to grow up as true sons and daughters of Bharat, revering parents, elders and preceptors, living in Love with all, worshiping God as seen in every being around. He told them to regard the body as a camera, the mind as the lens, and intelligence as the switch which opens the lens to flash the image on the film or plate, namely, the heart. He advised them to point the lens towards God, who is the Truth of everything in the Universe, and to try to get His Picture, clear and fine, on the heart, kept pure to receive it, and to avoid getting pictures of loan, ugly things. He directed the parents and teachers to guide the children on proper lines, with love and sympathy.

An Emperor's Taste

The Emperor of Delhi, the famous Akbar, was melancholy and depressed. His Empire was prosperous and safe from enemies, both internal and external. The cause of his sadness lay elsewhere. It was the food he ate every day. Of course he had himself shown the preference; the cooks, or Birbal, the Superintendent of the Imperial Kitchen, were not to blame. Nevertheless, he had developed a disgust for meat, for, it was meat, meat, meat—morning noon, evening and night.

So, he called into the Presence, Birbal and commanded that the menu be soon changed. And, the command was obeyed. Birbal racked his brains for a long while and decided on brinjals for a change. He procured baskets of brinjals, fresh and fine.

He got prepared chutney salad, soup, cutlet, sweet, savoury bitter—all from brinjal. Akbar relished every item; he praised Birbal to the skies. It was brinjal breakfast, brinjal lunch, brinjal dinner. Thus it went on merrily for a few days— but, for a few days only!

Akbar grew disgusted with brinjals, too. He poured all his wrath on Birbal. And, Birbal had to switch on to something else. For, likes and dislikes are but fancies of the moment; the mind wavers, flits from one thing to another. One has to realise this and be steady, adhering to the good and avoiding the injurious. Establish Mastery over the Mind; or, the Mind will ride you into, ruin. The Mind is a bundle of Desires. Give up Desire; the mind disappears.

—*Baba*

Dedicated for Defence

India is a land, dedicated to Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love; you are dedicated to the service of the Motherland, to defend her and preserve her independence. This is in accordance with the ancient injunction, Matru Devo Bhava—Revere the Mother as you would revere God. You are ready and prepared to sacrifice even your lives in her service, whatever others may do or may not do. I am glad your devotion is so strong and so sincere. Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love—these are the four pillars on which the mansion of Happiness, here and hereafter, is built. India too must build her happiness on these columns only. They are the real supports of India, of India's security, prosperity, anti glory. We have forgotten this truth; we have neglected the foundation; hence, all this suffering today.

God will always be with you in your struggle for the defence of this land. From within you, He will be guiding and inspiring you, to discharge your duty. Truth is God, and Work is Worship. By unselfish Service, strict adherence to Duty, and dedication to the cause of Peace you are promoting the welfare of India and of all humanity. The Mahabharata War is a good example of the guidance that God grants when righteousness defends itself against the forces of evil. Krishna was the very heart of the Pandava Body! Dharmaja, the eldest of the Five Brothers was the Head; Bhima, the second brother, was the Stomach; Arjuna, the third, was the Arms; Nakula and

Sahadeva, the twins, were the Legs—and Krishna was the Heart. God will not merely speak and guide from the heart; He will Himself be the Heart, provided you pray to Him to bless you so.

We achieve Peace and Joy, only through sacrifice. Giving yields more joy than grasping. Since you are all prepared for the highest sacrifice, you are genuine Sons of Bharat. Many do not realise the joy that can be derived from unselfishness; they waste their years and their lives in the pursuit of selfish ends. They are so conceited that they do not revere parents, elders the saints and the sages. They do not invoke the Grace of God through prayer. As a result, India is leaving off its age-old traditions and taking on new fashions and patterns of behaviour, thus landing people in misery.

The body is referred to in the Gita as Kshetram, that is to say, a holy place where God is installed. Kasi is a Kshetram, Bhadrachalam is a kshetram. The body-kshetram is Dharmakshetram as well as Kurukshetram, the abode of Righteousness and of Activity. God in the kshetram is the Kshetrajna, the Sivam without whom the body is but savam or corpse. Therefore, be ever aware of the God who is the real 'you', and seek solace, sustenance and guidance from Him through prayer.

—From Bhagavan's Discourse at the Army Service Corps Centre (South) 5-1-73

The gross can grasp only the gross; its categories of knowledge can proceed only as far as that. Fish die when they have to breathe the air above the water. Sadhakas going through the primers of spirituality need symbols, images, and rituals. When fish gave up the water and transmuted themselves into amphibians and land animals, they could breathe air freely. So also, when the Name and Form is transcended, then, the Nameless and Formless can be realised. But, at first, Name and Form are essential. That is the reason why Avatars come, so that God can be loved, adored, worshipped, listened to and followed, and finally realised as Nameless and Formless.

—Baba

Devotion Bore Fruit

—S. Sitaram; Pinner, London

Everyone knows that both these qualities are godly. Devotees here have been narrating many thousands of experience of Bhagavan Baba's divine grace flowing to them in every day life. Let me record one instance.

My friend, Sri Vemu Mukunda, a native of Malleswaram, Bangalore, a qualified nuclear engineer, turned to be a whole time musician, as he had attained proficiency in Veena recital in his earlier life. He became devoted to Bhagavan Sri held on 4th January 1970, for the first time. Almost in a flash, his popularity soared to great heights. There arose repeated demand for his music from many places in the United Kingdom, in all the West European countries and in the U.S.A. as well.

Mukunda has since mastered Karnatic rhythms in combination with Jazz. He has appeared on National Belgium Opera Television and Radio. Mukunda continues to participate in Prayer Meetings with increasing devotion and renders Veena recital.

During Mukunda's several visits to West Germany, he was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Sasse, a couple interested in fine arts. Near about Bhagavan Baba's Birthday in November 1971, Mrs. Sasse was having an ailment of her ear with discharge of blood and pus. Her doctors failed in their attempts to treat her successfully and feared that it might be due to a possible tumour. An appointment was arranged to consult a specialist in Hamburg.

In the meantime, Mukunda prayed to Baba silently, spoke to Mrs. Sasse about Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His divinity and suggested that the following day being Baba's Birthday, they will have meditation, prayers and music with devotion. She agreed. On 23rd November 1971 which was Bhagavan Baba's Birthday, Mrs. Sasse and Mukunda prayed to the Lord. Their devotion bore fruit, the discharge from Mrs. Sasse's ear vanished, she had no longer pain and the ailment got cured. Her doctor could see no reason known to medical science for this and could only attribute the cure to faith in the Divine. He had to cancel the appointment with the specialist arranged for the 29th November!

His and Mine

*His Power is my Power, untapped.
His Life is my Life, unrecognised.
His Love is my Love, unexpended.
His Atman is my Atman, unrealized.
His Grace is my Grace, unshared.
His Will is my Will, unreleased.
His Mind is my Mind, unilluminated.
His Being is my Being, unabsorbed.
His Treasures are my Treasures, unclaimed.
His Nature is my Nature, still chained.*

*—Denis Eversole
Santa Barbara, Calif.*

An Epic Fails

*In the mountain's glacier
You are the melting snow;
You are the source
of the running river that longs
for the mighty waves
of the shoreless silent sea.*

*You are the tenor
of the murmuring aquatic songs.
You are the cycle of seasons that garland
the earth with the splendid network
of many a name and form.
You are the question mark
in the great bear's chain.
You are the answer
in centripetal norm.*

*You are the smiles
and tears of innocent babes.
In the shining stars of heaven
You are the light.
You are the fragrance
in power, and sweetness in honey.*

*You are the inspiration of eternal delight.
You are the canvas and colour, the brush
You are the mind
that balances heart and brain
to make the countless sketches
with time and space;*

*You are the hand to erase them
and draw them again.
You are the strings and frets.
You are the strain.
You are the lyric of this song,
its tune and time;
You are the performer
and listener too;
the critic of your
own rhythm and rhyme I*

*You are the pencil
paper and the pen; And yet
an epic fails to glorify -
the thrilling aspects of your play*

*because you are
Lord Almighty Sathya Sai!*

—A Fret

Message From Bhagavan

Readers are aware that Sanathana Sarathi has been assiduously propagating, during the last fifteen years, unconcerned with decorative display, or the calculation of benefit; that the Integration of the Human Race cannot be achieved by the provision of facilities for mere outward contacts for, it can be realised only by the inner conviction of essential Unity; that Man must needs transcend his mental, vital and physical levels of experience and attain the spiritual depths, where the Atma, the Divine is; and that the strength surging from this awareness nourishes the physical vital and mental levels and raises man to a status above and beyond mere human-ness, into the Divine itself. Sanathana Sarathi is happily entering the sixteenth year, offering to all who yearn, mental moral and spiritual riches. Sanathana Sarathi celebrates the day as a Festival, with both Form and Feature, endowed with a new splendour.

The Universe, Mankind and Man can have but one Consummation to strive for, namely, Liberation, which is the fruition of untrammelled unselfish progress. This Truth has to be recognised, so that man can render life meaningful. This is man's first and foremost Duty to himself. When this is not recognised and the Duty that its recognition involves is not respected, Law and Discipline lose strength and authority. Man is dragged along the torrent of sensual living, until, feeble and foiled, he longs in vain to gain security and peace, and finds that he has only laid waste all the years of his life.

Man can liberate himself, only by knowing himself. He, may master the Universe; but, what can he claim to have known, when he has not mastered himself? When he has no awareness of himself, he has no knowledge of the Knower. Sanathana Sarathi has, as its Mission, the assertion of this Truth, its installation in the heart and its establishment in actual practice.

Truth and Righteousness—these are what one should seek to know, not the World of Nature, or the Mind and Body, which are not so vital, though knowledge of these latter is perhaps necessary and even unavoidable as equipment. But, knowledge of whatever kind has as its base, the Atma; when the nature of the Atma and its Being are, known, all is known. In every object, it manifests as Form and Function. Sanathana Sarathi has as its Ideal in service, the communication of this experience.

Victory in this glorious adventure has to be won by proper disciplines. Activities of individual life have to be regulated; social ways have to be chastened, valid mores have to be followed. Sanathana Sarathi is dedicating all efforts to draw seekers into this adventure, and promote it in every way. On this sixteenth Birthday, Sanathana Sarathi is bringing you this Carton of Verbal Sweets; keep your hearts open, to enjoy them. Cast away all encumbering thoughts and feelings, and cleanse the hearts.

May Sanathana Sarathi flow on, as the Santhosha-Dai (Grantor of Joy); may it swell and surge as Prema-Sai (Bringer of the Love that Sai embodies); may Sanathana Sarathi reside in and find fulfillment in the Sarva-Jiva-Samaikya-Varidhi (All-Beings-`Equality-Unity'-Ocean)! May Happiness, Peace, and Prosperity be attained all.

Officer and Peon

Once upon a time, there lived two friends in a village. They often went on long journeys together. One of them had a horse, and, so, he always rode from place to place. The other walked, by his side; but, he liked to carry under his arm, a big soft pillow.

Once when they travelled thus, men saluted the friend on horse-back, for, they believed him to be a big Officer. They paid no notice to the man with the pillow, for, they despised him as a peon, carrying the bundle of clothes belonging to his Master.

After a few miles of journey, the two friends entered a choultry, with a broad pail. The friend who had walked wished to rest for a time. He placed the pillow against the wall, and using it as a head-rest, stretched his legs. His friend led the horse by its reins, and went round the garden in front of the choultry, searching for some shade where he could tether it, before joining his companion. People who saw them then, saluted the `Man with the pillow', for they believed he was a big Officer. They paid no notice to the man with the horse, for, they despised him as a peon, looking after the horse of his Master.

But, the friends did not care. They knew that the villagers did not know the truth. They were only guessing from what they saw for a little while. They were hasty in forming opinions. Those who honour us today may well dishonour us tomorrow. We should not care for what people think of us. We must do our duty, and stick to Truth, whatever people may say or may not say.

—Baba

Pillars of Dharma

Saturday, the third day of February last, was a great Day in the History of the Sai movement. The Day marked the Celebration of the Silver Jubilee of the Installation by Bhagavan of the Idol of Shirdi Sai Baba, His previous Incarnation, in the Temple built by Sri Loganatha Mudaliar, cured of insanity caused by a sorcerer. Baba has come to cure mankind of the lunacy caused by Science and Technology! Bhagavan was present at the Temple, in the morning. While thousands of devotees were chanting Bhajans, Baba unveiled the Sai Pillar, erected a few steps away in front of the Temple. The Pillar is the imposing Lotus Symbol, and, on the rectangular pedestal on which it stands, are inscribed in marble, the Directives of Baba for the Regeneration of Man.

Professor V. K. Gokak. M.A., D. Litt., told the Gathering that this was the first of a series that will be erected all over the World. "These Sai Pillars," he said, "like their forbears, the Ashoka Pillars, will spread the significant Message of Sai to Humanity.

It is the symbol of the blossoming of the Human Soul and the Inflow of the Divine Transcendental into that Soul. Those Pillars were erected by a penitent Emperor, 2000 years ago, but, these are raised by the humble hands of devotees, in whose heart Baba has installed himself, and whose activities are transmuted into Love and Service, by the Message of Baba imprinted in their hearts."

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

38

Dissuading Sita

Rama was known to Dasaratha, the father, as a Master of the Codes of Morality, and as a strict adherent of these Codes; he was skilled in justifying his acts; he was unafraid of the consequences of his resolve. Dasaratha read from the face of Rama who stood before him that he had come ready to take leave of him for the journey into exile.

When he saw Sita too before him, he called her near and when she knelt by his side, he stroked her head softly, and described to her the travails of forest life. He told her that the best course for her would be to stay back, either with her parents-in-law, or with her own parents. His words came through groans of unbearable sorrow. He gnashed his teeth in rage, when his eyes fell upon Kaikeyi; all the while, he was fuming and fretting within himself, unable to contain his grief.

Sita fell at his feet, and said, "Revered Father-in-law! My mind longs only for the service of Rama. That good fortune awaits me in full measure in the forest. I cannot stay back, losing hold of this precious chance. Service rendered to parents or parents-in-law cannot endow the wife, with the joy of fulfillment that service rendered to her husband can alone give. There is no joy or happiness greater or higher than that, for her. Do not oppose me or present arguments against my leaving. Confer on me your blessings and send me with Ramchandra."

Dasaratha could well understand and appreciate the yearning of Sita. He extolled her virtues with genuine enthusiasm for the edification of Kaikeyi, standing before him. Meanwhile, the wives of Royal Ministers, and the wives of Royal Preceptors who were in the room gathered around Sita, and in their turn, they too described the hardships inherent in forest life.

The Court Preceptor's spouse sought the help of a cleverer ruse to dissuade her. She said, "Sita! You have not been required to leave and go into the forest. It is your task now to remain here and comfort the parents of your husband who are sunk in sorrow. You are "half" of Rama, aren't you? So, this half must stay in order to alleviate the sorrow that the departure of the other half is causing them. Rama will not be here, and so, `this half' must be here to serve them and give them joy.

Moreover, since you are the "half" of the eldest son, the Heir to the Throne, you have the right even to rule over the Empire. If Rama moves into the forest and lives there to honour the plighted word of his father, stay and rule over the realm and uphold the renown of Rama, filling his parents with delightful content. As the wife of Rama, this is the most correct step you should take; this is your most legitimate duty."

These words were spoken as soft and sweet as the whisperings of autumn moonbeams into the ears of chakravaka birds; but they made Sita reel in misery. She was so overcome, that no reply came from her.

Hermits' Robes

During this interval, Kaikeyi had secured hermits' robes of fibre as well as rosaries of Tulsi; she held them before Rama and said, "The Emperor holds you as dear as his very life. So, he is bringing down eternal infamy on his head, unwilling to let you go. His affection for you is clouding the right course. He will not utter the words, 'Go into the forest,' at any time, under any circumstance. It is fruitless to await his agreement and permission. So, decide this moment on one of these two steps: Are you courting infamy and dishonour and staying to rule over the Empire? Or, are you leaving for the forest and bringing eternal glory to the Ikshvaku Dynasty? Decide and act accordingly."

Rama was glad that she spoke so. But, they entered the heart of Dasaratha like sharp nails driven in by heavy hammer-strokes. "Alas! What cruel fate is mine! That I should be alive, even after hearing such harsh words!" he exclaimed, and rolled on the floor in a faint. Regaining consciousness, he recalled the words he had heard, and again, became unconscious. Rama could not bear the sight of his father's helplessness in the face of the situation that confronted him. He felt that he should accept the suggestion of Kaikeyi and leave; for, the sooner he left, the better it would be for all concerned.

He received in his hands the fibre robe his step-mother had brought and winding one of them around himself, he gave the other to Sita. She stood holding it in her hands, with her head bent in embarrassment, for, she did not know how to wear it or fasten it around her. It looked too short a piece. Rama, who had already worn his robe, came near her and spoke to her in a low voice. She was ashamed to confess that she did not know how to wear the fibre-garment, which hermitage women draped around themselves so elegantly. She whispered, "Besides, this is not like the ones we wear; it is too short and small!" Rama consoled her, and, putting courage into her, took her aside, and saying that it could be worn thus-wise, himself wound it round her. Seeing this, the wives of the hermits and other women of the palace shed tears of sympathy.

At this juncture, Vasishta, the Royal Preceptor, arrived at the scene; he stood aghast, taking in the situation at a glance. He fell foul of Queen Kaikeyi. He declared that Sita need not wear the garment of fibre. He asserted that Kaikeyi had asked for and had been granted two boons only—Bharata be crowned and Rama sent into the forest. He said that Sita could go into the forest, with all regal paraphernalia and every requisite for a comfortable sojourn there.

At this, Rama unwound the garment he had placed over her dress.

But, Sita came forward and fell at the Feet of the Sage. She said, "Master! Of course, my wearing that garment is not the direct consequence of mother Kaikeyi's desire. Can it not be permitted, as my duty, to follow the ways of my Lord? Would it be proper for me; would it bring credit for me, if I live in the forest bedecked in jewels and costly silken garments, when my Lord is wearing the rough garment of a hermit? It would be extremely absurd for a dutiful wife to adopt this attitude, wouldn't it be? Therefore, give me your permission to put on these garments, so that I may maintain my code of conduct and carry out my duty."

The adherence to righteous conduct which prompted this prayer moved the mighty Sage into tearful compassion. With sorrow stuttering his voice, he said, "Sita! This line of thought comes quite naturally to you, since you are the embodiment of virtue. But, as kings and rulers, there are certain principles to be respected, by you and others. Responding to the crooked mind and wicked brain of your mother-in-law Kaikeyi, we have also to give her some advice and warning.

The Right to be the Queen

As a matter of fact, this day, your husband was to be crowned Emperor of this realm. Though that event did not take place as a result of a combination of circumstances, including promises made long ago, I must say that it is against political justice to crown Bharata instead. Only the eldest son has the right to the Throne; no one else has a claim. If he for any reason gives up the right through his own free will, as he has done now, you, as the equal half of his person, have the right to wield that authority; no third party can exercise it, to the least extent."

When Vasishta was expounding these rules of political morality, Kaikeyi was visibly affected by anxiety and fear. But, she was not unaware of the fact that Sita will not desire to exercise such authority and power.

However long Vasishta elaborated on her rights and claims, Sita refused to pay attention to them; she was yearning for the chance to wear the fibre garment of the hermitage, in preference to the robes of Imperial Splendour. The wife of the Royal Preceptor felt that Sita would never retract from her resolve; she and others took the garment and wound it round her, in correct hermitage style.

Meanwhile, Lakshmana too wore the same sylvan garment, as Rama had on. Rama decided that there should be no more delay. The three prostrated reverentially before Dasaratha, who fainted away, at the sight of the ascetic attire; they prostrated also before Kaikeyi who was standing nearby. They fell at the feet of Sage Vasishta and of his Consort. And, they started out towards the forest.

Rama exhorts the Citizens

The citizens of Ayodhya who had gathered at the Palace gates saw them, walking through in hermit's attire; they broke into bitter sobs. Many were so shocked that they fell unconscious. Many beat themselves upon their heads in sheer despair. While yet on the doorstep of the Royal Gate, Rama once again prostrated before Sage Vasishta, and spoke a few words exhorting the people to preserve equanimity and to uphold virtue. He told them that they should not grieve over the turn of events, that he would return to Ayodhya after the fourteen years of stay in the

forest, and that the order of exile was only for their good, for his own good and for the good of the whole world. He addressed them in sweet sincerity.

Then, he distributed largesses to the poor; he gifted houses as well as gold, lands and cows to Brahmins, so that they could perform ritual worship and sacrifices without stint. He prayed to the Sage to arrange for the performance of sacrifices on appropriate occasions. He stood with folded palms before him, and said, "Holy Sage and Preceptor, for these, the people, and for my parents, you are the real parents. Advise the King, admonish the King, that he may rule over the people with affection, as he would treat his own children."

When the people heard this prayer repeated on their behalf, they became heart-broken and extremely sad. Some, of them beat their breasts, cursing themselves for losing the fortune of being ruled by such a Prince. Some inflicted injuries on their own heads. Some rolled on the ground and wailed aloud.

Meanwhile, Rama again turned towards the mass of citizens, and, palms folded, he spoke a few words to them. "My dear people, you are as dear to me as my very life! Our Sovereign Ruler has sent me to protect and foster the forest region. Do not entertain any animosity against him for this reason. Guard him and pray for him at all times. Adhere to his commands; make him happy and be happy yourselves. Your love for me should not encourage you to dislike the King. Never wish ill for him. Those only are dear to me, who work for the happiness of the King, after I leave for the forest. Those are the people who are really devoted to me, who do what I really like. Fulfill this desire of mine; honour these words of mine; make me happy.

My dear People! Being separated from me, my mother, Queen Kausalya, will naturally be immersed in grief. Every mother in a similar situation will have unbearable agony. But, I plead with you, since you are intelligent and full of sympathy, do your best to alleviate her sorrow and comfort her."

Counsel and Comfort for the King

Then, he called Minister Sumantha near, and said, "O Sumantha! Proceed now to Father. Advise him and quieten him. That is the immediate task on which you have to busy yourself." Sumantha was overcome with grief; he stood silent, with tears streaming down his cheeks. He could not restrain his sorrow; he sobbed and wept aloud. Other Ministers who were standing around him, as well as the Aides who were in attendance, attempted to bring him round into a state of calmness and courage. But, they were too sad to stand there. So, they went into the Palace, in accordance with the directive given by Rama. The entire city was sunk deep in a vast sea of sorrow.

Meanwhile, Dasaratha recovered from his faint, and became conscious of what had happened. He lamented, "Rama! Rama!" and tried to raise himself up. But, heavy with grief, he fell on the floor again. When he rose, he tried to walk out, but could not; he moved falteringly around.

At that moment, Sumantha entered the room, and endeavoured to hold him and console him. But, while mountainous outbursts of anguish were surging in him, how could he convey consolation to his master? However, he remembered Rama's order to that effect; and, so, he

dutifully swallowed the sorrow that was overwhelming his heart, and sat by the side of the Emperor, tears still flowing in streams. He could not utter any word for a long time.

Desperate Agony

Dasaratha opened his eyes; he saw Sumantha by his side; exclaiming in uncontrollable grief. "Rama!" he fell upon the lap of the old minister and poured out his sobs. Then he rose and groaned, "Sumantha! Rama has gone into the forest; yet, my life has not yet gone out of this body! What can my life gain by sticking to this body?" Then, getting a little quieter, he said, "Here! Hasten behind Rama! Take a fast chariot and go. My sons are so tender; my daughter-in-law can never bear the heat of the sun. She will soon have blisters on those lotus-petal soles! Go! Go with the chariot! "

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sathyam Sivam Sundaram

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The phrase—SATHYAM SIVAM SUNDARAM—has a distinctly Upanishadic ring, although the source is not readily traceable. These words, closely corresponding to the Western trinity of values, Truth, Goodness and Beauty, were once popular in Brahmo circles, and were cited frequently in their discourses and books. In recent times this great constellation of words has acquired a new lease of life in the title of the inspiring biography of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, of which three volumes have appeared so far.

The point about this constellation of words is that they are inseparable being only three facets of one indivisible essence, which for our times is manifested in the divine life and teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Any attempt to separate them from one another is fraught with disastrous consequences. Now, for three centuries at least, in the West there has been a determined attempt to isolate Truth in the name of science which is supposed to be 'value-free'. This is the vaunted ideal of scientific 'objectivity'. But it will at once be obvious that any 'objective' truth which ignores the human self as observer is only half the truth. A half-truth, as is well known, is even more dangerous than a falsehood. This is what has happened in contemporary civilization.

It was, however, not always so even in the West. The ancient Greeks undoubtedly prized Truth, but they were far more concerned with the Good and Beautiful life. In the Middle Ages in Europe, Goodness and Beauty (Love) were sought, perhaps, at the expense of objective truth. Modern scientific civilization is a reaction against medieval trends and has gone to the opposite extreme. In these circumstances, it would be useful to have a perspective of the relationship of these three essential values, comparing the Western and Indian stances.

"What is truth said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." With these striking words Bacon commences his essay "Of Truth," the very first in his famous book of essays.

Pontius Pilate was the procurator of Judea who earned the unenviable notoriety of having condemned Jesus to death. It is not on record whether he ever cared to ask the related questions: "What is good?" or "What is beauty?" The light-hearted impatience of this sophisticated Roman is, however, understandable. He had sensed that even if he should wait for twenty centuries, no satisfying answer would be forthcoming.

Yet these questions continued to be asked; and they have exercised the minds of thinkers in Europe over this long period. And it could be said without exaggeration that these three watchwords have compendiously summed up the values cherished by Western civilization in the past two millennia. To what extent they will still retain their sway as ideals in the Age of Science and Technology which is already upon us, is anybody's guess.

It is curious that an ancient Upanishadic text refers to these values together in closely equivalent language: Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram. But behind the apparent similarity, lie differences, of orientation and approach, of significance and emphasis, the exploration of which will help us to view the Upanishadic text in the right perspective. That is our main objective here.

In the, first place, the words of the Upanishad point to the ultimate Reality—Brahman. The context is metaphysical and not that of human affairs. Unlike the Western formula, which is inclusive and stands by itself, the present text is only one among many, ascribing triple attributes to Brahman. Thus there is the very familiar characterization as Sat (existence) Chit (consciousness) and Ananda (bliss). Then we have Sathyam, Jnanam, (knowledge), and Anantam (infinity); and again Santam (tranquil), Sivam (good), and Advaitam (non-dual). It is unnecessary to multiply instances.

III

The general significance of these terms—Sathyam, Sivam, and Sundaram—may now be examined in order. A word of caution is, however, needed here; for it is doubtful if such Sanskrit words could at all be designated "terms". "Term" derives from the Latin "terminus," the meaning of which is obvious. Western terms are literally "termini" border-lines of distinction, secluding one term from another into individual closed circles. Each of them may touch or cross another, but will yet retain its own distinctness.

Western terms are got by compression from outside, and achieve clarity at the price of inclusiveness. They constitute a "closed" terminology. It is another instance of the policy of "divide and rule." On the other hand, ancient Indian "terminology" was pre-eminently "open". It grew from within; extending from nuclei, verbal roots (Dhatu) towards the periphery, content to lose some intensity in the process. The aim was inclusiveness even at the risk of a little vagueness. Indeed, it does look as if the willing acceptance of a measure of vagueness, especially regarding boundaries, may be a virtue.

Indian terms have accordingly a wide range of applicability and at all levels of application—early or late, abstract or concrete maintain the intimacy of kinship. Each term will still reveal the basic, productively vague meaning derived from the nucleus from which it originated, as from a common ancestor. Thus several generations of terms may be seen amicably living together; as contemporaries, in the likeness of a traditional Joint Hindu family. Keeping such considerations in view, we may now approach the word Sathyam.

IV

The word occurs over a hundred times in the Rigveda in a variety of forms, as well as in compounds. It stands simultaneously for "Reality," and for "Truth," at once Cosmic and Moral. The meanings are often so blended that it is difficult to separate them. The Cosmic significance seems to have some kind of priority. Sathyam frequently appears conjointly with the twin concept of Ritam, a principle of law and order, similarly, sharing cosmic and ethical bearings. We find in the Rigveda the statement that the earth is upheld by Sathya: sathyenottabhita bhumih.

The transition from the Vedas to the Upanishads can be watched in the Ishavasya Upanishad, which is embodied in the text of the Vajasaneyi Samhita of the Yajurveda. There the devout seeker after spiritual vision describes himself as Sathyadharman, one who has Sathya as the utmost core of his being and aspiration.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad the vital forces of being (Prangs) are called Sathya, and Brahman is designated Sathyasya Sathyam: the Reality of realities, or the ultimate and constant Truth, from which all things that appear to be true derive their truthfulness, their very Being. In the Prashna, Bharadvaja says: "Verily, he dries up even to the roots, who speaks untruth." There are numerous similar examples.

V

One such is of particular interest: the dictum of the Mundaka Upanishad that Truth alone conquers, not untruth: Sathyam eva jayate, na anritam. The first half of this has been inscribed as the motto on our national emblem. This is undoubtedly in line with the noblest traditions of our people. Yet the dropping of the reference to untruth has not only affected the balance of the sentence, but also of the seine. The omission was perhaps prompted solely by considerations of brevity. But whatever the reason; the "State of the Republic" today makes one feel that it would have done the nation good to have been continually reminded that untruth is disastrous.

The truncation of the Upanishadic text suggests that the national mood was unwilling to face this expression of the consequences of untruth. It would not be untrue to say that our "present discontents" are a fair measure of the degree of untruth, or callousness, which has insidiously crept into the life of the country, just as the raucous clamour for integration is an ominous symptom of galloping disintegration which is overwhelming us, as a nation and as individuals. Is it too much to say that disintegration is due to lack of integrity at all levels of Sathyam?

So much for the omission. What about the positive assertion itself? Lifting it out of its due context has cheapened it into a political maxim: Truth is to be valued because it is a means to success. It is placed on a par with the adage "Honesty is the best policy." It becomes one among what Emerson has called "the maxims of a base prudence."

The trouble with such maxims is that they invert means and ends. The unspoken corollary remains: If truth (Sathyam) does not lead to success, then there are other alternatives. But what is the type of success which the original text envisaged? The verse proceeds: "By truth is laid out the path leading to the gods by which the sages who have their desires fulfilled ascend to where is that highest repository of Truth." The Upanishad certainly does not make out Sathyam as laying out the path leading to power and pelf by which our leaders may have their desires fulfilled and ascend to positions of the highest prestige and influence!

VI

In this context, an instructive exemplar is the life of Mahatma Gandhi, which he himself has described as a series of Experiments with Truth. With him, assuredly, Truth was an end in itself and not a means to something, else. For him, Truth, the end of Ahimsa, the means, were inseparable twins like the Sathya and Rita of the Veda. It would be well to remember that "non-violence" is not a happy rendering, although even Gandhiji used it frequently. To him it was synonymous with Love. Thus he said: "Truth and Love—Ahimsa—is the only thing that counts."

For Gandhiji, truth was a "total" concept. He said: "For me truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles. This truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative, truth of our conception, but the absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God."

For Gandhiji, truth had unquestioned priority. Divorced from truth, non-violence becomes a mere parody of itself, as we are witnessing today in so many fasts and demonstrations. It loses its truth, and ceases to be non-violence.

Gandhiji's conception of truth is certainly a very noble one. But it lacks the range and comprehension of the Upanishadic view. Gandhiji was a literalist, and, his moral over earnestness is reminiscent of the Semitic prophets. But we miss in him the cosmic and metaphysical overtones of truth which are the distinctive mark of the Upanishads, as well as the symbolism and wealth of imaginative presentation so characteristic of classical Hindu thought. Undoubtedly, Gandhiji's thought has a unity, but we look in vain for the necessary diversity. Yet the keynote of Indian thought has been, in the words of the Rigveda: 'Ekam sat' and 'vipra bahudha vadanti!' Reality is one, but perspectives are many.

VII

The very word "Universe" suggests this fundamental polarity—unity in diversity. Such has been our 'universe of discourse'. Such is the significance of Sathya or Sat (at once, truth and

reality). It is the truth of anything, constitutive of its very being, its Tattwa (thatness), its Tathata (suchness) as the Buddhists call it.

Sathya is basic, foundational. This is the significance of the first word—Sathya—in Baba's name. Hence it has been dealt with at considerable length. For that very reason we can afford to be briefer in regard to the other two aspects: Sivam and Sundaram. The former is an untranslatable word. It is not a synonym for good. It is primarily what is auspicious, what is sacred, what is numinous. The overtones include happiness, prosperity, and bliss. A near Sanskrit equivalent would be Shubham, which is also difficult to render into English. What at first sight may not appear to be, "good" may yet possess this ingredient. This paradoxical nature is personified in the great God (Mahadeva) who is at once Shiva (auspicious) and Rudra (terrible).

It is a dimension of experience which has been set out forcibly by Rudolf Otto in his book: *The Idea of the Holy*. The three, ingredients which go to make it up: *Mysterium*, *Tremendum* and *Fascinans*: can be compendiously described as those elements which are not taken into account in any type of secular humanism, however liberal. As the *Kena Upanishad* says: Not to realize it here and now is the greatest loss; but to experience it is to verify the truth itself: *Atha Sathyam asti*.

VIII

We next come to Sundaram. Here we are on more familiar ground: the experience of Beauty, which results in joy. In India, the aesthetic experience has always been held to be *Alaukika* (not of this world) and placed on a par with the bliss of Brahman: *Brahmananda sahodara*. Notwithstanding the existence of the great religious art—architecture, sculpture, painting and music—of the Christian centuries in Europe, and widespread appreciation of art in the modern world, the tendency in the West has been to exalt the ethical at the expense of the aesthetic, agreeing with that ardent Christian thinker: Kierkegaard. The oft-quoted lines of Keats: "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever" and again "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need, to know." are wholly in line with Indian sentiment. Here, the coupling of truth with 'beauty is noteworthy; for in a sense, true beauty, is a harmonious synthesis of all values, ugliness its negation. The Indian scene today, whatever else it may or may not be, is not exactly a "thing of beauty". "Good taste" seems to have been the first casualty of independence. That is by the way.

Unquestionably, the, prophet of beauty in modern India was Rabindranath Tagore. Gandhiji was by no means imperious to beauty; and he has said many fine and perceptive things about it. But the beauty which appealed to him was an austere ethical, beauty. He incessantly "hungered and thirsted after righteousness," and was by far too serious. But Tagore loved the world as a manifestation of the playfulness (*Leela* or *Krida*) of the Supreme Spirit; and in his poetry gave expression to the joy (*Ananda*) which is the source of all being.

IX

Of this spirit, the most felicitous description is Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram; and its plenary and complete (Puranas manifestation (Avirbhava) is in the Person of the Divine Master, Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

Tell Me About Sai Baba

—*An American Mother*

(A child's introduction to the Lord: to be read to, or read by the young child)

From time to time, in the life of the world, Lord God Himself is born in a body, like ours, so that we may see Him. When He is here with us, He teaches us and He loves us, in person. Just imagine! The Lord God, who has made all of the stars in the sky, comes to visit us on this tiny earth! Maybe your mother or father has told you about Rama, Krishna, Buddha, or Jesus. These were some of the different names God was called when He visited our earth in ages long past.

We are very lucky to be alive today, for the Lord has come again to the world, to help us all to goodness. He was born in India, forty seven years ago, in a little village named Puttaparthi. His family and friends called Him Sathya. That means Truth. Sathya played children's games, like you do now, but He was not like the other children. Sathya was very special. How He loved the helpless animals, and the poor and sick people! When He was fourteen years old, He remembered that He was the Lord God, and that He really wasn't a little boy at all! Sathya then called Himself "Sai Baba", which means God the Father.

As He grew older, some of the wise people in India found out that Sathya Sai Baba was a Great, Great Leader. More and more people came to see this wonderful Being. Soon people began to travel from all over the world to see Him, as they do today. Sai Baba healed these people if they were sick, and He made them lovely presents out of the thin air. But most of all, He gave them the Love that only The Father could give. You will see the time when Sri Sathya Sai Baba is followed by millions of people. He is like a great Sun toward which all living things are drawn. The children of Sai Baba live in every part of the world, from India to America!

Sai Baba loves the hearts of the little children, because your hearts are clean and pure. "How sweet is the smile of the baby in the cradle, or of the child playing in the garden?" He asks us. He has said that a child will be happy with a few pebbles or twigs. But many older people want lots of money to buy a poor sort of happiness. That is why God wishes the big people would act more like little children! "That is the reason why Christ fondled a child and advised all thrown-ups to become more like children, so that they may be saved," says Sai Baba. He wants you always to keep the simple, sweet heart of child. Little ones like to think about God. What do you think about Him?

Our Father, Sai Baba, will be very pleased if you remember to say your prayers in the morning before play, and at night before falling asleep. He is also glad when you remember to repeat the Names of God. This will make you very happy too, for the rest of your life! God wants you to especially love and obey your parents, for it was He who sent them to earth to take care of you.

And you must always try to be as kind as you can to everyone in your life, and ever speak the truth to them. Sai Baba teaches that our words are very, very powerful... and that our cheerfulness brings light to the world.

Even if you have not yet seen Sai Baba with your eyes, He can be your Best Friend if you just imagine His Loving Smile. Think about His lovely orange robe and His dark hair—and He will be there with you! The greatest thing we can do for Sai Baba is to dearly love every person and creature about us!

Have you ever stopped, during a quiet time, and asked yourself: "What makes me alive?" "Where did I come from?" "Where am I going?" Sri Sathya Sai Baba is here on earth to answer the questions of His Children. He tells us that every man has been on a long, long journey to find a wonderful secret. What is that great Secret that can make every person joyful, and bring our world to peace?

It is very simple. God does not live in a faraway heaven and neither does He live only inside of a Sai Baba, or a Jesus.

GOD LIVES INSIDE EVERYONE. GOD IS EVERYWHERE. GOD LIVES DEEP IN YOUR HEART.

The love we have for our mother and father is God's Love. The little birds singing are God in His Grand Costume. It is really God that gives us their song! Even the silent mountains and the shining sun are alive with God's Love. The sparkling eyes of your friends are the Lord's eyes. It is really He that plays with you! Love is seeing all things as One Great God. Where do you see Him?

Have you ever felt as big as the sky? Well, you are larger and brighter than even the sky! That is because you are an important part of God's Being. Deep within our Hearts, God sits quietly, and He watches us as we work and play. Many times He will call to us: "Look to me, inside. I am here." How can we ever be lonely or sad if we remember that wonderful secret? You can turn to your God inside at any time, and you can find Him all around you.

This is the great story that God comes as man to tell us. If every father, mother, and child knew that they too were an important part of the great God, they would love all their brothers on earth. They would not be afraid to die, if they knew they would be born into God.

You are a child now, but when you are all grown up, the world will be a very different place. Can you imagine a world where all men love one another? A world where all men love God? Sai Baba has promised to change men's hearts by teaching them the wonderful, beautiful secret. He will begin a Golden Age of Peace, and you will live to see it. You are the children of Peace, and your Father, Sai Baba, will lead you along the path of His Love.

The Bullet - Proof Name

One fine morning; way back in 1962, I was surprised to receive orders to proceed to Kohima, Nagaland, as the Magistrate of the District! It was not a change from the frying pan to the fire; it was a leap from the frigidaire to the fire! I responded to the call of duty and moved from the quiet seashore town where I was in charge of Law and Order, to the picturesque land of hills and dales on the eastern frontier of India. I took with me my wife and the seven children.

Nagaland was not a paradise of peace at that time. There were many measures, which I had to impose to prevent breaches of peace and tranquility; the curfew had to be clamped and enforced on many areas where hostiles were rampant. Nights were long and bitterly cold. Days were dull and life was mostly monotonous, with little or no company of care-free friends. In spite of the dusk to dawn curfew, some Army Officers dropped in at my residence. They invited me to Prayer Meetings held by some of them at their residences, where I was able to hear for the first time of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His Infinite Compassion and Power. They gave me a Book on the Life of Bhagavan, which planted His name and Form firmly in my mind. My wife and children also learnt to pray to Him, and His name was constantly on our lips. We had various instances of His miraculous intercession on our behalf. But, I must record one instance, where His Name revealed Itself as bullet-proof armour.

On the evening of 14th April 1964, Kohima Town, and more specially, my residence was fired upon by Naga Hostiles from 7-30 in the evening till about 4-30 in the morning! Though my bungalow had 23 armed House-Guards, it was not possible for them to stop the firing since the hostiles had secret, hideouts and were in the cover of darkness. The walls of the house were of earthquake-proof material; so, they were definitely not bullet proof! They whizzed past, through and through!

The helplessness which overwhelmed me, my wife and the seven children can be better imagined than described. We lay huddled up, under sofas, tables and bedsteads, closing our eyes, and praying to Baba, to save us. No one got a wink of sleep; the Name was ever on the tongue; the Form ever in the mind. I could hear the children whisper, Sai Ram, Sai Ram, close to me, under the table.

Day dawned; we were all safe, unhurt! Not a single bullet hit me or my wife or any of the children.

I counted the bullet marks in the morning, and found them to be 485! Jai Sai Ram.

—*Kayana*

The Lingam

The Angam (Body) is the Sangam (Juncture), where Chit (Spirit) and Jada (Matter) meet; the Sangam has revolutionary consequences—for, it results in Jangam (the Illusion of Change, of Samsar, of Flow), producing all this Appearance. Finally, through analysis and inquiry, one arrives at the Truth: the Lingam, the Primal Form.

Four Forms of the Lingam correspond to the Four Mahavakyas (Sacred Pronouncements) that are found, one in each of the Four Vedas. (I) Ayam Atma Brahma: This Atma (the Reality in All) is the One Only, Brahma, symbolised, by the Anda-Pinda Lingam. You are all basically the Anda-Pinda, with the outer shell of materialism and the inner core of Divinity. Anda is the shell, and Pinda is the Core. (II) Prajnanam Brahma: (The One is Wisdom). This is symbolised in the Sadasiva Lingam. Sada means Eternal. Unshaken, Unaffected. Sivam means Glory and Bliss. The One is Majesty, Light, Power, and Purity. (III). The third Mahavakya is Tath Twam Asi, (That Thou Art). It asserts that Distinction is Delusion; the Seen is the Seer, and there is no Sight. The Jnana-Lingam, the Lingam of Wisdom represents this awareness. The Jnani has the inner ripeness which makes the leaf fall from the twig, for it has no attachment. (IV) Aham Brahmasmi (I am the One). (The Salt Image has entered the Sea.) This is the Atma-Lingam, the Ultimate Phase.

—Baba

The Mahasivaratri

Shivaratri is observed every month, on the fourteenth night of the dark half; for, the Moon which is the presiding Deity of the human Mind, has only just one night more to be a non-entity, with no influence on the agitations of the Mind. In the month of Magha, the Fourteenth Night is named Maha (Great) Sivaratri, for, it is sacred for another Reason too. It is the Day on which Siva takes the Linga Form, for the benefit of Seekers. Siva is revered as the Form which is to, be adored for the acquisition of Jnana or Wisdom. Jnanam Maheswaraad Icched, as the Vedas advise—Pray to Siva for Enlightenment, through Wisdom. So, do not treat this Day lightly, and reduce the Disciplines prescribed by the sages for its Celebration, such as Fast and Vigil and uninterrupted Recital of the Name of God, into a routine ritual or a chance for picnic, revelry, rivalry or factious fun. Contemplate this day and this night, on the Atma-Linga, which emanates from Siva, the Jyoti-Linga, the Symbol of the Supreme Light of Wisdom, and be convinced that Siva is ill every one of you. Let that Vision illumine your inner Consciousness.

—Baba

I will not accept if you say you are an atheist! For, what is at the root of your faith in yourself? Who are you, that you should believe in yourself? You believe in yourself, because your self is God, and you have an unshakeable faith in God, deep down in you. Faith in your self and faith in God are identical.

—Baba

With Us, For Us

—*S. Bhagavantam*

This day is Vaikuntha Ekadasi. It is a special day, set apart for the constant remembrance of God. The culture and tradition of our country have always emphasised the value of such special days and laid down the disciplines that one should observe on such days. But, in the recent past, many of us have forgotten the significance of these holy days and have given up the prescribed practices and observances. Either through fast or through feast, the purpose of these days is to remind ourselves of the Mighty Power that governs all our lives and, in fact the whole Universe. Special worship of the Lord is done this day, in domestic shrines or in temples and some go on pilgrimage to places like this.

Through sheer good fortune, or as a consequence of some extraordinary merit acquired in our past lives, we have been able to travel safe and reach Prasanthi Nilayam in time, and be in the Presence of Bhagavan Baba. I regard this as a special gift of His Grace to us. Many desire to come to His presence. Many make attempts to come; but, only those who are recipients of His Grace do come. Many do not want to come, but, somehow, land themselves here, through some chance circumstance! You will be able to collect a thousand stories from the assembled people, how each one was brought to His presence in an inexplicable manner! My own experience tells me this; why? Each one of you has a unique story, putting you in a category, apart from the rest.

We come to Him burdened with many desires and weighed down with difficulties of various types. We long to place them before Him, for, He takes them all from you and grants you in return consolation and courage. Thousands of us put our troubles before Him, every day, troubles big and small. In His Divine loving manner, He takes them all, smilingly. We go into His presence with anxious minds and faces and come away smiling and happy, emptying ourselves of trouble and worry. We feel that a big load has been taken off our shoulders. This is the enviable but indisputable experience of hundreds and thousands of people. More extraordinary is the fact that each one feels that he has been specially blessed and saved from his brand of worry! This surely is an illustration of how the Avatar showers Grace on many different individuals in many different ways. Only God can deal with so many of us, numerous as we are, with such compassion, such love and such patience. This is Divine and is not humanly possible. Each one of us has had experience of dealing with problems, petty or profound, and of trying to figure them out and solve them. I have myself been pestered by many. There are problems of what to do for the education of one's children, how to set about in some business venture, how to deal with some emergency, how to overcome some physical handicap, how to get rid of some illness, how to interpret some knotty philosophical text, how to solve some spiritual maladjustment, and so on, and so on, running through all the manifold phases of human life. Bhagavan Baba deals with all these with utmost Grace and Mercy, with incredible Ease and Spontaneity, during the twenty four hours of every day. He instructs Professors and educational experts on the principles and practice of education. He instructs medical men on the diagnosis and treatment of disease. He gives valuable guidance to businessmen. He attracts learned scholars to listen profitably to His exposition, in simple clear terms, of the abstruse principles of philosophy. He tackles a variety of such situations and problems in one single day, and remains fresh, free and eager to shed more Light and Love on all. Only God can be so kind. No human being can do this.

Since He is in human form, and very much involved with us and with our lives, we make the mistake—I must confess that I make this mistake quite often—of believing Him to be only human. Arjuna made the same mistake in regard to the Lord, in spite of countless chances given to him by Krishna to correct himself. When at last, he was granted on the battlefield, a Vision of the Lord as All that there is, was and will be, he realised the Truth and repented for the intimacy he entertained, the jokes which he exchanged, and the comradeship he ventured to feel, all in his ignorance. We know that even as a child, Krishna revealed to His mother Yasoda, that He had all the worlds in Him, and when the child in the cradle granted that vision, Yasoda wondered whether it was just a dream or her own fantasy. She could not immediately grasp the full significance of that Vision. Thus, it is no wonder that smaller people like us quickly fall into an illusion. Let me therefore caution you. Let us not be deluded. Let us recognise Him, as the Avatar of the Age.

The Power of God, the Wisdom of God are now residing in Sri Sathya Sai Baba. What we have to do is to pray for Grace, and win it. We can go far, by means of our wealth, intelligence or positions of authority. But, somehow, some time, disillusionment is, inevitable. Then, we raise our hands and cry out, "Oh God! Why have you forsaken me?" We do not know till then that the Grace of God is absolutely essential, for ending our grief. In the Mahabharata, there is a story of an incident where Dharmaja the eldest of the Pandavas, is asked a number of questions by a Forest Spirit, a Yaksha. Upon the correctness of his answers depended the lives of the four brothers. They had fallen dead by the side of a lake to which they had gone one after the other, to slake their thirst. The Yaksha offered to revive them, if the eldest brother gave satisfactory replies to her questions. After asking several questions, the Forest Spirit finally asks Dharmaja to state what in his opinion, is the most wonderful thing in this world. Dharmaja gives a very apt reply and says that the most wonderful thing is that every person thinks, in spite of the fact that he sees day after day many of his friends and acquaintances who are young or old die and pass away, that he is permanent and that such fate will not overtake him.

Thus, it is obvious that we have all to make the best use of the rest of our lives. We have here before us, with us, the Divine Power, the Incarnation of God in Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We have to win His Grace by surrender, and by following His guidance and teachings, by accepting whatever He does for us, as the, best for us, for He knows and He is full of Love. He decides on what is good for us, what each one of us should get and when. He is the Divine Mother. If He makes you wait before He calls you in and speaks to you, it is for your good. If He makes you go home, without calling you in and speaking to you, that is also good for you. This is exactly like a good Mother giving her children what they should get and when they should get, for their ultimate good, and not giving them what they want to get and when they want to get.

—Vaikuntha Ekadasi; Prasanthi Nilayam

A Stream Immortalised

Two Rover Vans and an Omnibus were speeding along the road that runs through the Wild Life Sanctuary, on the border of Mysore State, towards a stream that marks its boundary with Tamil Nadu. Sitting behind Baba in the leading vehicle, I could see the evening Sun, flushed with excitement, racing towards the South, trying to maintain the lead he already had, anxious to reach the stream earlier than us. For, it was Maha-Sivaratri, the Day which millions acclaim as holy, especially for witnessing the Glory of Baba as Siva.

About a mile from the stream; a 'tracker' engaged in searching for trails of wild life, held out his hand from the side of the lonely road; we stopped; he told us excitedly that a herd of elephants, about a dozen in number, was sighted a little while ago, near the site where the party and Baba were to alight! So, the good news that Baba had decided to spend the auspicious evening at the Kekkanahalla River Bed; near the Bandipur Sanctuary, had spread in the jungle, I surmised.

As soon as Baba got down from the van, we and the large group of students from the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Brindavan, whom Baba had specially brought with him, gathered round Him, for, in His Presence, some event, dramatic and divine, can happen any moment, anywhere. And, sure, it did! Baba broke a short length off from a dry stalk of jungle grass; He clove the top with His Finger-nail and, artfully made a tiny cross out of it, peeling its skin to bind the, pieces together. Then, calling Dr. Hislop near Him, He blew His breath on it. Lo and behold! Right before our wondering eyes, it became a pretty big wooden Crucifix, with a silver figure of Christ nailed on it, complete with the crown of Thorns and the emaciated agony-torn Body! "This wood is the wood of the original Cross," Baba declared, as He placed it in the trembling hands of Dr. Hislop. The American devotee could scarce withhold his homage of tears.

When we sat on the small patch of sand on the bed of the forest stream, it was already dark. For, the Sun who had come in as a gate-crasher to witness the Glory, bad, in his anxiety to escape reprimands, covered himself completely with a thick black blanket. Baba had brought with Him two van-loads of devotees, and a busful of College boys. And, where were the elephants? No one was interested to inquire. All attention was fixed on Baba. Perhaps they had cleverly camouflaged themselves behind the heaps of rock that jutted between the teak trees on the river-banks and were enjoying the Darshan.

There was just enough space for the party to sit three deep in a circle, facing Baba. Bhajan brought the stars out over our heads! Poor dears! They were scanning the earth, from their vantage points, to catch a glimpse of Baba on this holy day; they strained their eyes to examine whether He was at Prasanthi Nilayam, or Bhagyanagar, or Brindavan, for, there were thousands singing Bhajan expectantly in those places. When they heard the music rising from Kekkanahalla, and saw, the Sai Halo of Love there, their eyes twinkled with delight, as they gathered with their Kith and Kin.

I had to sit on a cinder mound on the circumference, a heap which the Ranger ascribed to a funeral pyre. "Wonderful!" I exclaimed within myself. "Siva, who delights on the Cremation Ground is here, this Day. I am indeed fortunate," I whispered into his ear.

Baba patted the sand before Him. Earth responded with an audible echo! Some one said, it was due to the lie of the rocks; but it meant something else to us. It added to the mystery, sizzling in the air. He drew a largish design on the sand, heaped a few handfuls of sand over it, and joking that It (?) was already there, He put His Hand into the heap and brought out a Magnificently Translucent Linga! "From Kailas! The Linga Worship is just over at that place. See, the sandal paste applied is still wet. The kumkum dot is still on the Linga" Baba said. Yes. The Crystal Linga, five inches high vertical base, eight inches long horizontal base three inches thick, another four inches of tall cylindrical Linga Idol—was unique in artistic charm, liturgical value and philosophical significance. Baba started explaining the value, the significance and the uniqueness. Even while talking, His fingers drew another design, a smaller one, and heaped a little pile of sand over it. This time, He made a small silver Linga, and gave it to the aged Rajamata of Sirohi, for worship.

The fingers were at work again. One could see them clearly, for, a petromax lamp was near and the headlights of the three vehicles were trained to illumine the spot. He drew a roundish line and marked two dots on its top. I wondered what they could be for. Was it a fruit, with a twin stalk? Or, the two eyes on a face? Or a moon with two stars? The sand heap was formed, the Hand brought out a silver vessel of exquisite artistry, with a screwed lid which could be held by a handle fixed on the lid!

Baba unscrewed the lid; the fragrance was heavenly. 'Amrita!' Baba said. We gasped in astonishment at this rare gift of Grace. While we sang Bhajans, on the Siva, whose Grace we were witnessing, Baba poured a spoonful of the Nectar on the tongue of every one present, including the officers in charge of Forest Conservation and Wild Life Preservation, their family members, the mahouts, the trackers, and a few forest-dwelling tribesmen. When He sat down, we noticed that the vessel was as full as ever! Then Baba created from the sand-heap another concretised design, a silver image of Shirdi Sai, and gave it to a devotee, the Inspector General of Police in Mysore State, Mr. Kagal, for worship in his domestic shrine. "What a variety of things this stream can yield!" Baba said in fun. A few more Bhajans were sung by all; Baba too sang a few, for our guidance. Then, Baba rose.

Returning to the bungalow at Bandipur, Bhajan was held until near midnight. Baba gave Darshan to all, from the Porch from where He also sang a few Namavalis. He gave Sweets to all, as a token of His Grace. Returning to Brindavan on Sunday, by dusk, Baba blessed the thousands who celebrated Sivaratri there with a Discourse on Monday evening, and the Gift of Vibhuti afterwards.

Later that night, Baba called in the College Boys who had been privileged to witness the Manifestations at Kekkanahalla, besides a few other devotees into the Brindavan Residence. He brought the Crystal and Silver Lingams, and Amrita Vessel still full; and while Bhajan was on. He went through the rite of ceremonially sanctifying them, through Vedic rites, so that faith in the Scriptures might develop in them. Vedic Recitation and the Bhajan added to the

auspiciousness of the hour. A chalice of milk was ceremoniously touched by every one, as a symbol of their sharing in the ritual.

Baba waved His Hand, and created a Silver Vessel, with a screwed-in lid, containing as He declared, "Holy water from the source spring of the Ganga, and from the Manasa-sarovar beyond the Himalayas!" The Sacred waters were mixed with the milk and, when Baba held the chalice over the Lingams, pouring the contents over the symbols of Siva in a continuous stream, He graciously allowed every one assembled, one after another, to hold the same vessel and share in the Divine Ritual.

The thrill that each one experienced was ecstatic and elevating. Later, Baba gave each a spoonful of the sacred Abhisheka Teertha, the waters poured on the Linga, and also of the Amrita He had materialised on Sivaratri Day.

Of the Trinity, Siva is acclaimed by the sages of India as the very embodiment of Grace and of never-failing Compassion. He is, they say, easily propitiated by Seekers. Truly, we had the proof of the authenticity of that description, during the Sivaratri days.

—Ed.

I shall not give you up, even if you deny Me; for, I have come for all. Those who deny are blinded by ignorance and so need even more Compassion and Grace. Those who stray away will be led on to the right Path. I shall beckon them back to Me.

—Baba

Candidates for Prasanthi

The Parent

Recently, one of the more enthusiastic teachers of Bal Vikas in our town, approached the parents of a child and requested them to send her to her Class. The father turned a critical gaze at the lady and asked in derision, "Why do you desire to dub God and such other superstitions on these tender minds?" She succeeded, however, in persuading the mother to visit the Class and observe the attitude, play and behaviour of the children. They saw how other children were faring on the dose of 'superstition', and now their child is a happy healthy active pupil in the Class.

The trouble is that, when parents think of education for their children, pictures of Massachusetts, Oxford or Illinois stand before them. There is an impatient craving for diplomas and degrees, preferably foreign. The half-educated parents feel that India's Past is an age of dreary bankruptcy, and we have no richer legacy than poverty and ignorance. They feed on canned imported foods and canned ideas smuggled from overseas. They are exiles in their own native land; the atmosphere of their native land suffocates them.

Baba has directed Mahila Vibhags to start Bal `Vikas' classes, to correct the vision of such people and to save their children from the life of exile they are leading.

Nature, the Teacher

A tree sucks its food from the soil around it; it draws strength from the Sun that warms it from above and the rain that bathes it from afar. Children too grow best when they send roots into the soil of their own culture. Vikas—Expansion, Blossoming, means, awakening of the consciousness of the Child into awe and awareness of the silence and beauty of the Sky and Stars, joy at the colour and fragrance of the Rose, ecstasy at the brightness and compassion in the Mother's Face, eagerness to know the mysteries of Cloud and Grass.

Shishu-Vikas

About 200 kids below the age of six are attending the Shishu-Vikas Classes in this little town, on the highlands of Mysore. They are persuaded to sit in a composed posture, observe silence, and, while they close their eyes, seek for the appearance before them in their minds of Krishna, Rama or Sai, or whatever the Name and Form preferred in their, homes. We could see how their countenances changed and glowed, when true asking took root in their minds! They were told to touch the Feet of their parents while leaving home for School. The Sakhis who collected the children from the homes describe the happy smiles on the faces of both children and parents, When this `superstition' (?) was gone through. The children get, the first authentic glimpse of the Mother of the Universe, when they adore their Mother in this manner. They sing Matru devo Bhava, Pitru devo Bhava, Acharya devo Bhava, with genuine love. They know through Bhajans, which are explained to them, that Sai is in them and that He could be contacted whenever wanted, by prayer. The children could recognise various Forms of Divinity when the pictures are shown. They can even draw a few. They recognise Christ on the Cross, identify the Crescent and the Star, The Flames of Fire, the Wheel of Dharma and pronounce the Pranava. While going through the Albums of Pictures that can be specially prepared for these Shishu-Vikas Classes, they are told the simple outlines of their Glory and they grasp them soon. They have a great taste for colour, and group plays. We can also appreciate their taste for music, when they keep pace with the lilt, and the keep time, shaking off lethargy, timidity and rigidity. Let the children sit and sing together, on a carpet of Love and Light. Be patient with them for, they have come together in the name of Sathya Sai, the embodiment of Love and Light. Plant the seeds of Love and Devotion in their hearts. The Teacher, Baba has said, is Brahma: `Guru Brahma'.

The Nucleus

Next, we have the Juniors, between the ages of 8 and 11. They form the nucleus of the Bal Vikas programme, of Dharmasthapana. Here are the buds, who-have started unfolding, picking up shades on their feathers, imbibing the blue of the heavens and the fragrance of flower and fruit, just essaying to partake in the activities of home and school. These are to be guarded carefully against pests; and poisons. The Teacher, Baba says, has to assume the role I of Vishnu, in order to help them grow full of energy and strength.

We have found that this age-group loves, to imitate other children and grown-ups. They take pride in cramming and recitation. We can teach the child to grow into the awareness of God. It is best to teach the repetition of the Pranava to this group. Also salutation to the Sun and to the Teacher. Short Upanishads along with the Upanishad stories can be taught. Stories from the

Epics are listened to with gusto. Silence for longer periods can be practised by them. Exhibits of paintings and drawings can be arranged, so that they can exercise their artistic talents. They can be encouraged to sing Bhajans and tell stories to gatherings.

The Upanayanam or Initiation into the Gayatri Mantra is recommended at the age of eight and so the child can be taught the Gayatri, as well as verses from the Gita.

The Crucial Stage

Next, we have the age: group 11-14. The boy or girl has now a developed imagination a sharper curiosity, keener appreciation of the values of life, and more purposefulness in activity. Examples of men and women of action, of heroism, of sacrifice and devotion will appeal more intensely now. The ideals of Ekalavya, Nachiketas Dhruva, Prahlada, Bharata, Lakshmana Hanuman, Vivekananda, Sivaji, etc and of Sita, Savitri, Gargi, Akkamahadevi, Andal, Meera etc can be kept before their eyes and minds, through story and picture. The children of this group delight in plays produced on the Stage; they can be encouraged to take the roles and act the parts. Bhagavan instills spiritual ideals through this medium. The students can also address gatherings on the lives of saints and Mahatmas, emphasising the Sacrifices they underwent, the Seva they did, and the joy they experienced. This is the stage when distractions lead students away; smoking and other habits attract them now.

Care has to be taken to warn them of evil company and to weed out tendencies like a desire to inflict injury on others, to utter falsehood and to appropriate things belonging to others. The Teacher has to be Siva, here, conferring Mangalam and destroying evil.

When elements of Dhyana are taught we have found the pupils of this age-group responding actively. This brightens and quietens the atmosphere of the Class Room and helps build up Prasanthi.

—*Vittalacharya*

My Prayer

Most of Baba's Disciples perform ritual worship. I join then respectfully, whenever there is an occasion to do so. But I am incapable of performing ritual worship myself I only pray unto Him do the secret recesses of my heart thus, "Baba! I am an old rebel. I cannot think of any one who is a greater sinner than myself. Yet, how gracious, how supremely merciful You are that You have never refused me access to Your Divine Presence! Lord! No one in this wicked ungrateful world has forgiven me for the smallest trespass that I may have committed against him. It is You only, who forgets and forgives, whatever the transgression, in words, thoughts and deeds."

—*Darga Das Khanna Former Chairman, Punjab Legislative Council*

Recognise this Truth: Sai is in all. When you hate another, you are hating Sai; when you hate Sai, you are hating your self! When you inflict pain on another, be warned-you are inflicting pain, on yourself, on your own Sai! The 'other' is yourself, is Sai, in another Form and with

another Name. Love all, serve all. This Sadhana will be more fruitful than the recitation of a million mantras, the heaping of tonnes of flowers, or years-long japam or dhyanam.

—**BABA**

Dharma Incarnate

Part I

The Bhagavad-Gita (wherein the Dialogue between the dispirited warrior, Arjuna and Lord Krishna, who is God, incarnated to uphold Dharma, is given by the immortal Sage Vyasa) opens with the word—Dharma! The Bhagavad-Gita is the Essence of the Upanishads, which are precious repositories of the best in Indian spiritual thought.

Dharma is the very life-breath of this land and its culture. The Vedas laid down Dharma; the Sastras elaborated it, the Puranas and Itihasas illustrated it in story, legend, and biography. The Vedas are the authority for the moral codes which are denoted by Dharma.

Dharma is not the product of human intelligence or cleverness or inquiry. God has inspired the Saints and Sages to lay the mores and fix the limits, and they have revealed the Message of the Lord in the Vedas. So, the Vedas are the Voice of God; the Word of the Vedic hymns is our Mother! The Meaning of the Word is our Father. Those Divine parents prescribed regulations for their Children (Humanity) and their prescriptions are named collectively—Dharma.

Dharma which has such Divine Origin and Care can never suffer a fall; but, it may fade, off and on. It will have no Haani, it may suffer Glaani, that is all. Lord Krishna has announced in the Bhagavad-Gita that, on such occasions, He will incarnate Himself, in order to uphold Dharma and render it as strong and sustaining as ever. In the Treta Age and in the Dwapara Age, He came among men as Rama and Krishna, for this very-purpose.

Why is the Lord so anxious to restore Dharma to its pristine purity that He is willing even to inflict on Himself the limitation of the human form? If He does not so incarnate, what calamity will overtake mankind? Questions like these might arise. But, consider: Dharma is the Body of God. When One's Body is harmed can One remain unconcerned? The Universe is inextricably bound in Dharma, the Moral Law. There is a Cosmic Dharma, which regulates all. When this Law is broken or disregarded, the Balance is upset, and man suffers with all beings. When Dharma fades, man fails and is foiled. So, man has to welcome the restoration of Dharma.

In fact, the Cosmos, with all the Worlds in it, is the Habitation of God. God is residing in the most gigantic Globe as well as in the minutest cell and atom. So, when His Habitation is in disrepair, and threatened with dilapidation, should He not engage Himself in making It safe, sound and beautiful?

Again, consider how strong and strength giving is Dharma! Our forefathers believed it to be so essential, so valid, so vital, that they stuck to its path through the most terrific temptations and

the most disastrous dangers. Rama decided to enter the forest as an exile, to honour the promise made by his father. His mother, Kausalya, had to agree, though all her instincts rebelled against the step. When finally she had to part with him, (and the exile was for a period of fourteen long years; he was sentenced to undergo the exile, just when he was stepping towards the Throne to be crowned Emperor of the Realm!) what were the words she blessed her son with? Listen!

"Rama! The Dharma, the Moral Law, you are obeying, with such faith and tenacity, that itself will guard you and guide you"! Adhering to Dharma is no mere, matter of verbal profession; it is to take up arms against a host of foes and failures. Kausalya was reminding Rama that it was his duty to stand up four-square against all obstacles and maintain Dharma in the face of fearful odds.

When her eldest son, Duryodhana had declared an unjust war against his own dear cousins and refused to give them their share of the Imperial Power, his mother Gandhari recognised that it was against Dharma. During the 18-day battle, Duryodhana used to fall at the feet of his mother, every day, before proceeding to the battlefield, praying for her blessings. On no day did she bless him, as he desired! On the other hand, she repeated every day the warning counseled, "Son! Why seek my blessings? Where there is Dharma, there Victory is secure!"

Note how tenacious was the hold that Dharma had on our forefathers! Sri Rama and Sri Krishna came into the world to insist on this type of tenacious faith in Dharma. Sri Rama is acclaimed as DHARMA INCARNATE. Obedience to the father, reverence towards the mother, faithfulness to the wife, love towards brothers, compassion towards the weak, service to those who take refuge, fidelity to the word once given—these rules of Moral Right were practiced by Him and taught to others. When Rama obeyed his father and moved into exile in the forest, how many obstacles he had to overcome? Until He reached Chitrakuta Hill, and until He sent back His two brothers who had followed Him in order to persuade Him to return, how many trials he had to undergo! From the Ramakatharasavahini that our Lord is writing for our edification, we can all picture to ourselves the heroic determination of Rama to stick to Dharma, come what may.

He showed great reverence to Kaikeyi, the stepmother who was the very instrument to send him to exile; so, His brothers had perforce to revere her themselves! When Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, could not suffer any more at his brother's court, he came to Rama and sought refuge. Sugriva and others in Rama's Camp raised objections against his admission into the Presence, but, Rama declared it as His Dharma: "Whoever seeks refuge shall be protected, whether it is Vibhishana or even his brother, Ravana against whom we are now leading this army."

This day, we have our Lord, Sri Sathya Sai, proving once again that the Incarnations of God are ever Dharma-Embodied. For the upholding of Dharma which has now reached a far more critical stage of decline, Baba is adopting more significant and more pervasive means than were used in His careers as Rama and Krishna. Those days, the wicked were killed; today, this method will mean a cataclysm for mankind itself. Baba has said that Man is like a tree whose roots are being eaten up by white ants. He is removing the whites ants and saving the tree. The wicked are wined from evil ways and placed on the path of virtue, through the strange new stratagem of

Love! Sri Rama taught by His own Example. Sri Krishna sought to instruct and inspire. But, Sathya Sai has both precept and example, as His means.

—*S. V. Rama Sarma*

(Part II in our Next Issue)

I am Initiated

The Grace of Baba, though unseen and silent, is gained, when sought with the single mindedness of an arrow in flight. It calms the seas and soothes the beleaguered vessel, guiding it to the Infinite Eternal through the current of His Will. So, let all else fall away; have trust and courage in Our Father; be at Peace, and be Happy.

Brindavan. Evening Darshan! I sat on the Darshan Line, writing to some members of the Sai Family. Of a sudden, thirst drew me to the water spicket close by. Placing a mat where I sat, I ran and drank seven handfuls of water. Meanwhile, the Lord of Love emerged from the garden, and walked down the lane of Bhaktas.

This one, the writer, made haste to his mat, and settled down to receive the command of the Master. Approaching slowly, showering smiles, He greeted a few with a kind compassionate look, and then, He stopped directly in front of this one! He spoke barely audibly, "Be Good; Do Good" and passed on. What had I done to deserve this Grace? The ego was welling up: Turmoil. No, no, no, no to all contending gang of desires. YES, only, to Baba's command: Be Good, Do Good.

I wanted to offer the YES to Baba, on His return walk along the line. Those four words occupied the entire space of my awareness. O He was moving quickly; coming closer; there was little time; the heart was pounding Sai Ram, Sai Ram ...YES YES YES Swami, I shall be good, I shall do good. I was crying.

Ah, He stopped close to me on the left, and, moving before me, His robe brushed over my knees! He, looked down, into, through, my eyes! I concentrated on 'goodness'; my heart and all of me, said, "Achha, YES, Swami, I accept." He passed. I was initiated. The Universe is brimful of Peace.

—*Peter Ram; New-Zealand*

Our Lord

I hear the sounds of long ago,
that "God is one, for those who know;"
And, "In the beginning was the word"
But since there is no second or third...?
The Uni - (one)

Verse (word)
The One in all, is here for us to see!

Beyond the body, past the mind,
In non-duality.
The Form It takes we can perceive,
if we but raise our eye!
This Uni-Verse, the One in All
to our Lord, Sathya Sai.
—*Janet Bock, Lot Angeles*

A Punjabi Poem

*Five Rivers (Five Mothers) feed the Land with Milk
Drawn from Godly Peaks of Kailasa Purity.
But, still, the land was thirsty; the peaks were icy bleak
Pining for Sai Nectar, seeking Sai Warmth.*

*And, Sai knew the longing; Sai felt the chill.
He warmed the shivering multitudes;
He quenched the parched tongues,
He filled the drying rivers, freshened fading hearts.*

*He opened many a blinded eye,
Straightened drooping backs;
He made the faces bloom with Joy,
The hearts to turn towards the Rising Sun.*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Emperor's Ordeal

"SUMANTHA!" Dasaratha said, "My Ramchandra is an unshakeable hero; he will not turn back. His resolution cannot be suspended or stopped by any one. Efforts made for modifying it will be barren; and, we will only be causing him trouble by our attempts. Besides, Rama is an unswerving adherent of Truth. Do not delay, for, if even a little time is spent in getting the chariot ready, you may miss his trail. My subjects cannot bear the sight of Rama walking along the royal roads of Ayodhya. Go, go!"

The Emperor hurried him out, with the words, "Carry with you in that chariot, a few hampers of food and a few weapons and give them over. Sumantha! I forgot to tell you this. Plead as

strongly as you can, mention also that I told you to, pray that Sita be directed to return to Ayodhya. Take them into the chariot, and, let them go with you some distance towards the forest. Go into the forest along with them, for, if Sita is frightened at the sight of the jungle, and you become aware of her fear, immediately ask Rama for orders, and pray to Sita, the tender Princess of Mithila, to return to Ayodhya, bringing to her mind that it is also my wish. Tell her that, if she cannot agree to stay in Ayodhya, the Emperor will arrange to send her to her father, Janaka." Dasaratha repeated these words often, and, laden with grief at the pictures they evoked, he lost consciousness and rolled on the ground.

Rising soon, he exclaimed, in great distress, "Sumantha! Why waste words, and time? Bring my Rama, Lakshmana and Sita before me now, let me have a look at all three. Decide on doing that, and make me happy." Then, he plaintively requested Sumantha, "Go fast, don't delay, take the chariot to where they are and drive the vehicle as far as it is possible for it to proceed, to the spot beyond which it cannot go. Perhaps, it may be possible to journey in the chariot forward for three or four days. At the end of that period, let them alight; stand there watching them, until they move beyond the reach of your eyes, before you turn back to bring me the news of their health and safety. Now, go. Don't stay near me. Go." Dasaratha asked the Minister to hasten his drive.

The City on the Move

Bowing his head in acceptance of the Emperor's order, Sumantha fell at his feet and got the chariot ready. He caught up with Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, who were going along the City roads on foot; he told them what the Emperor had spoken to him; he had them seated inside the chariot; then, he drove off in the direction of the forest. On both sides of the Royal Road, masses of citizens were weeping and wailing, and, Sumantha tried to exhort them to control their emotions, and be calm. They crossed the City limits and moved a little distance further. The populace from the Capital ran behind the chariot, all in one panic-stricken mass, raising clouds of dust that reached the high heavens. There was no sign of road or ground; it was one vast plain of distraught humanity. Old men, women, men young and strong, Brahmins, all with one voice, screamed amidst sobs, "Rama! Rama! Take us with you! Don't leave us behind!" The streets of Ayodhya were empty; the City was as silent as a City in Sleep. Darkness fell, like a heavy weight, on every roof.

Some men and women who could not travel stood like stumps, helpless on the road. Many bolted doors and spent the days suffering utmost anguish, avoiding food and drink, rolling on the floor, in whatever place they were when Rama left. Some awaited the return of Rama at nightfall, when he may be induced by compassion to come back to his beloved people.

Meanwhile, Dasaratha had himself seated in a chariot! He shouted aloud, "Rama! Rama! Sumantha! Sumantha! Stop that chariot! I will look at the Treasure of my Love, just once." He quickened the pace of the horses and came faster and faster. The mass of citizens following Rama were caught between his chariot and, the chariot of the Emperor, and many of them were so exhausted that they fell on the ground. When they saw a Chariot passing by with speed they raised their heads to find out whether Rama was returning seated in it; they rose and tried to stop it, to have a glimpse of Rama, their beloved Prince. But, when the groans of Dasaratha fell on

their ears, they too broke into sobs, and allowed the chariot to pass, pleading pathetically, "O King! Go soon, go and bring back our Ramchandra!"

Father behind Son

Dasaratha saw the chariot of Rama speeding along the sand dunes outside the City, and, he cried out, "Sumantha! Sumantha! Rein in. Stop," and himself commanded his charioteer to speed up. Sumantha cast his glance backward and espied the chariot following his. He told Rama, "Ramchandra! Father Dasaratha is behind us; I feel it is best to stop for a while and find out what his orders are." Rama too saw the huge mass of citizens, and the chariot carrying his father, fast hastening behind him. He knew that, if he stopped now, they will surround him and break into uncontrollable grief, that those who sat exhausted on the sides of the road will rise and race, impelled by a new hope, and so, it will be only an act of greater cruelty on his part, for, he will be giving them trouble without any benefit. It will also injure the realisation of his promise. If this mass of subjects witness the wailing of Dasaratha, it will bring him down in their estimation. Weighing all these considerations in his mind, he told Sumantha who was his charioteer, that there was no need to stop the vehicle. He said it was best that he drive it even faster. At this, Sumantha prayed, with folded palms, "Rama! I have been ordered to be with you four days only. After that period, I have to return to Ayodhya, haven't I? On seeing me, he will certainly reprimand me for not stopping the chariot, as commanded by him. What shall I tell him in reply? Kindly keep me with you, throughout all the years of exile in the forest. I shall deem my life well and happily lived, if I am allowed to be in the forest with you. If you agree, I shall not stop; I shall drive as fast as you wish. Kindly communicate your order on this."

Rama thought about the problem presented by Sumantha and its implications. He said, "Sumantha! He, who ordered you to get into the chariot, and take us in it, right into the forest, as far as it could negotiate, was your Master, the Emperor. He, who now follows this chariot, weeping, and pleading with you to stop, is Dasaratha. You have to listen to and obey the command of the Emperor, not, the orders of Dasaratha. You are the Minister of the Country, of its Ruler; not, of an individual named Dasaratha. As individuals, between us, there is the bond of affection that ties the father to the son and the son to his father. But, as Emperor, he has imperial authority over you and me, equally. Your loyalty and my loyalty towards him are the same. You have to carry out your Duty. When Dasaratha chastises you for not giving ear to the request he is now making, tell him that you did not hear him; it is not wrong to say so." And, Rama asked him to drive faster, without caring to stop the chariot.

Clamour of Citizens

Sumantha drank in with avidity the nectar of moral analysis that Rama had vouchsafed, to convince him. When Dasaratha saw that Rama was driving on, he stopped his vehicle, and turned back towards Ayodhya, moaning his lot, and wailing aloud. The people, however, followed the chariot, undaunted by physical exhaustion, urged on by their, determination to hold on to their beloved Rama. Some of them who were ready to sacrifice their lives for him and die in their effort to reach him, trudged along, breathless and broken, their feet devotedly stepping on the track left by the chariot in which he sat. Rama saw those subjects of the realm trekking behind him, drawn by the Love they bore towards him; he was filled with compassion. He stopped the chariot, and spoke to them sweet and soft words that touched their hearts. He discoursed on the various moral aspects of the situation, and pleaded with them to return to Ayodhya.

They replied that separation from him was unbearable agony for them, that they, could not reside even for a moment in an Ayodhya wherein Rama was absent and that they were prepared to die in the forest rather than live in Ayodhya! While many among them asserted thus, the younger among them, declared that a City where from the Divinity of Dharma had disappeared was more horrible than the jungle, and that they could not live in such a frightful place. The forest where you reside is the Ayodhya for us, they said. Do not be worried in the least, about our exhaustion or our travail. Observe your vow, duly, as you have resolved; we too shall observe our vow. You have decided to honour the wish of your father as a sacred duty: we, too, have a sacred duty, to honour the wish of the Rama in our hearts, the Atma-Rama, our Master, the Authority we loyally revere. We will not waver in our resolution. We will not return. Death alone can defeat us,” they announced amidst sobs and tears of despair.

The compassionate heart of Rama melted at these words of love and loyalty. Sita shed tears in streams. Lakshmana watched the upsurge of devotion rising from the common people of the realm; his eyes turned red with anger, his tongue was tied with emotion, when he thought of Kaikeyi, the step-mother, who did not have even an iota of this sentiment towards Rama. He sat on the ground, head heavy with sad thoughts.

Rama felt that it was best to persuade them, by whatever means, to return home. He consoled them, sympathised with them, reminded them of the rites and rituals they had to perform every day and the consequences of non-observance. He described the horrors of forest life and the handicaps they would undergo when trying to live there as hitherto, and advised them to perform the rites and rituals, correctly and without break, so that the years of exile may pass off quickly and smoothly, without any obstacle in his path; they would thus be helping him to spend his exile in peace and joy, and to return to Ayodhya, at the proper time, fresh and fine.

The Brahmin youths present before him could not be convinced by these arguments! Rama pleaded with them, saying, "Your aged parents will miss you and your devoted service; it is wrong to leave them unaided and alone." At this, they said. "Rama! Our aged parents are so weak and dispirited that they cannot follow you to the very forest; they came thus far and turned back; pouring their mental anguish in streams of tears. They have directed us to follow you, and be with you, for, they said, 'We are too weak; you are strong and young; go, serve Rama on our behalf'. Those aged people are distressed more because you are away from Ayodhya, than because we are away from them. They will be happy that their sons are with Rama, a fortune they could not enjoy. Take us with you, for this reason at least, to shower joy on those aged people." Praying thus, they fell at the feet of Rama, and wept.

Rama was struck silent, at this sincere expression of love and reverence. He was thrilled at the renunciation of these young men, which he felt was grander even than his own renunciation of the throne. His joy was not unmixed with a sense of pride at being surpassed by his subjects. Darkness descended on the earth, while pleadings and rejections were going on. So, Rama asked them to take rest and refreshment for the night, rather than trek back in the darkness.

In order to encourage them to do so, Rama bathed in the Tamasa River which flowed by, partook of a meal of roots tubers and fruits, and rested awhile. The people who had followed him

over long distances were so tired physically that, after the meal, they fell into deep undisturbable sleep.

The Ruse

Rama knew that, on waking, they will all insist on accompanying him; so, he woke Sumantha up and directed him, to get the chariot ready, without the least noise and drive the vehicle so that its track may not be recognised. Sumantha recognised that there was no other way; he drove, so that the tracks were confusingly complex, and even gave indications that the chariot had turned towards Ayodhya itself! After skillfully laying these tracks, he drove forward in the direction of the forest.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness (To be continued)

Sai Family News

1. Letter from 'reps':

Paul Reps, renowned for his rewarding excursions into the mysteries of Zen Buddhism, ("Its skin and bones, its flesh, but, not its marrow, for that is beyond words!") writes from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada: "12 days ago on the night of February, 27th., friend Indra Devi gave a Talk at the Community College, Kahului, Maui, showing movies of Sathya Sai. To me, it was probably the most important event in the History of this Hawaiian Island I am visiting, because it formed a point through which Sathya Sai could penetrate into the mind of man in this, vicinity." His Presence was felt very strongly in the Auditorium, I am sure, and in those most receptive to Him.

I studied "Charters and Sayings," the marvelous Life of Shirdi Sai for two years, before hearing of Sathya Sai. Shirdi Sai actually visited me one morning! Now, the books are available to let us hear more and more of Sathya Sai. It is wonderful to read books on His Life.

For soiree reason unknown to me, I have not gone to Prasanthi Nilayam. Sathya Sai has said, He will be wherever the heart calls Him and I believe this is so.

2. Six Week Seminar:

The Hawaii Pacific College, Honolulu, is including in its Curriculum of Studies, a Six-week Seminar, from 4th April, '73, on "Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the Spiritual Needs of the World."

3. Brotherhood in Action:

Sri Muktinath Bardoloi, Former Director of Public Instruction, Assam State and the State President for Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in that State, reported to the All India Conference of the Organisation, Madras, in 1971, that the Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Guahati, 25 in number, were electing every year, the Office Bearers of the Samithi, by lot! They have all intense confidence in each other, and sincere willingness to act as a team of brothers. This year too, they have continued this unique example of mutual help and cooperation.

At a special Bhajan Sessions, they placed chits on which the names were inscribed; then, with the members standing praying, a child picked up one by one, the names, which were announced and accepted as those of the Office Bearers for the year.

4. Unique Seva Dal Unit:

The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Hyderabad, which has been arranging Bhajan Sessions, and other spiritual activities, at the School for Boy Delinquents called the Senior Certified School, Hyderabad, has succeeded in training and forming a fine Unit of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal from among the Students, with the Superintendent himself as the Convener. A few members of the Dal who visited Prasanthi Nilayam during Dasara and Birthday Festivals did commendable service to the visiting devotees.

5. Sai Lamps lit in Villages:

The Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Brindavan, under His Affectionate Care, is imparting to the students, not only excellent competence in the curriculum, but, also an appreciation of the basic values and disciplines inherent in Indian Culture. Students are inspired and instructed to engage themselves in Social Service, as a spiritual Sadhana. Old students of the College, and the Present Students, have responded to the needs of their own native villages round about Kadugodi, and are lighting the lamps of the Sai Message of Sathya Dharma Shanti and Prema, to revive Peace and Prosperity in the rural areas from which they come. This is indeed a sign of Bhagavan's Grace.

A Yuvaka Sangha for Cultural Studies and Social Service was inaugurated on January 28, in the village of Kanamangala. The Programme includes Weekly Bhajans and Nagarasankirtans as well the Cleaning of Village Temples, which had suffered neglect for years. On February 11th, students of the College coming from Hoskote Village inaugurated a similar Sangha in their place. The Sanghas are evidence of a spontaneous upsurge of Love and Co-operation. Already the young men have received valuable cooperation from the elders. For example, in one village, two old men declared at the Evening Gathering that they are ending that day a decade old factional dispute that kept them apart in resentful silence; they were emulating the younger generation! No wonder Bhagavan lays stress on disciplined bands of youth and their task of alighting Sai Lamps of Love and Tolerance in Homes, Villages, Communities, States and the World.

6. The Language of God:

The Mahila Vibhag, of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Ernakulam, Kerala, is holding a number of classes for children, under the scheme of Bal Vikas. One noteworthy feature of the Classes held by them has been the study of Telugu, the language which they revere as Bhagavan's. The children have learnt it so nicely that they were able to enact three plays written in Telugu, rendering the dialogues and songs as correctly as native Andhras. They acted the plays at Prasanthi Nilayam itself, before thousands of devotees, during the Birthday Festival of Bhagavan, in His Divine Presence, and they won Bhagavan's Blessings. Encouraged by this appreciation, they are preparing other Dramas based on themes from the Epics for presentation at Prasanthi Nilayam.

7. Dasara Festival on Television:

Sri S. Sitaram, President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Great Britain, writes from London, "On Thursday, 8th February, we were most delighted to see on Television, our Lord, Bhagavan Sai Sathya Sai Baba, appearing during the Dasara Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam. Bhajan Singing, Homam, Abhishekam for the Silver Idol of Shirdi Sai, and all the other items of the Programme were shown. Baba materialised the precious Gems for the final oblation in the Sacred Fire of the Yajna. He was full of Ananda, and we were thrilled at the opportunity of seeing Him. The film was produced by an Italian Firm."

Sing Your Way to Salvation

(Nama Dharma)

Assam, too, had its share of the spiritual upsurge that marked the history of India in the fifteenth century. Sri Sri Sankardev spear-headed a movement in that area, known as Ek - Sharan - Nam - Dharma, Bhagavati, and Mahapurushia, the Worship of One God, and the Recital of His Name, in a spirit of Surrender. Sankardev summarised the Dharma in a couplet, or Pada:

Brothers! Recite the Name of Ram; meditate on His Form.
Thus, you'll attain Liberation; I truly say to you.

He emphasised the statement made in the Bhagavatha, 'Krishnastu Bhagavan Swayam' 'Krishna is Himself the very God.' He pronounced the efficacy of the Name-Recital Yoga in a number of books of verse, notably, the Kirtan, the Dasham the Bhagavata. He wrote plays in Brajabuli like Parijat Haran, and Rukmini Haran. He encouraged the performance of Bhaonas or Dramas on Bhagavata themes. He composed numerous hymns and songs in classical ragas, known as Borgit. In all these, great stress is laid on Nam-kirtan, or Nam-Smaran.

This Krishna Worship has broken the barriers of religion, caste, and clime. It has wiped off superficial differences and has brought the adherents of various cults and faiths, and the inhabitants of the hill areas the valleys and the riverine tracts under one fold of Nam-Dharma. Nam-Dharma has survived the winds of change that rocked Assam during the last five hundred years without any sign of decay. Today, Nam-Ghars (Shrines) are flourishing all over the land, resounding with Community Bhajans or Nam. In households too, Nam-Sessions are held on many occasions, intended to promote the welfare of individuals, families or the entire Community. Nam-Ghars and the Nam-Dharma they propagate, have helped the preservation and promotion of tolerance and harmony in Assam. They have saved the people from social turmoil and the evils of caste-prejudice.

Bhagavan's Divine Message, "The way to realise God is Nam-Smaran" has charged the Nam-Dharma, with a new vitality. The Assamese feel that they have recovered now the wealth that was threatening to slip out of their hands, and secured it, with compound interest, added unto it. The Head of a Vaishnavite Centre (Sutra) in Assam, called by virtue of his status, a Satradhikar, told me a few years ago, quoting profusely from the Bhagavatha on the signs by which an Avatar has to be recognised, 'I have no doubt that Sri Sathya Sai Baba is Avatar!' Sankardev has declared, "God! Thou, comest in every Age." A devotee from Assam has his heart

open for the message of Baba and for accepting Him as his Divine Guide and Goal. He believes that Baba has come to lead us to Peace and Love.

Baba is now lighting the same lamp in the heart of every Assamese that Sankardev lit centuries ago. "Keep the lamp of Nam on your tongue; then, the outer and the inner worlds of yours will be illumined" "When doubt, disease, distress and despair assail you, maintain equanimity, by repeating the Name of the Lord and contemplating His Infinite Mercy and Majesty."

Baba, the 'Bhagavan Swayam', has given anew dimension to the Ek-Sharan Nam-Dharma so deep-rooted in the Brahmaputra Valley. It is believed that the Kalpataru, the Divine Source that grants all that we need has come, to rid the aspirant of physical and mental maladies, and to direct all to the attainment of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema, so that we can be happy here and free hereafter.

What we, of the present generation, need is Peace, Freedom from Fear. Baba brings us both. He assures us, "Why fear, when I am near," and He demonstrates to us that He is ever near to every one, whether he calls on Him or not. The Smarana of His Name or Names has cooled many a burning mind and given it unalloyed peace.

Assam has come into her own precious heritage through the Grace of Bhagavan. The impact of His Message and Grace is evident in the farthest corners of this State amidst the forest settlements, in the tea estates, in the Nam-ghars, Schools, and Colleges, in fact, all over this beautiful land.

—*Muktinath Bardolo*

Surrender and Win

Sivaratri

A fence is necessary to protect growing crops; but, when no crop is growing, why spend time and money on a fence? The orange is covered by a rind which is not very tasty, in order to protect it from too early consumption. Outer ritual is prescribed to shelter the inner message from being tampered with. Sivaratri too like all other holy days in the Hindu and other religious calendars has many such outer ceremonial observances and a deep core of inner significance. But, human nature prefers the easier path of outer formality to the path inner of discipline and direct experience.

Visiting Siva shrines, arranging for worship through priests, of Siva Lingams, pouring sanctified waters, potfuls of them, over consecrated idols, fasting, vigil and such other activities are resorted to on this Day. But, these are not the relevant to the real purpose of the Festival. To fulfill these rites and vows, one need not wait one full year and consult the astrologer and his calendar of holy days. When man takes in food four times a day, in order that his body may keep functioning efficiently, is it too much to ask him to feed the mind with good thoughts and godly acts, at least once every day? The mind too needs clean and sustaining food.

The Names of Siva

Ishwara, a Name of Siva, means that He has all the Glory that is associated with, Godhead. Samkara, another Name of Siva, means that He causes by His Grace, Sam, that is, Ananda on the supremest level. Siva is the embodiment of Ananda; hence the Tandava Dance; which He enjoys so much, with the Cosmos as His Stage. To set apart just one day among the 365 for the worship of this Universal Omnipresence is an insult to His Majesty and Mystery.

Consider the significance of the Form that Siva has assumed for human adoration: In His neck, He has the holocaust-producing poison, Halahala, that can destroy all life in a trice. On His Head, He has the sacred Ganga River, whose waters can cure all ills, here and hereafter! On His forehead, He has the eye of Fire; on His head, He has the cool comforting Moon! On His wrists, ankles, shoulders, and neck He wears deadly cobras, which live on life-giving breath of air! Siva lives in the burial ground and the burning ghat, the Rudrabhoomi, as it is called—the Land of Siva or Rudra. The place is no area of dread; it is an auspicious area, for, all have to end their lives there, at the close of this life or a few more lives. Siva is teaching you that death cannot be shunned or frightened away. It has to be gladly and bravely met.

Siva, again, is said to go about with a begging bowl. He teaches that, renunciation, detachment, indifference to good fortune or bad, these are the paths to attain Him. Siva is known as Mrtyunjaya, He who vanquishes death. And, He is also the Kaamaari, the destroyer of Desire. These two Names show that he who destroys Desire can conquer Death, for, Desire breeds Activity, Activity breeds Consequence, Consequence breeds Bondage, Bondage results in Birth and Birth involves Death.

The Linga

Ishwara is also symbolised in the Linga Form. Linga is derived from the Sanskrit root, Li, meaning Leeyathe, 'merges'; it is the Form in which all forms merge. Siva is the God who blesses beings with the most desirable gift of meaning in the Universal. That is the end, the death, which one should strive for, the end which Siva can vouchsafe. Realise the God in you first; then, if you involve yourself with the material world, no harm can come to you, for, you will recognise the objective world as but the Body of God. But, if you try to involve yourself with the objective world first, and then, try to discover God, your search will end in your getting a God who is material only. Again, you can direct your spiritual efforts in either of two ways: endeavour to reach God, or endeavour to induce God to reach you. Follow the commands of God, and He will be pleased to raise you up. Follow the path of inquiry and discover where He resides, and realise Him there. You can follow either means. But, reaching Him is the inescapable task of man.

Poison and Panacea

Siva means, Graciousness; Auspiciousness; Mangalam. He is all Graciousness, Ever Auspicious, Sarva Mangalam. That is the reason why the epithet, Sri, which indicates these qualities, is not added to the Names Siva, Sankara, Ishwara etc. It is added to the Names of Avatars, for, they have taken on perishable bodies for a specific purpose. They have to be distinguished from other humans, by the epithet, Sri Siva is eternally gracious, auspicious, mangala, and so, the epithet is superfluous. Siva is adored as the Teacher of Teachers, Dakshinamurti. The Form of Siva is itself a great lesson in Tolerance and Forbearance.

The Halahala poison is hidden by Him in His Throat; the beneficent Moon which all welcome, He has worn on His Head. This is a lesson for man to keep away from others all harmful tendencies and to use for their benefit all useful tendencies that he can command. If one uses his skills for his own advance, and his evil propensities for putting down others, he is only taking the road to ruin.

Offerings to God

Man is inherently Divine; he ought therefore demonstrate in thought, word and deed the Divine attributes of Love Tolerance Compassion and Humility. God is Truth; man too must live in Truth. God is Love; man too must live in Love, eschewing Anger. Master hatred through Love, master anger through sweet Tolerance. There are many who bargain with God, and offer Him gifts of money or articles if He would confer Grace! If one believes that God can be mollified by the gift of a coconut or a purse of 116 rupees, I wonder what kind of God he has in his mind? Is his conception of God so mean, so contemptible? Those who plan to have their desires granted through riches can never deserve the name, Devotee. Those who encourage the payment of money for spiritual gains, or for gaining Divine Favour are also to be condemned. This is the reason why the Gita lays down that God will be pleased by offering leaf, flower, or fruit or even a drop of water! But, even these four articles are materials.

Give Yours, Not others

The Gita does not intend that you should pluck a leaf or flower or a fruit from some plant or tree and place it before God. Nor does it ask you to bring water from a well or river or the roadside tap! The Leaf is your own body which like the leaf, sprouts, greens, fades, and finally falls off from the branch. The Flower is the Heart freed from the insect pests of Lust Anger Greed Attachment Pride Hate etc. The Fruit is the Mind, the consequences of its yearnings, which have to be dedicated to God. The Water is the stream of tears that flow from the eyes when one is in ecstatic Bliss at the contemplation of God's Glory: Giving these four is the real act of Surrender, Saranagati. The offering of leaves or flowers or fruits or river water is at best a way of helping the plant or tree or river to secure a little merit!

There are some who declare glibly, "O, I have surrendered my body, mind, intellect, my everything to God"! These people have no control over their minds and the emotions and passions they are filled with. They have no mastery over their reason. They are not even able to regulate their bodies. So, it is indeed ridiculous for them to claim that they have offered them to God. How can they give to God what is not theirs? What right have they? How can any one accept the gift of something which does not belong to the giver?

The Offering of Love

In fact, you need not surrender anything at all. Love all beings—that is enough. Love with no expectation of return; love for the sake of love; love because your very nature is Love; Love because that is the form of Worship you know and like. When others are happy, be happy likewise. When others are in misery, try to alleviate their lot to the best of your ability. Practise Love through Seva. By this means, you will realise Unity and get rid of the ego that harms.

—From Bhagavan's Discourse, 5-3-73

The Alchemy of the Smile

Summer Course 1972: The Glorious Month

The Day began at the Camp with Omkar, recitation of the Suprabhatam Verses (the Awakening of the Divine into the World), and Nagarasankirtan (Going round the town and villages in groups, singing the Glory of God). Returning, we had Yoga Lessons for both boys and girls, under separate instructors. After breakfast, there were classes from 9-30 till 12-30. Then after lunch and a short rest, we had another two classes of an hour's duration each from 3 P.M. After tea, we met again, for Bhajan. At the end of the thrilling sessions of Bhajan two students read summaries of the lectures of the day, one about the morning three and the other about the evening two. Finally, Baba elaborated on all the subjects spoken about during the day, by eminent scholars and educationists, in simple sweet Telugu, which was translated into English for our benefit. How Baba Himself knew what had been told us in English and when He was not physically present, is still a mystery to most of us. Many nights, after dinner, films were shown on the Holy Places in India, Vivekananda, the Festivals at Prasanthi Nilayam etc.

300 of us—teachers, students, of all grades from Ph. D, M. Sc, to P.U.C. classes from all the Universities of India belonging to different religions and linguistic groups spent the 31 days in perfect harmony and close cooperation. The Love that Baba showered on us and evoked from us, enveloped all and moulded us into a Sai Family, more happy and mutually helpful than any family on earth. The smile with which He greeted us, the light that shone in His eyes, the charm He spread around Him, the compassion that flowed from His lips, removed all pride and doubt, all fear and worry, from our minds. Brindavan became for us the Abode of Krishna.

The distinguished scholars who came from Simla, Madras, Hyderabad, Goa, Gwalior, Jamnagar, and many other distant seats of learning infused into us a high sense of duty and discipline; they planted in us a deep sense of loyalty to the traditions embedded in our culture. They described to us the glorious truths enshrined in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Epics, and in the Scriptures of Jain, Buddhist, Parsi, Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths.

Baba taught us to take interest in Yoga, Meditation, Bhajan, and above all Social Service in a humble and efficient manner respecting every other man as Divine. He exhorted us to revere our parents, as our first and foremost duty, the primary act of worship. He told us to revere elders and teachers and to utilise every minute for some good activity. He warned us against attempts to transform India, the Land of Rishis and Avatars, into an imitation of America or Russia.

Baba narrated many stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata which He called the two Eyes of India. He spoke on the Gita, and explained, so clearly that we will not forget it at all, the meaning of many expressions therein, like Nishkamakarma, Saranagati, Yogakshema, Kshetra—Kshetrajna, etc. He asked us to practise some one discipline so that we may realise God as the One and Only Truth. To deny God is but the foolishness of a blind man who denies the Sun, He said. His advice, 'Be Good, See Good, Do Good' is still ringing in our ears. He also told us, 'Start the Day with Love, Spend the Day with Love, Fill the Day with Love, End the Day with Love.' He occasionally spoke such good English, that we wondered why He used a translator on many days

The many miracles that we saw whenever Baba came among us and created Vibhuti or Sweets; or a gemset Ring for the Lecturer, a necklace of gems for a Pundit and the statements of Dr. Gokak, Dr. Bhagavantam, Sri Nakul Sen, Lt. Governor of Goa and Dr D. Venkatavadhani of Osmania University about Baba being an Avatar, confirmed our devotion to Him and to the Sanathana Dharma He has come to strengthen and spread. Sri. Indra Devi, a Russian-born American Citizen, the renowned teacher of Yoga, gave us every morning, fine lessons in Yoga. She considered Yoga to be a spiritual discipline, and educated us in what she called the Sai Yoga, the discipline of the emotions through physical and psychical processes into the realisation of the Sai inherent in all beings.

On the concluding Day of the Camp, Baba sat amidst the representatives from each State and allowed photographs to be taken. He got ready for the Valedictory Gathering new white clothes for all the participants, symbolic of the purity of mind that each had attained. He assured us that He would be with each of us, wherever we were; this was a warning for the waverers, for, He would watch us. Whenever we faltered or defaulted. He would know.

Leaving the place became a heartbreaking experience. He filled our hands with gifts created for us with Divine Love and persuaded us softly and sweetly to go back to our parents and colleges, and be fine examples of simple living, sincere Sadhana, and eager Service for inspiring our friends, classmates and relatives. The faith that we had in His Omnipresence told us that He will be with us, as our guide, far ever. He told us, "Why fear when I am here?"

He sent us home, strong, courageous and more confident of the future than when we first entered Brindavan on the First day of May.

—*Padma R. Padaki, 1 year B.A.; Bijapur*

The Clouds: and Baba's Child

Clouds
Clouds
In the blue.

A beauteous sight are thee!
Colours soft and mountain high
You break the monotony of the sky.

You draw our eyes upward by your charm
You build castles for the homesick crowd
You are an aerial zoo, an upturned sea,
You run races, play trapeze galore,
You hide, reveal, pull curtains on and off.
You eternally play
With sun and stars
And rain and rough
And thunder tough.

You add to the Infinite
And embroider the `Formless'.
You are painted and puffed with silver robes
Or pink or red, or gold on fire.

Float on by,
Float on by.

I am Baba's Child;
You are Baba's loving fold
I love to applaud, greet!

Thoughts
Thoughts
In the deep blue mind.

A motley crowd are they!
Thoughts flimsy, furious, fearsome, high
You break the monotony of life.

You draw the thinker down or up
You build systems for geo-philous crowd,
You are an inner zoo, full thick with beasts.
You somersault, and skip over many a slip;
You tantalize so near, so far from goal.
You eternally play

With ideas, I and Mine
And senses tough

You subtract the Infinite,
And prolong the Eternal.
And limit the Unlimited.
You are tainted and clogged with lust and hate
Or envy and greed, a brain on fire.

Float on by,
Float on by.
I am Baba's Child,
I am Witness
Of your flickering film
On the Untouched Screen of Truth!

—*Kaston*

Their Shelter & Their Strength

(A Talk given to about 60 students of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts & Science College, gathered in Bhagavan's presence on a Sandy River-Bed in the Bandipur Forest, Mysore State)

A highly valued facet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, at least it is so for me, is that one can love Him with all one's heart, without fear and without restraint. Every person wants to love greatly, with open heart, but experience has made us afraid.

We may observe how natural it is for young children to love whole-heartedly. With what richness and sweetness do very young children embrace parents, brothers, sisters and close playmates! How much joy there is for an adult when a child of three or four years tightly embraces him with the sweetest of smiles and says, "I love you, I love you."

It is the river of love rushing from the open heart of the child that makes the child so incredibly sweet and so overflowing with bliss. It is this rich treasure of love and affection that touches even the dullest adult and makes him share the child's bliss for a moment or so.

But, as each of us leave the innocent open-hearted years of his early childhood, something very sad and tragic happens. Worldly experience invades the shelter of early years and the heart suffers betrayal and rejection. One loves someone and love flows to that person. But, the response is indifference, or a harsh word, or outright rejection, and the resultant hurt is deep and agonizing.

The child tries again and again, and here and there, he is hurt again. In time, a natural self-protection arises and the child's love is qualified with caution.

A person learns that when he loves; he is unprotected; love destroys his self-protection, and makes him vulnerable to suffering. With each year of worldly experience, additional self-protective factors come into one's life. Ambition, business cares, competition, gratification of the senses, greed, resentment, hatred, jealousy, the whole range of narrowing tendencies exert more and more influence on body, mind, heart and intelligence. The open natural heart expansion of early childhood is by now a thing of the past.

Is not this complete obstruction of the flow of love, a fundamental reason why the life of an older person is often dry and joyless?

In this modern society, a dry and joyless life is the general experience. Witness the frantic search for distraction and pleasure the world over. An almost universal prayer arises from adult persons caught up in today's culture: "O Lord, may there be a new season of Spring in my heart. May the dry river of Love flow deep and strong again in my heart."

Here, to me, is one of the most wonderful Miracles of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Bhagavan is God, His Life is Divine Beauty and Divine Love. The fettered heart, turned to Bhagavan, can break free from all its bondage. Seeing Him, being sure that He will never betray, is a most wonderful feeling. With joy, the heart responds to this trust. With each day, love for Bhagavan grows stronger. He is Divine Mother and Father to His devotee. He is the present moment at every moment! He is our breath, our food, and our drink. Contemplating God so, at that moment, bliss is the experience. One may love Him without reserve, without guard, without fear, however guarded one may still be with fellow human beings. Of course, one's behaviour with Him must remain strictly disciplined. The young college boys here, assembled at this quiet stretch of sandy river-bed deep in the forest cannot, I think, realize their good luck. For them, the heart need never become dry. Long before the hot dry winds of the world have had an opportunity to invade their lives, these boys have claimed Bhagavan, He who is their shelter and their strength, from now, throughout the length of their days.

For myself who has come to this peaceful forest from the stormy life of the Western World, the good fortune of encountering Bhagavan is almost incredible. Even now, some five years from that marvellous first day, it is difficult to, believe that it is really true, that He sits there, and that I am here near Him! It is with the deepest sense of gratitude that I honor Him and give all homage at His Lotus Feet.

—*Dr. J. S. Hislop*

We revolved round The Sun

Summer Course 1972: The Glorious Month

II

For centuries, the Varnashrama Dharma of Hinduism stood the rigorous test of time. When however the moral degeneration of scholars began, the country lost; its spiritual guidance and intellectual balance. Society was left without leaders who could keep it on even keel. Some

organisation was needed to fill the vacuum; but, Sanathana Dharma was too vast and too deep, and the danger of India going astray was too, calamitous that an Avatar was the only solution. The Avatar has come and the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi corresponds to the spiritual leadership for the new Society, all over the world. The present leaders working in the Samithis will not last forever. Their place has to be taken by youth, quite soon.

I believe that Bhagavan organised the Summer Course in Spirituality and Indian Culture, in order to infuse the desire for this kind of service in the youth of this land to prepare an army of young boys and girls, who will ensure the triumph of our own grand culture and its universal values over the ruthless waves of materialism and Westernisation. The roots of the sapling of the salvation of humanity through Sai Dharma or what is the same thing, Sanathana Dharma, were watered at Whitefield this summer.

The Summer Course brought home to us five lessons: 1) It taught us to adjust ourselves to any situation, uncomplainingly. 2) It taught us never to waste time. This life as man is all too short for spiritual Sadhana. It is so valuable a gift that to waste it is a crime. 3) It taught us to meditate, to reflect dispassionately, on our own wayward thoughts, words and deeds. We are so used to think, talk and do, without any forethought and we are hardly conscious of its effect on ourselves and others. Quiet reflection on our behaviour will reveal so many shortcomings that it would shock us to know we were so foolish or callous: Once we know the faults, we can correct them with a little effort 4) The Yoga classes during the course brought home to us the need to maintain good health. We have to be so healthy that when we sit for meditation, we must not be aware of the body at all. Spiritual Sadhana, to which we were drawn by the Course, involves long strenuous effort, even physical. So, the body must be kept fighting fit. 5) The Course also taught us to choose our clothes properly. The personality is stamped upon the clothes one wears; subdued decent clothes reflect the attitudes of tolerance, humanity, service and Sadhana, which are the bases of Indian Culture.

We were given a very tight schedule, during the month the Course lasted. Not one of us could afford to while away a single minute. The day began when the sacred Brahma-muhurta (4-30 to 6 A.M.) dawned. It ended only at 8-30, in the night. The busy day was full of activity and disciplined study. But, it must be said, that the urge for organising the time and the activity came from within, it was spontaneous, breathed in, from the atmosphere of Brindavan, and the Presence of Baba.

And, what shall I say of the Role of Baba during the Summer Course? He was the Sun around which we all revolved. He was so fatherly, so protective, so loving. We felt like children in the huge family of Sai who was the Head. During the examination at the end of the Course, Baba was watching the boys being seated away from each other so that they may not cheat. Baba protested and with that sweet smile of His, He said, "No, no! My children will not cheat." The day after the Course ended, on the 1st day of June, Baba called all those who were leaving for home that day, for a mass interview; we clustered around Him, delightfully, expectantly, for we knew something momentous was about to happen. A cameraman came in to take a snap. Baba wouldn't allow him inside, though he was normally being permitted to click as many times as he wanted. Dr. V. K. Gokak, the Convener of the Summer Course, and some others were standing

inside the room, waiting to see what would happen. Baba asked them to go into the inner rooms, with the words, "Only My children allowed here"!

The lectures were divided into nine sections: Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Value and Culture, Indian Philosophical Systems, World Religions, Sacred Texts of Hinduism, Ethics, Hindu Law, and Yoga. Besides, we also had many opportunities to listen to talks by eminent persons on Ayurveda, Astrology, Problems of Youth, the Miracles of Baba etc. by General Cariapa, Sri Nakul Sen, Lt. Governor of Goa, Sri Mohanlal Sukhadia, Governor of Mysore, Sri R. R. Diwakar, former Governor of Bihar and one of the foremost Gandhi-ites alive, and many others each a luminary in his own field of knowledge.

I took a great deal of interest in Yogasanas, to which I was introduced to this Course. Yoga is growing in popularity, in India and even more, among the people overseas. The Board of Education in England has included it in their School Syllabuses. The ultimate aim of all Asanas is to prepare the body to achieve tranquility of mind. Yoga does not promise to make a man a Mr. Universe! It is not designed to give external beauty or muscular strength. It tones up the internal functions of the body. It assures normal physical wellbeing and is curative and recuperative.

—Sainath Chandavarkar - II B. Com. Calcutta

Yoga Ganga

Summer Course 1972: The Glorious Month

III

Though the brightness of the Moon is seen only in the night, our eyes now know better; though the Divine Light blind the weak, we now know it can be seen, even by the sinner. Sai Krishna, without the golden flute, but, with that same golden laughter to which the Gopis danced, and that same compassion which tolerated Arjuna's presumptuousness and tolerates ours, is here. He sought us out, and decided to shape us into steady flames, spreading Light and Joy.

We came to Brindavan, on the first day of May 72, to live with God, to eat His Food, and seek His Shelter, and take refuge in His Grace. Many of us came, as typical products of the schools and colleges of this generation, who knew only moments of Godliness, but, have seldom known that God is a way of life; we were unaware that spirituality is acknowledging our very breath to be God's. Without God, man is a seed blown this way and that, with desire as its sole motive and chance as its sole law. The Summer Course on Spirituality and Indian Culture has taken care to plant this seed deep in Divine Soil.

It is not in Technology or Science, so much, that the spirit of India has enshrined the wisdom of the Rishis; it is to be found in stones that speak of the secrets of God, stones condemned as 'idols' by cynics today. India has lost that sense of awe and reverence which transmuted every movement and action of man into an offering to God. Spirituality as a way of life has vapourised into a meaningless void where a tyrannical God appears only to bind and force man into rigidity.

The student, in India, has been long in search of the lost chord; he tries to find it in the desperate clinging to Individuality, in fanatic Self-assertion, which soon becomes Self-deceit. But, the very presence of about 300 students in Brindavan demonstrates that this search has reached its destination. Facing Baba, we can now say, "All is changed, changed utterly," through His Grace. For, He is Krishna, self-declared. "I am taste, in the waters; light, in the sun; Om, in the Veda; manhood, in men; know Me to be the Seed of all Existence."

This one-month has endowed every one of us with a view of spirituality that is far removed from the purely personal ideal of fulfillment. We have discovered that it is the means of integrating human values at the basic level. Self-less love, sacrifice, tolerance and forbearance are no longer ideals reserved for heroes, or for special occasions! They are there with the dawn and continue companionship throughout the day. It converts a simple act, a tiny activity into a spiritual discipline. It removes insecurity, frustration and despair, and fills the vacuum with indescribable delight, Ananda. Helping your neighbour to lift a chair, sweeping the place where the public gather, or, telling the truth even when it hurts, are actions we have started doing with a new awareness, that the Lord loves us for them.

Baba personally supervised every activity of ours, from watering the plants in the garden to 'keeping taal', (or marking time) during the bhajans. This has inspired us to carry back to our cities and towns, a high sense of purpose in everyday life. What is spirituality, but the inter-penetration of our daily lives with the golden strands of love, humility, and the spirit of service?

The purpose of the Summer Course, as Baba told us often, is not 'Information', but, 'Transformation'! This was evident here in the student-teacher relationship. The sincerity, the dedication and the emotional involvement of both teachers and taught were for us a revival of the ancient Gurukula, in the modern context. It has given us, students, a deep sense of humility, and the knowledge that Intelligence is a gift of God and has to be used for His adoration.

Superior to the merely informed intellect, born of University education, is the Informed, that is to say, the Illumined spirit, which enables us to feel the Harmony of Life, and fills us with the Joy of Full and Free Surrender, Sharanagati, arising from Love for the Perfect.

All life is a Yoga; Yoga is the search for Reality. Baba is the Yogeswara, the source that never allows the Yoga-Ganga go dry. What can I say more? I bow at Thy Feet, O Lord, praying for Thy Grace!

—Omita Bahl, Delhi

Madame Indra Devi, of the Foundation for the Spiritual Advancement of the Individual, U.S.A. held Sai Yoga Seminars at the Hawaii University in February; at Phoenix, Arizona, she lectured on Bhagavan, in March; she is holding Seminars on Sai Yoga and the Message of Sathya Sai in Chicago and the Mid- West, in April.

A Memorable Tour

—*Vinayaka Krishna Gokak*

There are different gradations of human consciousness from the caveman to the saint and the Avatar. Valmiki, Shakespeare, Napoleon, and other personalities like them represent the intermediate types of consciousness in this evolution. The Avatar is a ray of the Supreme, descending into the human flesh in order to take humanity a step further in its evolution towards light.

Civilization tomorrow is going to be four-faceted. It will be global, electronic, unitive and spiritual at the same time. India will play a prominent role in contributing to the unitive and spiritual side of world civilization.

However, as we think about it today, we see that liberty, equality and fraternity are still a dream in the modern world. What Bhagavan calls the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are as far away from us as ever.

The Master who would lead his country and the world further towards this goal requires a four-fold equipment. He has to have an infinite patience with things as they are, universal love, a clear vision of Truth and the power to implement his vision. This is what we have in Bhagavan. As he himself has said, Truth is his advocacy, Right Action his doing from day to day, Peace his habitual disposition and Love the full manifestation of his being. Further, the Master who would change the world has to be interested in rebuilding the individual as well as the collective consciousness.

The tour that Bhagavan undertook in northern and western India is significant because it highlights some of these very aspects of his personality. He left Bangalore on 14th March 1973 by air and he returned to Hyderabad on 4th April 1973. During these twenty two days he covered the Union Territory of Delhi, The Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Sourashtra in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. The climate varied from the freezing cold in Simla to the desert heat of Rajasthan and Sourashtra and the humid and oppressive heat of Bombay. It was mostly by chartered planes that the distances were covered except some regular flights and a few car journeys, as from Mogha to Simla.

Bhagavan flew from Bangalore to Delhi on 14th April 1973 and the next morning to Amritsar, where there was a big crowd at the airport waiting for Darshan in the chilly air of the morning. A few thousand had gathered at Delhi around midnight for Darshan and blessings. In fact, as he motored down to Mogha, people had assembled at the threshold of their houses or shops, scanning the cars eagerly as they passed by and joining their palms with great devotion when they spotted him out. The car had to be stopped in one or two places on the way for Darshan to crowd, that had assembled there.

Shri Jindal had built a charity hospital in Mogha and named it after Bhagavan. This had to be inaugurated. This took place on 15th morning and more than a lakh of people had assembled for the Darshan, bhajan and message. This number swelled to more than two lakhs for the discourse

on 16th afternoon. As one looked on, it was a sea of human faces all around for two or three miles. The sons and daughters of the Punjab had come out in their lakhs to see and hear Bhagavan.

The journey was made to Simla on 17th morning. There were arches put up in Solan and a band was waiting to take Bhagavan in procession through the town. As he arrived in Simla people were lining along the road and some thirty thousand people had assembled on the Ridge for the meeting announced to be held at 3 P.M. Bhagavan gave Darshan at the meeting and it was announced that there would be bhajan and discourse the next morning at 11 a.m. The next day was bright and there was glorious sunshine. People clambered up on the tops of trees and covered every imaginable inch of space to see and listen to Bhagavan. It was a most inspiring discourse and the bhajans were simply enchanting. The crowd was visibly moved and Bhagavan himself felt impelled to say: "This will spread."

There were thousands who sat on the lawns the next day at Woodville for Darshan. And they were there for the whole day. They gathered round to listen to the talk that Bhagavan gave to the elite on another side of the garden.

Shri Sohanlal, Bhagavan's host, both at Delhi and at Simla, took the party to Kufri and Phagi for an hour or so on the 17th and again on the next morning. There was knee-deep snow lying on the way. Bhagavan gave an ear-ring and a ring with the Lingam symbol on it to some visitors there. A ring which flashed with light had been given to the D.S.P. at the public meeting on 18th morning.

Bhagavan left for Delhi in the early hours of 20th morning. The devotees at Solan were very keen that he should stop there on the way. They were there even in the small hours of the morning to bow down to him. In Delhi, there were always hundreds around 16, Golf Links, where Bhagavan stayed. In the special pandal that was put at Talkotara Gardens, there were some fifty thousand people sitting, morning and afternoon, for Bhajan and Darshan. A first aid tent had been put up near this pandal and also an annex for the sick and ailing, to be seen by Bhagavan.

On the morning of 2nd April, Bhagavan inaugurated the Shri Bal Vikas building that had been built near her palace at Jamnagar by the Shri Rajmata Public Charitable Trust. The Trust has built up a sizable fund of Rs. 60 lakhs to be spent on an educational complex in Jamnagar. Jamnagar came in its thousands to attend the meeting. Bhagavan paid a handsome tribute to the philanthropic and self-sacrificing nature of Rajmata. He told the people. "We come into the world, crying Koham? Koham? (Who am I?) We should leave the world saying: Soham, Soham, (I am He)."

After a reception by the Home Guards, headed by Dr. Chudasama who is the State President of Gujarat Sathya Sai Seva Samithi Organisations, Bhagavan flew to Bombay from the Jamnagar Military Airport. He spent a few minutes there chatting to the airport staff. As Bhagavan said, this was the first time that he ever went inside an airport. Arrangements were usually made to take him straight to the aeroplane in order to avoid crowds at airports.

Bhagavan flew from Bombay to Hyderabad in a chartered plane on the morning of 4th April, Telugu New Year Day. Shri Prasad Rao, the chief architect and engineer of Sivam, Bhagavan's place of residence in Hyderabad like Sathya Deep in Dharmakshetra, Bombay and 'Sundaram' in Madras, had come to Bombay. He was delighted, as a keen devotee, that his dream of Sivam had come true. Sivam is a distinctive piece of architecture and its most distinctive feature is the Linga symbol that crowns it and rises into the sky. Bhagavan performed the opening ceremony of the building before a large audience and shifted from Prasad Rao's house to Sivam the same evening. The Siva Puranam Week or Saptaha began the next morning and Bhagavan materialised a Linga for worship on that morning. People had the good fortune to listen to his discourse and Bhajans in the evening. This was the pattern to be followed on succeeding days, culminating in the celebration of Rama Navami.

Certain students from the Shri Sathya Sai College in Whitefield, Bangalore spoke—two on each day—on some days during the Saptaha. They gave an account of their hostel life from day to day under the all-seeing eye of Bhagavan, Bhagavan's teachings and of the divine love that was showered on them and the sternness which dealt with their transgressions. They showed how student agitation proceeded from a lack of proper guidance on the part of teachers and elders.

Gorgeous arrangements were made to give a send-off to Bhagavan when he left for Bangalore. There was a police escort; back and forth for the car and horsemen riding gracefully on either side of it. The procession drew large crowds and thousands gathered together to feast their eyes on it.

Now that the narration is over, one might inquire into the significance of these happenings. How to account for these fabulous crowds that came on the scene wherever Bhagavan went and gave him rapturous welcome? The crowds were stationary as well as mobile. Whether in Simla, Delhi, Jaipur, Bombay, Rajkot or Jamnagar, eager faces popped out of car windows to do him Namaskar. Hundreds collected around Bhagavan's car even if it stopped for a minute. Lakhs of people sat down for hours, wherever he went, to listen to him in reverent silence. One can hardly think of another person in this country who draws such crowds, the common man and the elite alike. Bhagavan's presence answers a long-felt need. He is a cool spring of water for people in a desert.

His appeal is to all age levels and strata of society. It transcends all considerations of caste, community and language in a country of which they are the warp and woof. Apart from mass meetings, the elite listen to him and are thrilled. The coming generation—preschool and school children—get together in their thousands and sing his parables. There were Nagarasankirtans every morning, wherever Baba was. It is a veritable cultural and spiritual revolution that comes in the wake of Bhagavan.

There is an appeal of love and assurance that stirs each one that comes into contact with Bhagavan. The pilot and all on the planes deem it a privilege to fly him and there is a competition among pilots, who should man that particular flight. The police have a hard time of it wherever Bhagavan goes, in spite of the fact that the crowds are spontaneously disciplined. Their rapture sometimes exceeds their restraint. Bhagavan is kind to the police. He materialises rings for their officials and Vibhuti for them. He invited a group of policemen on the snowy

heights of Kufri near Simla to get photographed with him. The District Superintendent of Police at one place was so impressed by Bhagavan that he and his wife followed him wherever he went for nearly a week taking whatever kind of leave was available.

They sick and disease-stricken people have great hope in their eyes whenever Bhagavan visits their region. They all flock to him for his blessings and Prasad. The homes of many devotees are rendered sacred by his visit and profound psychological changes are brought about in the interviews. The newspapers in the region which Bhagavan visits bring special issues, like Shri R. Dhiman's News Chronicle of Ludhiana or publish a number of special articles like Dr. Bhargava's Hind Samachar of Jullundur. This is also true of, the papers in Rajasthan and Saurashtra.

The casual conversations that take place when Bhagavan is relaxed, before the day begins or after the day's labours are over, are themselves matchless for their appeal. The parables regarding Hanuman, the monkey-god, when the president of the Jaipur Samithi said that he observed fasting on Tuesday because it was a Maruti day; the talk about tube wells, deprecating the exploitation of surface water without providing for pumping an equal quantity into the earth beneath the surface leading to water-famine eventually; the reference to chemical manures which produce big tomatoes but with very little 'tomatiness' in them; Syam and Laxmi Bai devoted cooks at the time of the Shirdi manifestation, serving two big bhakris of jowar and brinjal vegetable; the sacrificial priest wanting the performer to repeat "Papoham papasambhavaha" and Bhagavan asking the priest to change it to punyoham, etc; the well-wall distinction, comparing the digging in, to reaching the people and behaving with them and building the wall to raising the spiritual structure; comparing a public lecture to treatment in a general hospital and personal conversation to a treatment precisely directed towards the individual by the bhavaroga vaidya; time melting away swiftly and imperceptibly like a block of ice; and the fact that the secret of happiness consists, not in doing what we like, but in liking what one has to do: all this and more was spiritual wealth scattered prodigally, day after day, in casual conversation.

Finally, one remembers what Bhagavan said last year in a speech at Delhi, that the nations of the world were a railway train, India the engine that drew it on the spiritual path and Bhagavan himself the engine driver.

A friend said in Saurashtra that Saurashtra was fast becoming Sairashtra. In fact, the whole of India seems to be on its way towards becoming a Sairashtra, judging by the response to Bhagavan and his message in all parts of the country. The late Mr. Winston Churchill called Gandhiji, the father of Indian independence, a half-naked fakir. If a half-naked fakir brought independence to India, a full clad fakir is sure to bring cultural, moral and spiritual regeneration to India.

Boiuinngggg - Plp

I waited around at the Airport; the flight was scheduled to depart around 4 A.M. I was growing more and more sleepy, till finally, I felt everything important had been accomplished, and that I would be foolish to tire myself uselessly, as it would interfere with my Sadhana the next day. So, I took my leave of Baba Rama Das, the famous American Sadhu, and taxied back to Kailash Colony.

I was feeling spiritually elevated, as a result of my reconciliation with Rama Das. The hour was a familiar one to veterans of Nagarasankirtan. The western sky was still pitch dark and the eastern horizon was just turning deep purple, though stars could still be seen all across the heavens. The cool air was crisp and charged with spiritual energy. A few birds sent their first experimental chirps of the day into the traffic-less quiet of the pre-dawn.

Feeling too good and too in-tune with the call to witness the cosmic advent of the glorious morning, I about -faced from my room, and went for a walk. I turned down a deserted lane I had never explored before, which wandered between vacant lots away from houses and most reminders of civilised man. I felt wonderful.

A temple bell was ringing. All was well with the world. There was naught to disturb the all-pervading peace. All my psychic barriers were down. Then, suddenly, "Boiuinngggg....Plp." My ear announced this surprising interruption to the silence, while the corner of my eye saw a strange event, by the glow of the distant street lamp.

A sparrow, probably on its first flight of the morning, struck an electric wire overhead, at the side of the road. I don't think the sparrow received an electric shock from the well-insulated wire, but, the physical shock was sufficient to knock the sparrow out. While the wire continued to vibrate visibly and audibly from the repercussion, the sparrow plummeted obliquely across my amazed field of vision, to strike the ground at my feet with a sickening splat which bespoke irreparable organic damage.

In the moment of that birdie's plummet from the heavens, I plunged into veritable hell. In my state of psychic open-ness, this mini-drama of nature gripped me, and turned my mood inside out, over my head like a half-removed sweater. The smashed creature lay about a step directly in front of me. Its neck was twisted and bent back and stayed at an impossible angle, which spells only 'broken'.

The nearly unconscious and dying creature lay gapingly open-mouthed, while its surviving reflexes unsuccessfully struggled in fitful little gasps to draw life-giving breath into the body. Not only was I filled with sympathy for the creature which a moment ago had been flying cheerily through the air on its way to breakfast, I was caught in a soul-tearing conflict. Though it was probable that the bird would be dead within minutes, still, it seemed possible to me, that Nature being what she was, the bird would suffer on, for hours, before its life resources were drained.

Unable to tolerate the thought of such continued suffering, I felt it my duty to become the bird's rapid executioner. I visualised myself smashing the bird with a small boulder, and knew, even as I pictured it, that once I found such a stone, I could never bring myself to use it. As I stood there in a confused and conflict-ridden daze, a three-wheeled auto-rickshaw made its lonely way down the deserted street towards me. All I had to do was step aside and the auto's front wheel would have finished the bird. But, my mind was too busy, searching for a way to kill the bird without committing violence, to comprehend the simple solution. So, I stood there fretting, and the rickshaw was forced to detour around me, thereby also missing the sparrow. At the time, I was only dimly aware of the rickshaw's existence, but many times later, as I relived the experience, I recognised Swami's touch of Cosmic Humour in that moment.

Finally, as I stood there, weeping, the thought of asking God's help surfaced in my conscious mind. I began to pray, and I remembered my package of specially blessed Vibhuti, waiting in my room, three minutes walk away. Baba hadn't merely tapped this package in passing, as I'd seen Him do when blessing so many other packages of Vibhuti. Instead, He had walked over, and before I'd even shown it to Him, He proved He knew and was ready to grant my innermost wishes, by leaning over to me, hand extended, ready to bless the object sitting in my lap, hidden from His physical vision by the tightly packed row of people sitting between me and Him. As I lifted the package within His reach, He drew His Hand slowly and lovingly across its entire length almost as one strokes a cat.

So, I felt this doubly blessed gift of Grace might have the power to quickly and easily separate the sparrow's agonised spirit from its wrecked body. I tenderly lifted the bird and started carrying it to my room. About half-way there, the entire body of the sparrow writhed in a sudden convulsion while lying on its side, which bounced it along the ground, in a semi-circle of pathetic side-hops, increasing the impression in my mind of a hopelessly destroyed life system.

Scooping up the bird again, I held it firmly, as I proceeded to my room. As I went, I was nearly hysterical. I was supplicating Swami and, at the same time, berating Him for making me His executioner. I was still having a tantrum-like argument with Swami in my mind, when I reached my room, where I quickly gathered together the Blessed Vibhuti package, and my favourite Puja Photo of Baba. Holding the sparrow in my open palm, I proceeded to wave it in a circular motion an inch above the Vibhuti, wondering if this would really help the bird to die quietly. Within two seconds of this waving, the bird flew out of my hand!

I looked across the room to where it had perched on my open door-frame. Its neck was perfectly straight, and there was no sign of damage to its body.

At this point, I went completely berserk. I think I wailed and screamed. Eventually, I woke up some neighbouring disciples of my music teacher and tried to explain what had happened; but, I could hardly speak coherently. For, somewhere, the words of Jesus came into my mind, about 'not a sparrow falling, without the Heavenly Father taking note!'

The bird stayed in my room, and ate some crumbs. I fed it till the late afternoon, when it finally left.

—Paul (Ram Ram)

CRYSTAL LINGAMS

*Raven Hair and Crimson Robe
Vibhuti's sacred shower....
Hallowed be this shrinking Globe
And, blessed the fleeting hour!*

*More wondrous than the Solar Orb
His Sign of Grace brings Joy.
Crystal Lingams freely born
Illusion to destroy.*

*Would any one have thought that He
The Lord above—a still small voice
Would care! And call, to make us free
And feed on our Love?*

—Erwin Glattauer, Bond-Australia

BABA, BABA

(I am submitting this poem, 'Baba, Baba!' as a humble offering to Shri Sathya Sai Baba for the Grace that he has bestowed upon me in my Quest for Absolute Union with the Supreme Brahman. The poem represents to me, my highest achievement in poetry and sadhana, thus far, and therefore is an act of complete self-surrender—the surrender of six years of writing, a master's degree, and twenty three years of ignorance and delusion. I pray that it may be as worthy as the leaf that Draupadi offered Lord Krishna.)

*Be Thou my lover when I'm sick with grief,
Be Thou my mother, when I'm mad with fear,
and, when the forces of darkness assault my peace
Be Thou Charioteer.*

*Thou art in me and I in Thee—
O Baba, Baba, ravish me!*

*Be Thou the royal witness of my soul,
Be Thou the ruler of my spiritual sight,
and, when the armies of Maya obscure my Goal,
Be Thou my conquering Might.*

*Thou art in me and I in Thee—
O Baba, Baba, ravish me!*

*Be Thou, my Lord, the lightning in my spine,
Be Thou my Life—O let me not resist!
and when Thou deemest it fitting that I be Thine,
Be Thou my Infinite Bliss.*

*Thou art in me, and I in Thee—
O Baba, Baba, ravish me!*

—**Brad Scot**

Dharma Incarnate

II

The Declaration

OUR Lord declared, on the first day of the Navarathri Festival, in 1967, that He was God Incarnate. While addressing the vast concourse of devotees, before the Hoisting of the Prasanthi Flag, He said,

"When moral codes lose their mastery—
to curb mankind and cure them;
When vice and wickedness bring ruin to man—
to cleanse and purify;
When good men pine midst cruelty—
to guard and save, give solace deep;
When God's Words are twisted,
tarnished into rites—to reform, reveal.

To lighten burden of the World,
To keep the Word, the plighted Troth
God, the Ever-Full, Free, has come.
(It can't be said in plainer terms!)

Sinking and floating on the trivial Sea of Living, Man
Shrieks and, wails in despair, to gain the shore;
If He but yearns and prays, The giver of Peace
and Joy,
Sathya Sai, the Life-Boat is here to save.

What do these words mean? They mean that our Lord, Baba, has come to suppress immorality, to restore to foster the good, to teach mankind the secrets of spiritual progress and guide man

towards the Realisation of his identity with God. These are but the many phases of the Revival of Dharma.

On another occasion, Baba declared. "Truth is my Reality; My Name Itself is Truth. What I preach is Truth. I am Truth, the Truth of Truth. This day, the World is torn by the storms of Injustice, Immorality and Inflated Ego. I have come in order to establish beneficial mores, pure, habits and attitudes, and good activities, so that Dharma might be re-established."

Our Lord is the Embodiment of Truth, of Dharma. He alone knows Him. The physician who knows the genesis and nature of the illness can alone prescribe the remedy. Similarly, only He who knows the Inner Mystery of Dharma can enter the task of establishing It. Baba is restoring Dharma, in ways and through means that are beyond our comprehension. He alone knows how and when, He reinforces It and restores It to health and vitality. We can only witness and wonder, watch and revere.

Vedic Study

Baba is encouraging and reviving the Study of the Vedas and the ancient scriptures. He is laying great emphasis on Indian Culture, and its basic tenets. Baba practises them and preaches about them. His Practice is the supreme Example He asks to follow. He has founded a Vedic School; He arranges every Dasara a Vedic Yajna, strictly in conformity with the injunctions of the Vedas. The Yajna is performed by the Vedic Scholars He patronises so generously. Baba wrote in the 'Yajna Vedika': "The Vedas have to be revived not only for the acquisition of Grace here and hereafter, but also, with the aim of developing reverence to Vedic Injunctions, the fostering of Dharma and the promotion of Vedic Studies. When these are accomplished, the World will gain Peace and Prosperity. The Vedas are the Source of all that is Right. That is the reason why it is laid down, "Study the Vedas, every day." In the Gita, the Lord has said, "I am the One who is known through the Vedas." Baba is bringing Vedic Scholars from all parts of India to attend the Dasara and other Festivals and to take part in the Proceedings, giving Discourses.

He included in the Curriculum, for the Summer Course on Spiritual and Indian Culture for about 300 College students from all over India, not only the sacred texts of all religions and the epics of India, but, lectures on Ayurveda, Astrology and Yoga. The Pundits who delivered discourses on these traditional fields of learning were blessed and given tokens of Grace. Baba's discourses given every day of the month-long course were elaborations of the quintessence of the Vedas, Upanishads and Sastras, and, therefore, easy lessons on Dharma.

The Heritage

Our Lord is instilling Dharma in the hearts of young and old, through other means too. The phenomenal advances made in Science and Technology in recent times have made man cleverer, and more intelligent; but, less wise and less humble. In the name of progress, man is running along the road to barbarism and, terror. Baba alone has this day the Might and the Compassion to lead mankind in its desperate swim against the current, towards the height from which it has fallen. Converting brains into book-stores, and conferring begging bowls during convocations, Universities at the present time feel that their duty is done! Baba is establishing schools and colleges for the New University that will reveal the Universal Spirit fertilising knowledge in all climes, and that will equip man with the skill to attain Peace and Joy, Peace that will survive

bitterness and defeat, and Joy that can survive the ups and downs of Fortune. The vast heritage of wisdom earned by the sages of India is being presented to students in these institutions. Boys and girls are taught in separate Colleges and the ideal of Motherhood extolled and realised in this sacred land is emphasised in the Women's Colleges.

Sai is in every being; He is the Inner Motivator of all that lives. Therefore, if we harm another, we are harming Sai; if we serve another, we are serving Him. This is the faith that one gets, through one's experience of our Lord and His Omnipresence and Omnipotence. Baba is establishing the Dharma of Seva, asking us, to serve the poor, the diseased, the distressed, the downfallen, in an efficient manner, but, without the fanfare of publicity, propaganda and fund-raising. When the Divine Blessings of Baba are assured, why seek for alms from the indifferent and the ignorant? Baba is inspiring and instructing man in this Seva-Yoga, collecting the children in Bal Vikas Groups, the Youth in Seva Dal Units, the women in Mahila Vibhags, and the adult men in Seva Samitis, all over the World.

The children of this land, heirs to the most precious of all spiritual literature, have long been denied access to that treasure house. But, Baba insists that the Bal Vikas children be told the stories that are plentiful in the Vedas and Upanishads, the Epics and Puranas of India; He wants that they should learn to sing Bhajans, enact plays on themes from the Stories of Rama, Krishna, and the many Saints and Sages intent on God-realisation. Baba Himself has set an example by writing such plays and training boys to enact them!

His Life as Message

Baba says, "My Life is My Message." He has been impressing on us that Dharma consists in the development of Love, Forbearance, Discipline, Simplicity, Sincerity Fraternity and Reverence. Baba is Himself the supreme exemplar of these qualities. He is ever active in his self-imposed task of showering Grace. From dawn to dusk, He is ever busy in ministering to those who are torn by anxiety, fear, pain, panic doubt, disease, desire, and agony of some sort or another. He knows no distinction of status or wealth or age or scholarship. All are bathed in His Love. Dharma flows from Him; Dharma lives in and through Him.

And, let us remind ourselves that our Lord has no Duty to perform, no Benefit to gain! He has no compulsion to engage in activity! He is Master of all; He owns all, and has nothing to gain or no fear of loss! He says, in the Gita, "There is nothing I need gain; there is nothing I have not gained; there is nothing I need do, in the three worlds. But, yet, I am engaging Myself in activity!" Why then this ceaseless toil? It is graciously undertaken by Him for your benefit and mine. You and I are prone to do what those all that we consider great do. In the Rajasuya Yaga celebrated by the eldest of the Pandavas, what role did Lord Krishna play? He could have kept all by Himself. But, He imposed on Himself the task of welcoming the guests and showing them their seats! That was done only to teach others how guests have to be received and respected. Baba is active, so that we may learn the manner and method.

Shower of Grace

Another means by which Baba is establishing Dharma on the strong basis of Faith in God is by the Shower of Grace. Those who approach Him or do not, those who are devoted to the Name He has assumed or the Form He has equipped Himself with, or those who have no devotion to them,

those who have never seen Him or even heard of Him... those within the confines of India or in the most distant corners of the World—are drawn by His Grace, by means of some one picture or book, or a chance conversation, to look on Him for guidance or help; and, then, He cures the illness; rescues from the calamity, solves the puzzling problem of life, clears the doubt, loosens the knot, presents Himself in dreams, appears directly in Person before them, until He transforms them into earnest Seekers of their own Reality, which is Himself! This is uniquely Baba's own; no other incarnation has attempted this alchemy.

Four Pillars

Baba is teaching us four great principles of Life: Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema. (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love). He has often told us that if we keep these four as guide-lines in life, we cannot deviate from the Right Path. Moral Codes or what are usually referred to as Dharma (Hindu Dharma, Stri Dharma, Raja Dharma etc) are adapted to the religion one follows, the sex one is born in, the status one occupies, the profession one is bound with etc. It will be difficult for those for whom they are intended to observe these Codes because of physical, economic or educational deficiencies. Even if these Codes are observed in practice, unless these four pillars support the mansion of Life, it is bound to crumble and fall apart.

Every rite that is prescribed might be done; the worship offered to the God installed in the shrine or temple might be without a flaw of mantra or fault of ceremony. But, if the person who is Dharmic so far as these are concerned, is not observing Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema, his is but hypocritic play-acting! Bhishma is said to have told Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandava Brothers, the quintessence of Dharma, while he was awaiting Death on the bed of arrows. He said, "The expounders of Dharma are ignorant of its fundamentals and so, are leading men astray. Earnest seekers are confused by conflicting accounts and teachings. Therefore, listen, I shall tell you the basic tenets of this mode of living. A-himsa (Non-violence), Dana (Charity), Sathya (Truth), and Krodha-vivarjitham (Refraining from Anger)—these are the four cardinal principles of Dharma." We can see that Bhishma mentions Sathya; his Dana is the Dharma emphasised by Baba, for, it involves Sacrifice, Compassion, Morality etc; refraining from Anger is in other words, Shanti; and A-himsa is Prema.

Lode Stars

In this Kali Age, man is weak, in body, mind and spirit. Realising this tragedy, Baba has, with infinite Compassion, called on us to eschew almost all redundant and external rites, but, rely on Namasmara as the constant ritual and Sathya-Dharma-Shanti-Prema as the lodestars of daily living.

In the Treta Age, Sri Rama was extolled as "Vigrahavan Dharma" (Dharma Incarnate). Now, in this Kali Age, Sai Ram is the Vigrahavan Dharmah.

—*Vidwan S. V. Rama Sarma; Translated from Telugu*

Master of Time and Space

Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a modern wonder, through whom cosmic energies flow and genuine miracles manifest.

I first heard his name while taking part in a radio show, three years ago, in Long Beach, California. One of the panelists was Indra Devi, well-known Yoga teacher. She told me that he materialised objects with a wave of his hand, healed people with a thought or word, and even raised the dead. She was so enthusiastic that my first response was skepticism. I was to find that she did not exaggerate in the least!

His name is a combination of words—Sathya means, 'the highest truth'; Sai means, 'saint' and Baba means, 'revered father'. Truly, Sathya Sai Baba embodies the meaning of his name, and has all the attributes of a Divine Incarnation.

Being a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, and having met many illumined people over the years, I know the signs of sainthood. Baba is, without a doubt, a true adept and master-teacher. Some people are at first, in a state of wonder when they see him, for, he does cut a dramatic picture. He is not a large man but is very lithe and nimble; he has a certain rhythm when he moves and walks. He is ever aware and spontaneous... He is more than sharp, he knows and he is aware of what is happening all the time.

As a personality, he is an incarnation of love. The emanations just flow out to take in those who are close to him, either physically or telepathically. He is not confined to his body, he moves easily through, inner spaces not only in thought, but, in his subtle body. He has been *seen* at the bedside of dying devotees, even while conducting services or meetings hundreds of miles distant... Sai Baba is master of time and space. This I know. And, this is what a true Master is—one who comprehends the mystery of Maya, the fabric that makes up nature. When I sat with him last November, he turned to me and said, "Every thing is one-thing. Do you agree?" The realization conveyed with this simple statement was profound... To Sai Baba, the manifest worlds are projections from the Central Source and imagination makes external life possible. It is all Divine Dream, and Baba lives from the position of seeing the true nature of the Life Process...

After landing in Bombay, I flew to Bangalore and met Baba the very next day. The first evening session with Baba and about two dozen other visitors lasted three hours. I sat just to his left and was able to observe him closely, and take in his consciousness. A more alive and vital person cannot be imagined. The following day, we spent over six hours with him... I witnessed at least fifty or sixty occasions when Baba produced things for various people. Each time, it was appropriate, 'right' for the particular person and situation, He does this two ways: he materialises an object by holding a mental picture of it and exerting his will; at other times, he will teleport an object. In the first instance, Baba brings *available substance* into concrete form; in the second instance, he dematerializes an object, wherever it is, and reproduces it in his hands. It happens in a moment. I have seen him do it time and time again.

But, his miracles of manifestation are not the important aspect of his ministry. He has come to restore the 'Dharma', the creative law of life. He has come to encourage people to abide by moral and spiritual laws, in order to regenerate society and transform human consciousness. He does not teach any specific method for all people. He teaches according to individual need. When it is required, he encourages the guru-disciple relationship, gives instruction in meditation or advice relative to better living or healing of a condition. Whether speaking to one person, or one hundred thousand (as he did last year at New Delhi), he always says the right thing.

During the twelve days I spent with Sai Baba, I watched him closely and received his love... Several times, he called me in to small group interviews, where I had the opportunity to see him work with individuals. Sometimes, he opened the sessions with a casual remark, or asked a question. At other times, he would turn to a person he had never seen before and give helpful advice. Baba has said to many people, 'I know your past and I know your future'. Being with him as he worked, with so many men and women, there is not a shred of doubt in my mind, that he does know...

After visiting Sathya Sai Baba, I am convinced of his greatness and of the importance of his world-mission. He will surely visit the West one day, and the impact on mass consciousness will be profound.

—Roy Eugene Davis
(Director Center for Spiritual Awareness; Author: "Darshan: The Vision of Light")

Our Eyes and Ears

Today, in educational institutions discipline is very essential. It is only when we propagate these three, 'discipline', 'duty' and 'devotion', in all our educational institutions, that our education will deserve to be called right.

It should not be regarded as something which describes the superficial nature of worldly, sensuous ideas and details. Today students are making efforts to prepare for their examinations over-night, to fill their heads with all kinds of details. When they go into the examination hall, they empty their heads of all this material. When they return home, after their examinations, they are not in a position to give any answer to any of the questions. Whatever material has gone into their heads they pour out on a piece of paper, in the examination hall.

But, whatever education has been acquired, has to be printed on the plate of your heart; it should be a negative, a photograph is negative, so that, at any time an number of positive prints can be obtained. Education should be regarded and acquired with the spirit that it will remain as a life-long companion.

You are aware that a large number of ignorant people have come round and are giving education content and shape. We must be able to take Indian culture into our hearts, and India's traditional

vision into our eyes, and we must establish Indian culture an India's traditional vision as our guide posts in life.

Today, Indian youth are using western eyes and western ears and western hearts. It as only when our youth are able to use their own eyes to look at things, their own ears to hear the things, and their own hearts to think of these things, we can say that our youth are living a life which is their own.

—**Baba**

Why should you go about, asking all and sundry, whether something is either sugar or salt? Put a little on your tongue; that will give the correct answer for you. Have faith in that answer. What many are now doing is to reject what their experience has shown to be sugar; for, some one who has not tasted it swears that it is not sweet, but, very saltish!

—**BABA**

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

40

Left Stranded

THE new day dawned! The citizens of Ayodhya rose and looked around. There were no signs of the Royal Chariot! Nor were Sita, Rama, or Lakshmana in evidence! They were thrust into deep agony; they aroused the sleeping; they sought to trace the wheel-marks on the ground. They wept aloud; "Rama! Rama!" they wailed. They ran wildly in all directions, seeking to spot the vehicle.

One among them said, "Brothers! Rama saw how tired we were, how we were sleeping out of sheer exhaustion; so, He left this place, without taking us with Him." Then, they started blaming each other, for showing signs of exhaustion, and inducing Rama to leave them and go alone. Others condemned themselves as inferior to fish; for, they said: "Fish cannot live, without water, but, we are alive, though Rama has left us stranded." "Fie, fie, on our lives," they cursed. "We have brought on ourselves this separation from the Person dearest to us; why are we not bringing upon ourselves Death, which will end all sorrow?" they moaned. But, soon, they felt that since the Atma in them is Rama, the act of Atmahatya (Suicide) was unthinkable. It was also not a meritorious act. Even suicide can succeed only when one's destiny is to die by one's own hand! So, another among them suggested that they could pray to Destiny to sanction that kind of end for them all.

They got involved in these pathetic discussions and doubts. They were anxious to decide soon on the next step they had to take. Before long, some one announced that the tracks left by the wheels were traced. Indeed, it was good news! For, the tracks showed that the Chariot had proceeded towards Ayodhya! They followed the tracks for some distance; but, soon, they could not be seen

any longer. They had faded out. It became impossible to guess what had happened; so, they returned to the City in a mass.

Many consoled themselves, saying that Rama would certainly return to the Palace, for He had seen their plight and His heart was full of compassion towards the brokenhearted. Rama would return before the lapse of two or three days, they said. The women entered on various vows and types of worship in order to propitiate the gods to persuade Rama to return to His subjects.

People lived thereafter like Chakravaka birds which have no lotuses to live on, since the Sun is absent and they would not bloom without its warmth.

The Sacred Ganga

While the people were suffering thus, Sita, Rama and Lakshmana reached the outskirts of the town of Srngibera, with Minister Sumantha. Rama noticed the River Ganga, and immediately, directed Sumantha to stop the Chariot. He alighted and prostrated on the bare ground, before the Stream of Holiness. Sita and Lakshmana as well as Sumantha got down and did likewise. Rama told the others that Ganga was the source of all the wealth and prosperity, all the peace and plenty that shone around. Ganga gave beings Supreme Bliss and the highest spiritual boons. Then, they decided to bathe in the Holy Waters.

Rama directed Lakshmana to find some place where Sita could get down from the bank to where she could safely take bath. The banks of the river were soft and slushy in the jungle area; so, Lakshmana chose a spot, which he could reinforce by placing a few stones and rocks so that she could descend safe, and ascend in comfort after ablutions. He prayed to Sita, the Mother, to use that temporary ghat for her bath. She took great care, while stepping down; and before she entered the river, she prostrated to the Goddess Ganga. Lakshmana went into the jungle to gather some edible fruits so that Rama and Sita could recoup, with some food, after bath. He offered them, reverentially, and they partook of them.

The Nishada Chieftain

Meanwhile, a few boatmen could be seen collected there. Their eyes fell on the Royal Chariot, as well as on the princely forms of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana. They inferred that they must have arrived at that place, on a picnic party. So, they hastened to their ruler and chieftain, Guha, and informed him that a party of Royal Visitors were near. Guha sent a messenger to inquire and discover who they were and what their purpose was, in the forest, by the shore of the Ganga.

He brought back the information that they were none other than the sons of Emperor Dasaratha, and that the Princess was Sita herself, and that they were accompanied by the Royal Minister, Sumantha. Guha felt that the supremely delightful moments should not be enjoyed alone! He informed his kinsmen and comrades and friends that the great Prince, Rama had come to the Ganga with his brother and wife. He collected fruits and flowers in plenty, and, the entire party proceeded in groups, in reverential humility, towards the Ganga. Guha placed the fruit and flower offerings at the Feet of the Royal Visitors, and fell at the Feet of Rama. His kinsmen and friends also prostrated before Rama.

Devotion of Guha

Watching the joy that thrilled them, Rama called Guha near and inquired of him how they fared and whether they were all happy and peaceful. He asked the chieftain Guha how far his administration was helping the community to prosper. Guha answered, "Lord, Rama-Chandra! Beholding your Feet, we have all derived limitless Ananda. We achieved this great good luck only through the merit accumulated by us, as a consequence of good deeds in the past. Or else, can we, who spend our days in this inaccessible forest, ever hope to be blessed by your visit and the Darshan of your Lotus Feet? From now on, this region is certain to enjoy plenty and peace, for Your Feet have trodden the ground. There can be no doubt on this; the transformation is bound to happen."

Lakshmana, Sita and Sumantha noted the sincere expression of his joy and the tears of Ananda. They were astonished at his devotion, humility and wisdom. Meanwhile, Guha held fast the Feet of Rama, and, said, "Lord! All this is yours; all the riches, territory, and authority, that I have as Chieftain, as well as all my subjects are yours. They are awaiting your commands; they are at your disposal, usable for your purposes, your service. I am your servant. Accept me as such, accept all that I am offering, and enter the City where we dwell."

When Rama heard this prayer, he smiled and replied, "Guha! You are a staunch devotee; you are deeply virtuous. Your heart is very pure. But, listen, I have to roam the forest as an exile, wearing the habiliments of a hermit, in obedience to the command of my father. I should not step into a town or City. I must take only the food prescribed for monks who are engaged in austerities. I have to live in accordance with the regulations laid down for ascetics doing Tapas. For these reasons, I am unable to fulfil the wish that you have expressed now."

Guha's Grief

Hearing these words, Guha was stricken with sorrow. The large gathering of people who had come there from the city of Srngibera whispered among themselves about the divine charm of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana. One of them wondered how, the parents of those lovely brothers and that angelic late could possibly exile them into the forest. "How could their tongues ever pronounce such a sentence?" At this, another retorted, "Keep quiet, you fool! Those parents have really done what is good. Had they not spoken that sentence, we could not have feasted our eyes on their Divine Forms. This day, our eyes are enjoying a rare festival." This filled many with satisfaction and joy. The Nishada tribesmen who comprised the gathering spoke among themselves words of worshipful admiration of the royal visitors. They extolled the beauty, the tenderness, the soft sweet natures of Sita, and of Rama and Lakshmana.

Guha was immersed in sorrow that he had lost the fortune of welcoming Rama into the capital City of the Nishadas, whose chieftain he was. He felt that even if the City was 'seen' by Rama, even if His eyes once glanced at it, it would be blessed with Peace and Prosperity for ever; so, he suggested that Rama should walk towards a gigantic but gorgeous Simsupa tree that grew near by, and Rama agreed. Guha knew that Rama's eye must have fallen on the City from that spot. He was pleased at the thought. Rama too was happy, when he saw the City from a distance. He allowed the Nishadas to touch his feet and directed that they should return to their homes, since nightfall was imminent.

Beds of Grass

Then Rama went through the holy rites that had to be observed at dusk. Meanwhile, Guha gathered quantities of soft grass and tender leaves, and prepared soft beds. He sent his subjects to collect tubers and fruits, tasty and fresh from the trees and creepers of the forest and to bring them packed in leaves, for being offered to the distinguished visitors. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana as well as Sumantha partook of the frugal meal, and retired for rest, and sleep.

Sita slept on the soft bed of grass. Lakshmana sat at the Feet of Rama, in order to massage them tenderly, to relieve the tension of exertion. Rama realised that Lakshmana would continue the service, so long as He appeared to be awake; He desired to induce him to take rest; so, He pretended as if he had gone into deep sleep. At this, Lakshmana feared that any further pressing of the feet might disturb the sleep, and he quietly slipped away to a distance. There, he sat in the 'hero' posture, so that he could gaze intently at the four directions, and recognise at once any wild animal approaching the spot, or any demon or demonic person bent upon disturbing the sleep of Rama; he was all attention and vigilance.

Seeing this, Guha too instructed his faithful lieutenants to guard the area and ensure that nothing happened to disturb the sleep of Rama. He put on his shoulder the pouch of arrows, and holding the bow in readiness, sat near Lakshmana, eager to share his vigil.

Agony of the Heart

Guha, his eyes filled with tears, held his palms folded before him, and asked him, "Lakshmana! The Palace of Emperor Dasaratha is, I know, grander and more magnificent, than the Divine Mansion of the Ruler of the Gods, Indra. In that Palace, everything is charming and beautiful; everywhere there is fragrance and sweetness; soft feather-beds, lamps embossed with precious gems, add to the grandeur and comfort of the place. There, the beds have sheets light and white like froth on fresh milk, and pillows to match. Sita and Rama who used to sleep on such luxurious beds are now lying on a grassy heap, with no coverlet or pillow, sleeping through sheer physical exertion! It is insufferable agony for me to contemplate this scene. His father and mother, his aides and maids were looking after his needs and comforts in various ways. Sita and Rama who lived royally until yesterday are now lying on the hard ground! Alas, my heart is torn to pieces by grief."

"Sita is the beloved daughter of the world-renowned Emperor Janaka; yet, new, she is lying on a spread of dry grass. What a strange turn of fate is this! Are these Sita and Rama fit for life in the forest? O, it is now being proved true, that the consequence of one's acts are binding, in spite of everything else."

"Kaikeyi is the daughter of the King of Kekaya State. No one can believe that she is capable of this atrociously sinful act. These two are at a period of their lives when they have to be happy together. What a reprehensible act is it to inflict on them now this hard sentence! Such a fate should not overtake even one's worst enemy."

"The Kekaya Princess has proved herself to be the axe that would cut the very roots of the Tree of the Solar Dynasty. Her selfish greed has sunk the world in sorrow. Ah! My horrid eyes are destined to look on this pathetic sight! What horrible sin did I indulge in, to deserve this

punishment? Whose happy life caused my eyes in the past to become red with envy; that I had to see my beloved Rama in this plight?"

Guha wailed thus; unable to stop the onrush of the surging waves of grief, he kept his mouth shut, and sat, with head bowed in irrepressible agony. At this, Lakshmana too was plunged in gloom.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness
(To be continued)

Sai Family News

1. A Letter from the Netherlands

As Dharma is so much in decay lately, I was expecting Krishna back on earth, as He had promised to re-install humanity. In Amsterdam, we have a Radha-Krishna Temple, and I visit it many times. Recently, I read uninterruptedly, three times in ten days, your Book, Sai Baba, Man of Miracles, in Dutch Translation. What I read on Him makes me convinced that He must be the re-incarnation of Krishna, just as Lord Chaitanya was 500 years ago. Just fancy! Krishna is on Earth! This is the MOST WONDERFUL THING! The miracles are next to unbelievable in the West, but, to me it is quite normal that an Avatar should have complete government and control over everything material and spiritual. Television offers everyday most banal and trivial things, but, they would not report on this most important event, the Avatar being on earth! It is a shame! I have written for the three parts of the Life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Not one day passes without me reading about Krishna; therefore, the said books will be so welcome to me. I was a Sufi initially; I love Krishna, notwithstanding the pulls that put me again and again into Maya. How much I would like to be a 100% devotee of Krishna! God willing, I shall visit Vrindaban, where the Lotus Feet of Krishna touched the ground five thousand years ago. I shall settle under the holy Vatauliksha He planted Himself as Sathya Sai Baba.

—J. J. V. D. Stel

(Howard Murphet, while sending this letter to us, wrote, "Indians may be interested to know of Fires being lighted in far-off places from Sparks of the great Divine Flame there, in Prasanthi Nilayam.")

2. Operation SSS Medi Check

Workers who tasted the joy of service during the Eye Camp held in Coimbatore in the first week of September were longing for another opportunity to render service. The idea of a large scale medical check-up of a stipulated number of villages and hamlets where medical assistance was available only at a long distance was therefore welcomed. Bhagavan blessed the project, on 5th March 1973. Thereafter, preparations were set afoot. The Kadri Mill High School on the National Highway was chosen as the venue, for, there were 10 villages and 15 hamlets, with a population of many thousands living in them, with no medical facilities within reach. The Check-up was announced for 25th March. Publicity was given, through posters and hand-bills, and volunteers announced the event through mobile vans carrying loudspeakers. Slides were

exhibited during film shows. The date, place and purpose of the camp were announced in temples, churches and mosques. 44 Doctors and ten Para-medical personnel offered their services with genuine enthusiasm. 200 volunteers were enlisted, besides the Scouts of the School, and the members of the Mahila Vibhags of the participating Samitis.

Children scrubbed and cleaned the Boors and walls, and re-arranged the furniture for the Camp. A long cool pandal was erected to shelter the villagers while they waited; the water pipe was extended into the area, and squads were allotted the task of supplying water. The rooms were specially fitted with electric connections, for conducting tests. A big bungalow adjacent to the School was given over to the Catering Section, which was run by the Mahila Vibhags—the Sullur Mahila Vibhag prepared the breakfast, the Coimbatore Mahila Vibhag made themselves responsible for lunch, and the Podanur Mahila Vibhag undertook to prepare and supply the evening tea. No hired labour was employed for cooking, cleaning of utensils or serving food.

At 0445 on the 25th, the skies echoed Omkar from 200 hearts and throats, followed by Sri Sathya Sai Suprabhatam. Then, like a trained regiment, the 200 moved, singing Bhajan up to the gate, where they divided into two columns, one taking the road that led east and the other the road to the west. The two parties of Nagarasankirtan converged again at the gate, exactly an hour later and proceeded to the shrine inside the Camp.

At 0630, the Prasanthi Flag was hoisted by Sri O. K. Damodara Rao, the State President for the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in Tamil Nadu. At 0800 hours the Camp was inaugurated by Dr. Kulandaivelu, M.A. Ph.D, Principal, Teachers College, attached to the Ramakrishna Vaidyalaya.

2108 patients, with 650 children availed of this opportunity. On entry he/she was registered. His/her height and weight were recorded, and later, as they passed through the Camp, the BP of all who were above 40 years of age was recorded, urine was checked for sugar and tension in the eyes measured, as a planned diabetic and glaucoma detection programme. Doctors in the sorting counter referred the patients to the various specialists who were in attendance, such as physicians, child specialists, eye specialists, dental surgeons, ENT specialists, skin therapists, surgeons, gynaecologists, TB specialists, and bone specialists. While leaving, each one received the medicines at the dispensary, and at the Prasadam Counter they were given, along with sweets, the Medicine of Medicines, the Vibhuti. Drugs worth about ten thousand rupees were dispensed that day; they were mostly gifts received from doctors and pharmaceutical companies. A Clinical Laboratory provided laboratory facilities at the Camp, and deputed two technicians who helped the team of doctors. Urine; blood, faeces and sputum tests were conducted. A Crèche was nicely run for the children.

The eye specialists and the physicians had the busiest time of all. 300 ENT cases, 170 skin cases, 120 gynaec cases, and 76 dental cases (with 12 extractions) were attended to, in detail., Nearly 500 injections were administered, as per the advice of the physicians. Many were advised to meet the doctors later, for further courses of free treatment.

The atmosphere was charged with the spirit of devotion and service. Fragrance from the jasmine garland on Bhagavan's picture in the shrine pervaded the Camp and every one felt His Presence.

Many of the villagers stayed on for Bhajan in the evening at the school. Sri Damodara Rao and Sri A Kandaswamy, the District President addressed the gathering. At 7 P.M., Mangala Aarati was offered and the Camp was wound up, amidst cheers of Jai Sairam.

About 2000 persons working in various industrial units in rural areas adjacent to the Camp requested that since they could come only after 4 P.M., the Camp may be extended till nightfall. They were requested to attend the next camp, which, it is hoped can be arranged, with Bhagavan's Blessings, in the future. The Doctors are eager to give them the benefit of their knowledge and skill. The Camp was the combined venture of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, at Sulur, Podanur and Coimbatore.

—Report from Dr. Pannaivanam

3. Weekly Visitors

I heard a knock at the door; there were also some subdued whispers and a distinct 'Sai Ram.'

I called Sai Latha, the 8-year-old daughter of my host to open the door; she apologised for not being ready when the knock came. She admitted into the hall a motley group of nine children, more or less her own age. There were three girls in that party. They were familiar with the topography of the house, for they straight trooped into the bathroom and washed their feet, hands and faces. Then, they went into the shrine room and put on their foreheads dots of Vibhuti from the little casket that Latha held before them. "Who are these nine planets?" I joked; but, the host put his finger across his lips and counselled silence.

It was 30 minutes past ten. The hostess spread a long carpet on the ground and placed before it a line of ten plantain leaves, as if for lunch. "This is Uncle," she said, introducing me; the host had gone into the kitchen to bring the menu. They bowed and said Sai Ram rising to touch my feet. I protested and said the bow was enough. "They are our guests; Baba has sent them; they are Sai Latha's friends," he said, while serving roti on their leaves. "They come from the Bhajan Group in the slum colony near by," added the mother. "We have our lunch after the children have finished." The menu was simple, except for pappad and payasam. Before they began, they prayed, Sai Ram; at the end, they recited, Asatho ma sad gamaya.

Before they left the house, I asked them to sing a bhajan and, when they started to sing, I was transported to Prasanthi Nilayam itself. Latha accompanied them, up to the wicket gate; the host and hostess waved their hands, and said, "Next Sunday! All of you."

"Uncle! Last year, during the State Conference at Dharwar, Baba spoke about the Feeding of the Poor, which has become a routine item in the activities of all Samithis. He said that providing one meal a month or every fortnight to congregations of professional beggars might be spectacular, but, it does not bring the beggars any nearer to the new life. It does not cleanse the hearts of the giver or the receiver, He declared. It does not bring hearts nearer, He said.

He suggested this alternative. He directed us to keep aside in a special receptacle a handful of two of rice or flour, every time we take it out from the store, for preparing our food. It will be 'Baba's Rice', He said 'for Baba's Children'.

He asked us to cook this rice or prepare rotis out of the flour, every Sunday; invite children from some slum colony or homes of the poor near by; and, "feed them with your own children, with the same care and love." You must take your food only after they have been fed. "Feeding children is much more beneficent and joyful than feeding adults; their minds are pure and innocent. Teach them a few Bhajans, inquire about their parents; visit their homes when loving kinship is established between you; that will be more lasting and more fruitful service," Baba said.

"This is a great step in the building of the Sai Family"; I exclaimed. "These children have become so charming, healthy, happy and peaceful. What about their parents and their homes?" I asked. They have urged their parents to start a Bhajan Mandali in the slum; we go there every Saturday. We visit their homes. The girl with the blue skirt—her father died last week, run over by a truck from which he fell. We visited her mother, comforted her and directed her to a lawyer, friend; she is now very brave and composed." replied the host.

Latha reminded us of the Shrine Room where Aarati was about to be offered. I stood facing Baba, with tears in my eyes, for I saw in Him, the Child of Brindavan, eating simple fare with the cowherd companions.

"Some others of this Mahila Vibhag are also inviting every Sunday, small batches of children to partake of Baba's Prasad," the mother informed me, writes Dr. Narayana Murthy.

4. Service of Mothers

During the recent agitations in Andhra Pradesh, over the Mulki Rules issue, normal life of the, citizens of Visakhapatnam was completely disrupted; since doctors nurses and compounders were also on strike, hospitals were perforce deserted. Private medical practitioners who were the only people available for consultation did not have the facilities and equipment that the hospitals had. The hospitals were catering to the poor, but, since they were closed by the strike, the poor found it difficult to resort for medical advice to doctors not employed by the Government. The worst affected were indigent women, who were expecting confinement, for, the maternity departments of Government Hospitals were closed!

As an emergency measure, members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Visakhapatnam set up the "Sri Sathya Sai Free Maternity Home," with twelve beds, and an out -patient department. It was fully equipped to deal with all types of maternity cases, and had medical and surgical facilities. The Home was managed by Dr. C. Mangamma, M.B.B.S, D.G.O, who offered her services free, and served the patients devotedly, bearing all costs herself. From 12-2-73 when the Home was inaugurated, till 28-3-73, 44 deliveries were arranged for at the Home. Besides many normal deliveries, these included complications like eclampsia, placenta previa, forceps case, breach presentation and urine retention. The out-patient department served the needs of hundreds, of poor patients every day. No consultation fee was charged and medicines were supplied free.

Dr. A. Bapiraju, the District President, reports that all the cases treated at the Free Maternity Home, and all deliveries attended to, were successful. Every one returned home, with a smiling,

face, after prostrating before the Portrait of Bhagavan in the Shrine set up at the Home, and receiving the Prasad offered there.

5. Prasad Centres

"The Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in Bijapur District have, by their joint efforts, and the enthusiastic co-operation of Samithis and of Mahila Vibhags in other parts of Mysore State started, popular "Sri Sathya Sai Prasad Centres" in the villages seriously affected by the drought and scarcity conditions. Bhagavan has blessed this endeavour and so, large quantities of jowar and other grains have been collected from other districts as well'. At Chadchan more than 200 people are given a full and daily meal of jowar rotis; another Prasad Centre has also been opened at Amjutgi, a village in the same Taluq. The Prasad is given by the Seva Samithis of the Villages, at Bhajan Sessions that are held every day." writes Sri H. M. Shivaram

6. Blood Donors

"Donation of blood is an important item of service for the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal, Bombay. Mother nature has so decreed that the stuff on which man's life depends is manufactured by Her Grace solely in man's own body! No process of science has yet been able to produce blood.

Animal blood cannot be used for human beings. During wars, or when there is a huge fire disaster, there is usually a donor crisis. But, blood transfusion is necessary in maternity cases, when serious operations are done and when accident cases have to be treated. 15 minutes of our time and half a pint of our blood may mean a LIFE-TIME for some one else. Blood donation does no harm to a normally healthy person. Only 250 c.c. is collected from one person at a time; this quantity is fully replenished by the body within 48 hours. Once every three months, blood can be safely donated. The process is painless and takes no more than 3 minutes. It is collected by experienced persons, under proper supervision and after thorough examination of the blood and the physical condition of the donor.

The Bombay Seva Dal has donated more than 500 bottles of blood, since it was inaugurated. It works in close collaboration with the St. George Hospital, Bombay.

It has also arranged Blood Donation Drives, through Mobile Collection Centres, Film Shows and Lectures, in close collaboration with the authorities of the St. George Hospital.

Blood has no substitute. Donated blood saves lives in extreme danger. So, the Sathya Sai Seva Dal member who shares in this great act of service is only fulfilling the ideal set before him by Bhagavan." Writes Dr. K. K. Mistry.

The Father

One day, I was feeling depressed and very unloved. I took my little girl by the hand and went to do a little shopping, to cheer myself up, and, then, lo, I saw the book, "Baba"! I picked it up, and, I felt—I don't know how to explain it—I'll use the word—'beautiful', all inside.

In my religion, the word Baba means 'Father'. My religion is Yoruba, which comes from Southern Nigeria. Our Ouishas, (Gods) are Sango (God of Thunder), Ochun (Goddess of the Rivers) and Yemayo (Goddess of the Seas). Obatala (God of Whiteness and Purity), we call, 'Baba', because He is the Father of all the Ouishas. True to the belief that Baba is the Father, when I read about Him, all my problems seemed to melt away, leaving me with a calmness and joy, that knew no bounds.

Maria Jemenez; New York

An Upadesh in Stone

The March of Time brings; in its inevitable precision, a New Year at the end of each twelve-month period. Such a New Year Day is adhered to with a new hope for the future. The New Year Day heralding the year, Pramadi, is however invested with a deeper and more abiding significance and grace, to the devotees of Sai in Andhra Pradesh in general and the Twin Cities in particular.

Bhagavan's arrival in the City on the New Year Day has opened to us the portals of "Sivam." It is not merely the Inaugural Function of entry into the newly built edifice, that it signifies. To us, it is of such lasting import, that the depth of the import can scarcely be gauged. Every New Year chimes in with the note, "Ring in the new, ring out the old." But, the old and the new are pathetically alike; the new merges with the old, with nothing to distinguish the one from the other. There is a distressing continuity of the same actions, thoughts, utterances, and inner and outer lives.

Inviting us to enter the portals of 'Sivam' on this New Year's Day, has not Bhagavan, in a subtle esoteric manner, led us away from the beaten track of other New Year Days, to a different pathway leading to the Goal which we have to reach? To my mind, the co-incidence is not un-intended; the New Year has brought us into the fold of "Sivam", which is the essence of pure, resplendent, beneficial and divine element. A new vista has been opened, as also a new path. We are asked to take a look at "Sathyam" and project ourselves into the realm of "Sundaram."

Architecture, it has been said, is petrified music. It seems to have other facets too. 'Sivam' is a Sermon, an Upadesh, in stone. Its exquisite beauty symbolises Bhagavan's teaching that each of us is basically "Sathyam Sivam Sundaram." It is a constant inspiration to us, to live in tune with the Infinite, and in harmony with the spirit of "Sivam."

From the 4th day of April till the 12th, Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourses every evening. The gathering was the' largest on Sri Rama Navami, the filth day of April. On the first day, it was only slightly less. The vast assembly heard the messages with rapt attention. The Bhajans that Bhagavan sang at the conclusion of the discourse were exquisitely sweet. Their melody has been woven into the fabric of our souls, and the notes of incomparable melody will ring in our ears and hearts for as long as we live. The exhilaration and thrill that the songs confer can only be felt and treasured; no description can do justice to the mellifluous 'nada' and grace.

The twelve days were days of unalloyed happiness and ecstasy, when every one experienced the exalted state of 'inner self'; the aura of Prema and Shanti was unmistakably sensed by one and all. I must confess my inability to recount the events in their depth and authenticity. What I can do is a poor presentation of the 'Viswaroopa' that our eyes can scarcely behold and our minds can dimly, if at all, comprehend.

—*Justice V. Parthasarathi*

Message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the Occasion of Celebration of Dharmakshetra Anniversary on 12-5-1973

Sri Sathya Sai Baba Prasanthi Nilayam 11-5-1973

My Dears!

Verily, Thoughts are Things. As you think, you become. What we sow, we reap. GOD if you think of, GOD you are. Dust if you think of; Dust you, are. In my turn, in my own way, I love to ask the same question of you.

We are in the light. The light is in us. We are the light. That which exists is one. You are that light. TATT TWAM ASI—Thou art That. The Power that sets the winds and moves; the suns and fiery galaxies through space and mind is in me, is me, that I am. That is Atma.

There is something which is impossible for the men of GOD-realisation to do. Do you know what this is? He cannot forget Himself!

The Effulgent light is the only changeless Reality in the World of never-ending and changes. When once he has seen the light, has known the light, when once he has recognised the light, how can he ever forget it? Verily, that light is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient. The man of GOD-realisation is Himself the light.

It is incorrect to use words such as 'seeing' and 'knowing' for there is nothing for him to see or know besides Himself, the light. He is the One without a Second.

He is SAI, always with you, in you. You are in Sai. Sai is in you. Be GOOD.

With Blessings,

SAI

Four Truths

The firm truth we have to know about Bhagavan is that He is not limited by the body that He dwells in. This body does not imprison Him, as our bodies imprison us. He is free. He can be anywhere and everywhere. Time and space are no barriers to Him. This Omnipresence is one of the facets of His Personality.

The second aspect is His Omniscience, the Universal Consciousness. He knows what is in the mind of every one. He reads the past and the present of every one, like an open book. The future of every man is also known to Him. Omnipresence and Omniscience by themselves will not be of much use to humanity. He might be everywhere and everything. But, if He has not the power

to set things right, to cure the evil and support the right, the Incarnation will be ineffective. Baba has the third attribute of Omnipotence also. Nothing is beyond His capacity.

Lastly, Baba has the unique attribute of Omnifelicity, the Compassion and the Capacity to give everyone 'Delight'. Each individual feels and knows that Baba loves him as much as He loves any one else, or even a little more. His love radiates in all directions and all feel the impact of His Grace.

—Principal T. H: Vaidyanathan; Chandigarh

Hand in Hand

Tuesday, 5th December 1972. At lunchtime, a friend phoned that Baba had come to Whitefield. My wife suggested that we might go there, the same afternoon. I readily agreed. My grandson was to drive the car.

We started at 3-30 and reached about 4-15. The sight of numerous cars parked outside the main gate assured us that Baba was 'in'. We parked the car by the roadside, and walked in.

I proceeded to the inner gate of Baba's Residence, but, the volunteers there would not allow me in. Our party sat near the pandal round the big tree, but, got under its shelter when it soon began to drizzle.

I and my little grandson, Anand aged 8 got under the chejja of a window of the College Office. It appeared to me an endless wait. For, Baba did not come out till it was almost 6 P.M. It was already getting dark. Outside the inner gate, there was a small crowd; ourselves among them, inconspicuously by the edge of the road. Anand was hungry and restless. I thought within myself that I would not come again in a hurry.

Everything changed as soon as Baba came out. He acknowledged the Pranams of the crowd, talked a word or two to a couple of American ladies who had been waiting under a tree, and walked, straight to where I was standing. With His face beaming, and a gracious smile, He said to me, "I am happy to see you." I bent low and touched His feet. All my grouse had vanished. I felt overwhelmed.

Baba took my hand in His, and kept it, while He moved forward and I with Him, with my grandson following close!

Many onlookers took flash snaps. One of them said to me, as we neared him "You are very fortunate." I whispered, "It is all Baba's Grace."

Then, Baba released my hand, and saying, "Come tomorrow morning," and blessing, Anand with Vibhuti, He got into a car and drove away.

That grasp, of my hand in His, is a great event in my life. It was a clasp of Grace.

As the result of an injury received by me, during the course of the "St. Philomena Church Riots" in Mysore, where I was City Magistrate, in 1937, I had developed an inability to write with my hand. I managed to do my writing assignments using typewriter most of the time. After retiring from Government Service, 20 years ago, the disability increased, until I was lately unable even to sign my name on a cheque.

It was a handicap, which affected me deeply. All sorts of treatment, including mantra and tantra had been tried, but, in vain. After my first Darshan of Baba, I used to apply a little of "the Vibhuti, He had given, daily on my hand. There was improvement, but, not enough for me. I had once said, jokingly, long before I saw Him, that I would believe in Him, if He cured me of my writing disability. But, I had never mentioned it to Him, or even thought of it when I was in His Presence. But, the miracle has actually happened!

Ever since my Darshan on the evening of the 5th day of December, when Baba had grasped my hand, there has been remarkable improvement in my writing capacity. The fact of Baba's holding my hand had so stunned me that it drove away all thoughts from my mind. It, was only a fortnight later, on the 19th December, Dattatreya Jayanti, that it struck me with a flash, that the inexplicable improvement was entirely due to the Baba contact.

The more I dwell on it, the more the Truth of this grows on me. I do not seek to convince anybody; but, I am myself convinced, that, as He has so often said, Baba is an Avatar of Datta, my Patron Deity, after whom I am named Om Sathya Sai Datta.

—H. Guru Dutt. I.A.S. (Retd)

Gift from the Blue

Many and different are the ways by which Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba showers His blessings on His devotees. Bhagavan was going in a car, running at quite a speed, just near the India Gate, while at New Delhi. Suddenly, He instructed the driver to stop. Every one with Him was surprised. He got down, crossed the road, went to an old man in tattered clothes on the pavement, bent down, materialised a ring, put it on one of his fingers, and came back happy to His car.'

News Chronicle

Immortal Desires

Establishing universal peace, eliminating petty ideas of aggrandizement and egoism from the mind, and planting and fostering the idea of unity among all human beings those are the ideals of good education. Indian Culture has been laying emphasis on these ideals from time immemorial. Educational institutions have to promote humility, fear of sin and vice, devotion to the traditions and cultural heritage of the country, and eagerness to serve others who need love help and

guidance. They must help students to realise their own Reality, which is God. They must make all activities of man meaningful and purposeful.

We have to take great care that Indian Culture which stands on five distinct principles of conduct is preserved, promoted and propagated. They are Sathyam Vada (speak the Truth), Dharmam Chara (Walk in the path of Righteousness), Matru devo bhava (Revere your mother as your God) Pitru devo bhava (Revere your father as God), Acharya devo bhava (Revere your teacher as God). It is my intention to establish institutions which will sow these ideals and this heritage all over this Country, as part of my mission to revive Dharma.

Poonamchand Kamani had understood and assimilated this sacred idea and he had a desire to have a College in Jaipur, to propagate this Atma Tattwa and the Sanathana Dharma which fosters that Atmic Principle. Since this desire was 'immortal' in him, the desire did not vanish; when he passed away; his brothers have taken it up and have decided to establish this sacred institution here. Therefore, I have undertaken to lay the foundation stone for this College today.

As Divine Atma within Swami, Poonamchand is enjoying the bliss of this Function. His name itself was Poornachandra. It means that he has a clear and peaceful mind, a holy pious mind. So, what we have done this day is to lay the foundation for an Institution that will give and radiate cool beams. The students who will come out of this College will have full, peaceful, pure, cool, calm hearts.

The moon, or Poornachandra, is the presiding deity of the mind, just as the Sun is the presiding deity of the Eye, or vision and insight. So, this Institution which will train the mind, cleanse the mind and use it as an instrument for the liberation of man is associated with Poornachandra, who yearned to see it established here.

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse: Jaipur 26-3-73*

Treat your mind as you treat a little child. Caress it, train it to avoid dangers, to tread safely through traffic, teach it to be wise and circumspect, remove all its fears and foibles, and regulate its food and drink—the inputs that fashion it, focus its attention on the goal ahead, not the pleasure at the doorstep. Make it aware that all objects that are seen or heard or touched or tasted or smelt are impermanent, illusory, mere appearances on the basic reality of the Atman.

—**BABA**

IS ME

Your Grace now fills my sky with Light,
Removes the darkness and the fright;
And, as if it were again,
That point in Love that Time began

A new beginning has been found;
This young plant stirs beneath the ground.
Now, rising up toward the Light
I feel as though I may take Flight
Until, I chance to look and see
A small part of that Light is me.

—*Janet Bock*

Leelas, Leelas, More Leelas

Lila Young

i had briefly mentioned in the Sanathana Sarathi, last November, that about 50 people had made the trip to come with me to India, into the physical Presence of Bhagavan. Bhagavan's Leela! Some of them had already experienced His Grace, even before they met Him. Lila Young, for example, was determined to see Him and had ready her passport, visa, and vaccination certificates. The only missing item was—money! How could she travel? But, she felt sure that Bhagavan will answer her ardent prayers. And so it happened!

Later when Bhagavan called the group into the Interview Room, that could hardly hold so many people, while talking kindly to us, He produced suddenly, by that quick wave of His Hand a crystal japmala, and without a word, He threw it round Lila's neck!

A few days before we were scheduled to depart, a neighbour offered her 2000 dollars, without being asked for it! For, her husband, an inventor, suddenly received a fine offer for one of his inventions, some luck that didn't happen in the last ten years. "We did not have even five dollars in the house," Lila told us, when relating this Leela, with tears in her eyes.

Warner Bros

Listening to her, i was reminded of what happened to me several years ago when, one evening, after meditation, i lifted my eyes to Bhagavan's picture, saying, "Please take me to Puttaparthi for your Birthday," although I was not planning to go there, before Spring.

Two days later, a young man whom i knew from our Sai Baba Center in Los Angeles, phoned to Tecate. "Mataji, Could you go to India tomorrow, if Warner Brothers pay your trip? They want Baba's permission to take a documentary film of His Life"! Seeing me off at the Air-port, Dick Bock, who runs the Los Angeles Center remarked to every one around "Whatever will come our this trip, the main thing is Mataji is going to India."

The interesting thing, however, was that after my return, when i wanted to report under what conditions Bhagavan gave His permission, there was no one at the Warner Brothers who knew anything about me, the trip or even Bhagavan! One of the executives to whom i told the story promised to enquire and let me know. i haven't heard from him or any one else up to this day, though 3 years have passed!

Hawaii

Well. Returning to America, shortly before Christmas, Bhagavan kept me busier than ever. In January, it was a Sai Yoga Seminar for two weeks, conducted at the Sai Yoga Center at Tecate; in February, it was Honolulu and Maui, on the beautiful Hawaiian Islands. During the Sai Seminars, most of the participants turned into devoted followers of Bhagavan, in less than two days! So for the public Lectures at the University or College Halls the new members of the Sai Family turned up to decorate the stage, to sing Bhajans and to share their enthusiasm and Love with every one present. We were seldom dispersed before midnight, although by 7 o'clock, the halls were usually full. In Honolulu, the Bhajan Session had been regularly held, already for quite some time, at the home of Terry and Diane Payne and of the architect Steve Au after he and his wife returned from Prasanthi Nilayam.

Arizona

It was different however in Arizona, where we went in March with Rosita, our Yoga Instructor at Tecate and my adopted daughter. No one there with the exception of two of my former students, had ever heard of Bhagavan, ever sang any Bhajans or ever meditated. Nevertheless, on the last day, at parting, all of them knelt down to receive the Vibhuti, and every, one began to cry until i finally reminded that it was not a funeral! I told them that Bhagavan will be with them whenever they call Him.

A Letter

In conclusion, i would like to share with you some parts of a letter, which arrived about 2 weeks after we returned from Honolulu, where we had visited Dr. Kramer and his wife Meeke, who were with me, in India, on the last trip in October. She had leukemia, but, looked very well, when i saw her in Hawaii. When she sat for meditation with me, in front of Bhagavan's picture, i soon tip-toed out to leave her alone, and suggested that the four of us who came to see her quietly sing bhajans in front of the closed door of her room. When she finished meditation, she came out with tears in her eyes and i had the feeling that this was the last time i see her.

"Dear Mataji," wrote Dr. Kramer, "This is to tell you the *sad and glorious* news of Meeke's passing away. She must have gone straight into Baba's hands. She was so peaceful, so smiling, so completely without apprehension or anxiety and she could think of Baba's Name until the very last second." "Thank you for singing the bhajans. She thought it celestial music. At Puttaparthi, Baba promised to give, her strength. Of course, hopefully, she interpreted this as 'I will be cured', but, Baba sure gave her what He promised. It was *the most valuable gift* she ever received."

This is truly the way -every devotee of Bhagavan should be going, and also the attitude the near and dear ones should have, to forget their own grief, and to rejoice that, the loved one has merged with Bhagavan.

—India Devi
Sai Yoga Center, Rancho Cuchuma

Once, in 1000 years

The darkness of untruth and hatred is prevalent over the whole world. Man has thrown overboard as useless, the moral spiritual and ethical values, cherished over many centuries. The bonds of love and faith are no longer effective to hold nations, communities, societies, families and even the members of the same family together in mutual co-operation. Man is in search of peace in this warring world, of joy in this wailing society. Uneasy and unsatisfied, he is groping in the night.

Lo! The day has dawned. The rays of the Sun are prevailing over the entire planet. Sathya Sai, the Sun, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent Embodiment of Love, has risen over the horizon. We are fortunate that we are living in the Sai Era. He calls on the World: Come to me, empty handed; I shall fill them with Peace and Joy. The caravan that has responded to that Call is unending and the Compassion of the Giver is also un-ending. Like Gautama Buddha and Vivekananda, Sathya Sai has organised a Samiti in every town and village, to keep the Lamp of Peace and Joy, lit bright.

He has also declared that He would change the World and that no power on earth can stop that consummation. Workers devoted to Him and His task are already numbered in millions and they are increasing at a fast rate, every day, all over the World. The Sai Organisation can quench the thirst of crores of people, caught up in this age of technology and unashamed affluence and power. Sai is vigilant everywhere and at all times; and so, He guides and controls the Organisation most effectively, never allowing it to dilute its aims or tarnish its ideals, by bringing in the ego and its demeaning influence. This is an age of publicity and propaganda; but, the widest and the most lasting publicity is done by Truth and Love. These instruments are the ones which the Samitis use, under the advice of, Sathya Sai. Therefore, He exhorts all mankind to rise up to the highest level it can reach, in Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love, so that it can justify the Advent of the Incarnation of the Lord, an Event that happens only once in thousand years.

—Mohammad Amin

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Beyond Joy and Grief

Lakshmana gathered some courage and said, "O! Chieftain of the Nishadas! One does not get happiness through another nor does he become miserable through another. He cannot get good fortune or bad fortune, through another. There is no possibility for such indirect means to succeed. Nor can one really be either happy or miserable. Each one comes for some purpose, urged by the potentiality of their acts in the previous birth or by some sovereign will and resolution. And, in these of fulfilling that purpose, they appear to be happy or miserable; that is all. A beggar, dreams that he is a king; a king dreams that he is a beggar. When they awake, they find

that the happiness and the misery were only dreams, unreal, short lived. So too, the World is a dream, unreal, illusory. It is Mithya. You feel sorrow because Rama is in this plight; but, Rama is above and beyond grief and joy. For those who watch him, according to the good fortune or misfortune as decided by the merit or demerit acquired and accumulated, he may appear to be happy or miserable; what you see as joy or Brief in Rama is only the reflection of your own mental states." At this, Guha calmed himself, and gave up the rage he had directed against Kaikeyi, a little while ago. He understood that it was not proper to find fault, with another and assign blame.

"People are all laid up in the sleep of delusion. And, they are engaged in witnessing a variety of dreams. This is the way men spend the night called 'life'; the Yogis, self-mastered people; they alone keep awake in this night, without, being caught up in sleep or enchanted by dreams. They have no use for the world and its contents. They have turned away from all sensual pleasures and entanglements. Until this stage is reached, people cannot refer to themselves as 'awake'. When Jnana is attained and the Reality is realised, then, the bonds of delusion will fall off, and Love will be fixed on the Lotus Feet of Sri Rama." Guha's thoughts ran on in this strait. He was comforted and strengthened by them. The rest of the night was spent by Guha and Lakshmana, narrating to each other the super-human attributes of Rama and the fullness of the Glory that was latent in him.

Matted Hair

Meanwhile, it was dawn. While one of them stood guard where Rama slept, the other finished his morning ablutions and returned. Soon Rama moved his limbs, rubbed his eyes, and sitting up, looked at the four quarters. He awakened Sita, and both wended their way to the river Ganga. After bathing, and completing the morning rites, they came to the place where Guha and Lakshmana were. Rama directed Lakshmana to bring a quantity of the milky juice of the fichus tree. Lakshmana moved off without murmur, into the forest near by, and without much delay, he brought with him a leaf-bowl full of the juice. Rama applied the juice on the hair on his head and it turned into a thick lump of matted hair, the like of which is generally worn by hermits.

Looking on at this act of Rama, Sumantha could not restrain his sobs. He was shocked that the head which had the right to wear the jewelled Crown was now carrying the burden of matted hair. He lamented that his eyes were destined ever to see this tragic sight. His heart was scorched by agony. "I cannot be with you any longer in the forest; it has become impossible. I have accomplished the orders of the Emperor. Fate is cutting, short my stay in your presence. His orders were to take you in the chariot until we arrive on the banks of any holy river, and then, leave you there and return. I have the duty to inform you this fact; now, it is your turn to tell me what I have to do," said Sumantha, standing before Rama, with head bent in sorrow in humility, and tears flowing freely from his eyes.

"Do not grieve," Rama said. "Accomplishing the orders of the Emperor is your duty, and mine too. I am very happy that you carried out the orders he gave you. Thenceforward, I shall carry out the order, that he has given me. I shall follow his directions with the greatest reverence, and in scrupulous detail. Do not delay; return to Ayodhya. My parents will be awaiting your arrival with unbounded anxiety. They are longing to hear from you the description of our journey so far. So, take the chariot back and proceed fast," he urged.

Sumantha to Return

Sumantha pictured to himself the place he had to go back to. He pleaded pathetically, "O Rama-Chandra! See that Ayodhya does not become an orphan city. The Emperor will find it difficult to hold himself together in your absence. Bharata will find it impossible to reign." Sumantha fell at the Feet of Rama, unable to bear the weight of his sorrow. Rama lifted him up, and holding him by the shoulder; he consoled him. "Sumantha! No principle of righteousness is higher than Truth. The Vedas, the Puranas, the Epics, all assert and proclaim this, as you know. Now, I have been assigned the task of following this supreme principle of righteousness! What great good fortune is this! If I miss this chance and lose this fortune, I and my dynasty will earn eternal infamy in all the three worlds. Infamy will burn the righteous, more excruciatingly than a million deaths and cremations. Go, fall at the feet of my father and make clear to him my determination and my joy. You must be vigilant that my father is not worried about me, Sita and Lakshmana."

Guha and his followers heard these words of Rama, and were visibly affected by them. Without being aware of it, they started shedding tears. Lakshmana could not bear the anguish; he uttered a few words of anger and bitterness against those who caused this tragedy. But, Rama realised his temper and stopped him forthwith. Then, he turned to Minister Sumantha, and said, "Sumantha! Lakshmana is a stripling; do not attach importance to his words. Do not communicate them to father. Lakshmana's mind is undergoing such suffering, since he has great affection for me, and since he is affected by the troubles that afflict Sita. He gave vent to such expressions, for, he has a mistaken notion about those who sent me to the forest in exile. By nature, Lakshmana is endowed with very good qualities." Then, Rama began to describe the virtues of his brother.

Sumantha, raised his head and pleaded with Rama about Sita. "Lord! Janaki is tender and soft-natured. She cannot brave the travails of forest life. It is necessary to advise her to return to the City, in all ways that would convince her that it is the proper thing to do. She is the life-breath of Ayodhya. She is the Goddess of Prosperity for the Empire. If she cannot come to Ayodhya, the inhabitants of that City will suffer like fish in a dry tank. Let her return, and reside, as she desires, with her mother-in-law or her parents. The Emperor has commanded me, again and again, to tell you this, in these very words. When you return to Ayodhya at the end of the fourteen years, Janaki could be brought from her father's palace." While Sumantha was importuning in this manner, Rama signed to Sita, as if to draw her attention to his yearning and the prayer.

When Sumantha had concluded, Rama addressed Sita, "Sita! Did you listen to the message of father? Go home, and let my parents forget at least a part of the agony they feel at my separation. In this old age, they are too weak to put up with this terrible situation. So, it is very necessary that you go back with the minister to Ayodhya." Rama used various other arguments also to persuade her to accept the request of his father.

Shadow and Substance

Sita replied, "Lord! You are omniscient. You know the ideal, moral conduct prescribed for each section of mankind. I have no need to remind you. Please listen for a while to my prayer. The shadow has to follow the substance, hasn't it? Can it be separated way from it? Solar rays cannot

exist, separate from the Sun. Moonlight cannot exist, separate from the moon. In like manner, this Sita-shadow cannot leave, and exist after leaving, Rama-Chandra; the Moon-Substance."

Then, she turned to Sumantha and said, "Sumantha! You are to me as revered as my father and father-in-law. You are my well wisher. Please consider this: I do not seek any other refuge except the Lotus Feet of my Lord. The world knows that the daughter-in-law who is brought into the family cannot be any nearer than the son born in the family itself. To say that they will forget their agony at the separation of the son, if the daughter-in-law returns, is a statement that has no meaning. As regards the wealth and comfort of my father's palace, I have enjoyed them enough in my childhood days, since my very birth. Now, they appear as dry and cheap as grass, without my Lord being with me. I have no other path, except the path which he treads. Therefore, without misunderstanding me, please agree to my words; drop this attempt to take me back to Ayodhya. Forget it. Convey my heartfelt prostrations to my parents-in-law and assure them that there is no cause for anxiety about us. Tell them that Sita is happy, many thousand times happier than when she was at Ayodhya or Mithila. I am with the Lord of my heart, with the great hero, his brother, the best of warriors, Lakshmana; so, I am passing these days in the forest, happily, undisturbed by fear, anxiety or agitation of mind. Tell them I am not tired in the least by the journey. Tell them I am very happy, that I consider this a great piece of good fortune."

Imperial Decree

Hearing these words, Sumantha was so overwhelmed with admiration and grief, that he could not look up at the face of Sita; he could not listen any more to such profoundly moving words; he could not himself find words to speak to her. He reflected on her virtues, on her pure feelings, and on her steadfastness; he deplored the fate that deprived Ayodhya of the presence and inspiration of a lady of such supreme character.

He spoke to Rama and said, "Rama! In that case; accept one prayer of mine. Keep me too with you in the forest and allow me to serve you for fourteen years here itself." Rama replied; "Sumantha! You are well versed in law and the rules of morality. You are the Minister of Emperor Dasaratha, not a Minister under me. It was he who has commanded you to come back, and how can I permit you to stay? Even otherwise, it is not desirable that you stay away from the Emperor, at this particular juncture. You are as the right hand to the Emperor. So, you should not pay attention to your own Ananda and try to keep away from him; go, go to him, without further delay. If you go soon, you could give me, and my parents, a great deal of consolation and assurance." Rama persuaded him to go, using various other arguments and examples. Finding it impossible to resist his request and pressure, Sumantha wept aloud and prostrated before the three; his steps were heavy and hesitant, when he turned back; both mind and body were unwilling.

Rama caught his hand and helped him to walk up to the chariot, and ascend, to his seat thereon. Rama spoke sweet and soft to Sumantha, as well as the horses of the chariot, in order to induce them to turn and, proceed towards Ayodhya.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sivam

ON 25th October, 1972, the auspicious Monday of the Kartik month, when according to the Hindu Calendar, the Birth Anniversary of Bhagavan was being celebrated by the more orthodox among the devotees, Baba laid the foundation for the structure honoured by the name, Sivam, at Hyderabad, the Capital City of Andhra Pradesh State, wherein Puttaparthi and Prasanthi Nilayam are situated.

The devoted enthusiasm of Sri Prasadarao, the Architect and Engineer, and the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal of the Twin Cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, guided and blessed at every turn by Bhagavan Himself, raised the Structure charming and sublime, in, the form of the Linga, with its three parts, the pedestal, the Abhisheka Channel and the Cylindrical Column above. It drew the attention and the admiration of all as a unique architectural achievement, similar to the Dharmakshetra at Bombay, another place of Residence, for the Avatar of the Age. At Bombay, the structure is named Sathyam. Now, we have this `Sivam' at Hyderabad, and with the completion, at Madras, of "Sundaram," devotees can fill themselves with joy that Bhagavan who is `Sathyam Sivam Sundaram' will be residing in buildings named after the attributes they adore Him with.

On the 4th day of April 1973, the New Year Day for the Andhras, ushering in the year Pramadeecha, Bhagavan arrived at the Airport, of Hyderabad from Bombay, at the end of a twenty-day-long tour in Northern and Western India, showering Grace on millions of people wherever He went. `Sivam' and the area around it were turned into a scintillating scene of light and colour, of flower and festoon, by, devoted hands, who awaited Baba's Presence. The Lingam on top of the Structure was gorgeously illuminated; the building was bedecked, in multicoloured garlands; the shamiana was packed with eager crowds, and bhajan was sung by elated hearts.

About 4-30 in the evening, Baba arrived, amidst the Jai Jais of thousands, the chant of Vedic hymns, the singing of bhajans, and, the playing of pipes and drums. Baba entered the building, and gave Darshan to the vast gathering, standing with the holy Lingam as background. He hoisted the Prasanthi Flag, on the building. It was the most thrilling moment in the lives of hundreds, when they could see the Avatar fulfilling the yearning of millions of hearts, and filling them with Ananda.

Dr. Divakarla Venkatavadhani M.A. Ph.D. submitted Swagathanjali, a Bouquet of welcome verses, Dr. Vinayaka Krishna Gokak, M.A., D.Litt. described how Baba had showered His Grace on the drought-stricken hearts of the people of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Bhagavan in His Divine Discourse, declared: "This Day marks the inauguration of Sivam for all Humanity, not merely for the small section that is present here. Sivam means Auspiciousness, Mangalam, Shubham, Prosperity, Happiness. Believe that all mankind will derive Happiness, peace and joy with the inauguration of this Sivam."

On the morning of the 9th, when the Saptaha or Holy Week of Siva-puja, was begun,

Baba created a Sivalingam for being worshipped according to Vedic Ritual. The Siva Puranam, narrating the various episodes of the Glory and Grace of Siva, the Third among the Trinity, reputed to be the easiest among the Three to be propitiated and pleased, was read and expounded at 'Sivam' by Pundits learned in sacred lore. The devotees of Hyderabad and Secunderabad as well as the thousands who had come from the mofussil gathered for Nagarsankirtan, and the Morning Puja and Bhajans. They gathered again for the evening Bhajan at 5.30 and for the Discourses of Bhagavan and the Namavalis He sang, The Bal Vikas pupils staged various playlets in the Presence. Prahlada, Mira, Namdev, The Gita, Sambhavami Yuge Yuge, were some of the titles.

For the first time, the huge gathering had the pleasure of hearing the speeches of some Students of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College at Brindavan. Sri Sathish Chandra, Srinivas and Rajani Patel spoke on Bhagavan's Educational Ideals being realised in action, under His Guidance, in the Colleges He has established. Since they spoke from genuine experience and obvious sincerity, they were able to create a lasting impression on the gathering. Bhagavan blessed the gathering with daily discourses until the 12th April. On Sri Rama Navami Day, the Valedictory Oblations were offered, with due ceremony, in the Sacred Fire that was fit at the beginning of the Siva Saptaha and fed ritually everyday. Bhagavan created a rosary of gems for the High Priest, and delighted the thousands who witnessed the event. That evening, Dr. Amarendra, M.A., Ph.D, addressed the gathering. The Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Khandubhai Desai presided. Bhagavan blessed the vast assembly and gave a Discourse on the real significance of the Rama Incarnation.

During the Siva Saptah, Swami Karunyananda, and Hon'ble Sri T. A. Pai, Central Minister for Heavy Industries, also spoke on the Message of Bhagavan to the Modern Age. When Bhagavan left on the morning of the 15th April, the precincts of the Airport were packed with members of the Seva Samiti, Bhajan Mandalis, Mahila Vibhags and Bal Vikas organisations, as well as thousands of citizens who longed to be in the Presence for as long as they could. When the plane got airborne, there was no single pair of eyes dry on land.

—A Pair of Wet Eyes

Sai Family News

1. Hollywood Letter

THE Sathya Sai Baba Center located on Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, California, is attracting many Sai devotees and many others, who are eager or curious to learn about Baba and His Teachings. Bhajan Sessions are held every Thursday, and Friday, in the evening hours. Colour-Sound Films on Baba are shown every Friday, following the Bhajans. A number of Students from the Colleges and Universities of from all over Southern California, and many young married couples and housewives attend the Sai Yoga Classes, taught by Cheryl Harriman, every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evening. Bhajan Classes are taught by Janet Bock on Monday evenings.

Famous persons like George Harrison, Swami Satchitananda, Ravi Shankar, Lakshmi Sankar, Gaylord Hausfur, Swami Venkatesananda, and Richard Bach, author of the Best-Selling Book,

"Jonathan Livingstone Sea-gull" have come to the Center, to join in the Bhajans and see the Films on Baba.

Mataji Indra Devi gives talks on her experiences with Baba, whenever she is in Los Angeles; she has performed quite a few marriage ceremonies, at the shrine of Bhagavan, in the Center.

`The Lite Storm Group' performs Bhajans on Saturday Evenings in English when all join in singing with them the devotional songs, dedicated to Baba. Every Thursday night, after the Sai Yoga Class, devotees who are regular visitors at the Center, as well as many from the Indian Community in Los Angeles, augmented by a few guests, join in singing Prasanthi Nilayam Bhajans. This is followed by group meditation. Readings from the Discourses of Sai Baba close the evening programme, on many days. It is not unusual to have about a hundred guests on Friday evenings, to witness the 40 min. colour film, entitled, "The Advent of the Avatar." Distinguished visitors from the Sai Family in India have shared their "Experiences with Baba" with the members of the Center. These include Dr. S. Bhagavantam, Dr. Dakshinamurthy from Pusa, Delhi, Sri R. R. Kamani, and his wife, Mr. Bhawani from Delhi, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Murphet, and Dr. Pani of the Food and Drug Administration Dept, Washington, D. C. American devotees, when they return after a happy stay at Brindavan or Prasanthi Nilayam find their way to the Center, and spend some time in Satsang with the Members.

The Book Store connected with the Center is open every day of the week. It has a stock of all books by and on Baba, also of records, tapes, and photographs. Mail Orders are received for these from all over America, Canada and Hawaii. A mailing list of several thousand persons, eager to learn from Swami's Teachings has been thus collected by the Center.

—*Dick Buck*

2. Dum - Dum

A highly gratifying aspect of the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti at Dum Dum West Bengal is the organisation of Bhajan, inside the Dum Dum Central Jail where about 500 prisoners participated. The Jail, according to the report of the President for the year 1972-73, is humming with Sai Bhajan, and the prisoners whom Baba calls, 'birds with broken wings' are keen to have a Bhajan Mandali, inside the jail on a regular basis.

3. My Business

Simla weather behaved very politely during Bhagavan's Stay. It turned bright, a day earlier and continued bright till He left. Thousands pressed forward for Darshan. Baba went deep into the gathering and gave Darshan to all. Once, when He saw the police pushing back an over-enthusiastic devotee who was rushing forward, Baba went in that direction, saying, "Police! No. No. Not like that. This is my business. I am coming."

4. Srimati Easwaramma High School

The High School established at Puttaparthi by Bhagavan, in Commemoration of Srimati Easwaramma, the Mother, is now housed in the Sri Peddavenkama Raju Kalyan Mandap, in the village. With the increase in the number of pupils and also of classes, it is found that the School has to be shifted into more spacious buildings. Therefore, Bhoomi Puja was performed on a vast

site on the main road that leads into the village on Saturday 13th May, and Bhagavan blessed the construction work that was inaugurated that day.

5. Kadugodi

The villagers of Kadugodi' and the surrounding area were blessed by Bhagavan, on 17th May, Vaisakh Purnima Day. Bhagavan entered the village in procession in an open car, and was received with Poorna-Kumbham and Vedic Chants. Thousands surged into the temple grounds, where Bhagavan addressed them on the need for mutual love and co-operation, the need for rejuvenating the temples and living disciplined lives. Elders from about ten neighbouring villages offered reverential homage to Bhagavan, and joined in the Festival of Welcome. More than a thousand people were fed with Prasad at noon. The Presence of Bhagavan at Brindavan, adjacent to the village has inspired the villagers to self-examination and self-improvement, as a result of which they were able to receive this unique gift of Grace from Bhagavan.

6. Second Summer Camp at Brindavan

The month-long Summer Course for College Students on Indian Culture and Spirituality become a great instrument in human reconstruction and the revival of moral and spiritual ideals and practice. This year, the Course was inaugurated on 21st May and will continue till 21st June. The enrolment this year is nearly double the number that was taken last year. The number of University Teachers is also more than last year. Bhagavan has taken as the text for elucidation in His Daily Discourses, the Bhaja Govindam slokas composed by Adi Sankaracharya. A large number of students and seekers have arrived specially from America to attend the Course.

Jnana Yagna

Inaugurating the second National Gita Jnana Yagna by Swami Chinmayananda, at Bangalore City, on the 7th May, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba declared that the Gita provides instruction, inspiration and insight into problems that affect man from birth to death, as well as in all fields of his activity, physical, mental, intellectual and moral and spiritual. It is a textbook of practical guidance for the individual, who is, really speaking, but a limb of society, which itself is but the body of God. The Gita is not the last refuge of the aged, but, the very primer of the growing adventuring progressing man He said. With eyes clarified by the Gita, mind purified by the Gita, actions urged on by the Gitacharya, man is bound to realise the God within. Baba asked the persons attending the Yagna to place themselves in the position of Arjuna and to regard the teacher as Krishna Himself; the pupil must have the same yearning and reverence and the teacher must have lived the Gita, down to the very letter. Baba pointed out that people adore God and hate men; they worship God with great pomp and publicity, but, in private, they are cruel, greedy and dishonest. This is hypocrisy which will bring only spiritual ruin. To say that you are immersed in Krishna, but, to be hankering in Trishna (thirst) for objective gains and pleasures is a form of double dealing. Just as a tree must send its roots down as deep as it rises above the ground, so too Sadhana must nourish the tree of scholarship; then only is life worthwhile. One stick from the box of matches is enough to create a fire; one sloka out of the 700 in Gita is enough, if put into practice with faith and steadfastness, to save man from danger and delusion.”

The Fruit and the Tree

Bharat is the most ancient of all the centres of civilisation that is surviving today, with her heritage intact. But, out of a false sense of values, the leaders and the youth of the land are ignoring the traditions of this precious culture, and are adopting the ideas and ideals of the West. Therefore, they identify themselves with the body, they spend their energies and skills in catering to its needs and whims, and they believe that the material world is the only field for study and subjugation: The result has been, here as everywhere else, as even in the most advanced Western Countries, fear anxiety, violence, corruption and pollution. Physical comfort, individual, advancement, personal progress, these are held to be desirable.

However, though each person might declare that he cares for himself only, no one can live in isolation. Persons sleeping on the same cot are caught in the contemplation of different dreams; each one has an inner life of his own, his own path and speed. But, ask him why he is engaged in work, what he is bringing from the shop, why he looks worried. The reply would be that he was engaged in building a house for his family, that he was purchasing clothes for his children, that he was worried about his wife's health. So, he is living, not by himself, but for others whom he is attached to, who are his near and dear ones. Man is under an inescapable obligation to shape his activities and attitudes in consonance with those of others, amidst whom he is placed. He is given parents to revere and obey; brothers and sisters to love and learn with; playmates to mix and move with; society to be changed by and to change. His affection and attachment are attracted by others, and his reactions are determined by others.

He might be sitting at table, before his plate on which dinner has served; if some one rushes in to tell him that his child has been injured in an accident on the road, He runs out of the room, and on to the road, without caring for the hunger, and the plate. The call of the one he is , attached to is louder and stronger than any call, from within. In spite of such experiences; man still believes in his ego, in an exclusive type of individuality. The family is essential for the blossoming of human personality; how can the helpless baby grow and learn, talk and move forward without the home? The home needs the community around it to keep it safe and happy. Even a bird in the bush cannot survive isolation from its kind. Man has to expand his knowledge, his emotions, his sympathies, and his love. Expansion is life, expansion is love. When the community or the safeguarding, sustaining Society is rendered weak, the family too tends to disintegrate and the individual suffers.

The individual's fulfillment, in the joy of liberation, is, undoubtedly, the fruit of the tree of humanity. But, when you yearn for the fruit; you cannot neglect the roots, the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the buds and the blossoms of the tree; they all help the fruit to manifest and to be filled with sweetness. When Pakistan invaded India last year, their armies did not attack Madras, but, yet, did you not rush forward to teach, them, a lesson? Attachment to the nation; affection to the language, reverence to religion and loyalty to Society are all-essential. They are all facets of the overwhelming sense of gratitude one feels for all that has shaped one. Each such loyalty, instead of running counter to another, must feed and foster all the rest. Then they are most desirable.

Patriotism prompts man to, understand the ideals of the past and the teachings of one's forefathers, based on their deeper experiences; it urges him to live for those ideals and gain experiences for himself on the paths laid down by the sages of one's country. But, there are in India people who call themselves patriots, though they are neglecting and even harming those ideals and ridiculing those experiences and those paths. Adhering to one's own likes and dislikes, however harmful it may be to the interests of the culture of the country, is very injurious to both. When the hand is amputated it is not merely the limb that suffers, a great quantity of blood also flows out from the rest of the body and makes the system weak and exhausted. So too, when one separates himself from the Society or Nation and insists on a path that is not part of the culture and traditions, not only does he lose support, he harms the nation too.

The world is one vast Society. Every individual in it is part of this Society, bound to it by the love that draws man to man to be kith and kin. This love is there, deep in the heart of man. Only, it is unrecognised, ignored, doubted, denied, argued away. It is the secret source of all-sympathy and service; it creates the urge to live in and for Society. It is the Viswa-Prema, that flows from one spark of the Divine to all Sparks. When the eyes shine with awareness of this limitless love, they are illumined by the highest wisdom, Jnana. They see all as the One. Man realises that Sarvam (All) Brahmanam Jagat (all that is apparently changing and transforming and moving). To have this One revealed as, in all, one has to develop faith, and discipline the mind. The mimed has to shed its fancies and foibles; the Truth has to be known and experienced. Learning things by heart will result in only heart-ache. Learning slokas or verses can only help you from not being engaged in anything worse during that time. They cannot take you an inch nearer the goal; how can mastery of the map equal the joy of the journey?

Faith is an individual asset; it is acquired and preserved by one's own efforts. Manikkavasagar, the Tamil sage, used to say, "You have the freedom to say No; I have the right to say Yes." What he meant was; when one denisor asserts a thing, it is the outcome of his experience. How can any one dispute the experience of another? God may not exist in the horizon of your experience, but, he has already risen in mine—that is what the theist tells the atheist. The time indicated by the watch on his own wrist is the correct time for him and he asserts so, though others might not agree. And, he has the freedom so to do. Have faith; do not allow it to be shaken, because some one else has no faith.

Until you realise that you are Divine, that God is your Core and Reality, you will have to undergo these entrances and exits; the same newspaper should not be pored over again and again, day after day; one life, must be enough to know the mystery. So, at least, recognise that there is a mystery, search for the secret, and unravel it for yourself.

There was a Doctor in Benares, who spent five minutes in the morning and five in the evening, for meditation on God. Knowing this, his colleagues and friends laughed at the idiosyncrasy; one day, they argued that he was wasting ten precious minutes on some thing which he had been misled into believing. The doctor replied, "Well. If God does not exist, I agree, I am wasting ten minutes a day. But, what if He exists? I am afraid, you are wasting your entire lifetime! I prefer to waste ten minutes rather than a lifetime." "Why should you grudge me the ten-minutes joy that I derive therefrom? I am not robbing you of your joy; why should you rob me of mine?" he asked. The cynics were silenced.

Ramakrishna used to cry in agony at the loss of another day, without the vision of the Divine Mother. Have that yearning; feel that sense of urgency. Seek to know now, yearn for that ecstasy this moment. Do not postpone or spend time in discussing others. Trying to satisfy the senses is a dreary desert path. Do not imitate other nations, and compete with other cultures in external pomp. Yours is a mind, intelligence, ear and eye shaped by Indian tradition and culture, Indian history and Sanathana Dharma. Move along those lines and success is certain.

You may have only a picture of Sai Baba before you, or an image in metal or an idol in stone. But, if you have the faith that He is alive and present in it, and that He is in your heart and the hearts of all beings, then, you can get the ecstasy of that knowledge, the knowledge that He is omnipresent and omnipotent. While meditating, first imagine and feel that you are in the Light; then, gradually, you can feel the Light is in you, not outside you; and, finally, you will realise the Truth, that you and the Light are One and will ever be One.

The Di-vine is a wine, that would intoxicate you! It is produced by the nectar that the Name of the Lord is saturated in. Taste it and you forget everything else; you are transformed. Man is, they say, a monkey that has lost its tail; well, he must lose many more attributes of the monkey before he is entitled to call himself man. He must dedicate his thoughts, words and deeds to God, and surrender to His Will. Then only is this animal entitled to become a Man, in whom the Divine is enshrined.

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse. Madras 4-2-73*

The Lazarus of Sai Baba

O Christmas Season of recent past—
Blessed by a drama that Baba directed:
As Lazarus was raised, after breathing `his last',
Walter Cowan was thrice `resurrected'.

When spirit left the body's brace
Sai appeared at Walter's side;
O to look upon that Effulgent Face
In life, and, when one's died!

(His promise is our Treasure Grand:
He will never desert a devotee—
And through Death's Portals, holds our hand;
We are never parted from Thee!)

King David sang with steadfast faith
To the Shepherd of Human Flock:
"No evil shall I fear, when through

The Valley of Death I walk."

Walter's experience proved this Psalm
To be a prayer of Truth—
Swami is there, with the Balm
When Yama smites without ruth.

To the Hall of Judgement, Baba led
This man now serene, released;
They met the Accountant of the Dead;
Walter felt, not dismay, but Peace.

Chitragupta, kindly and wise,
Scrolls in hand, proclaimed,
"Your works and character are here, column-wise,
From ages forgotten, un-named."

Two hours of reading brought to light
The good lives of our friend;
His Soul felt Bliss of heavenly might—
Though, on earth, grief had, no salt.

Sai Baba announced at this crucial time,
"He yet has My Work to do;
His soul must now reverse its climb
For a mission of mercy and truth".

The Lord got custody of this Man
For return with Him to Earth!
The Judge had to change the karmic plan
And say, "So be it. A re-birth."

Only God's Love could eclipse Death's Might
And bring with It, he that Death's borne;
Soul returns to flesh, with new won Sight,
Much to the joy of those who mourn

Walter's wife, at the body, dressed rose-hue,
Saw breath moving him that was 'sleeping'.
Walter whispered, "In pink! So lovely are you!"
And she fell into sanctified tearful thanking.

To; have this Fortune, unique, to talk
With one who has died in the Lord,
Erases our fear of the unknown walk
All must take, through Transition's Door.

Generations will hear of this Story
That beckons to all human-kind:
"Feast upon Sai's Arch-Glory!
Marvel at His Love Divine!"

—*Karen Shultz*

The Three Moons

The moving waters of a river has the moon in its depths; the still water of a lake has also the moon in its womb; the sky has the moon, up above. The moon in the flowing flooded river is broken and fragmentary; it flows fast and frantically forward; it is never full circle, calm. The moon in the still lake is unmoved, undistracted, full. But, these two are but reflections of the real moon in the sky.

The moon reflected in the lake is the individual soul, engaged in activity embroiled in Maya, cause and effect, right and wrong. The moon reflected in the calm lake is the Yogi, the Saint, who has attained balance, equipoise, peace, by ever dwelling in the One. The real Moon in the sky is the Primal Principle, the Absolute, the Eternal Witness.

Christ spoke of these three Moons, when he made three statements, one after the other. Referring to the active individual soul, he said, "I am the Messenger of God." This is the flickering moon, that is apparently caught in the flowing stream. Referring to himself as the Yogi, who has risen beyond dualities, and attained equanimity he said, "I am the Son of God." Realising that these two are but reflections, and that the Reality is the witness, and that he too is the Formless Nameless Absolute, unaffected by Time and Space and Causation, he said, "I and my Father are One."

—*Baba: Discourse. 25-12-72*

Turn Him Over to Me

The Cowans

"Why can't we know God? If we must have Self-realisation, why don't we?" wailed the Cowans, Walter and Elsie. "We followed one belief after another; each step gave some little wisdom, but, no security, no actual knowing how to reach the Goal. We felt discouraged. We talked it over and made an important decision: Pray loud and sincerely, for the Highest Living Master, to come, and take us to the Goal. We did so; the next day, a friend came and gave us a Book, the Book on the Life of Sathya Sai Baba. We knew our prayers were answered;" their wish was fulfilled.

The Cowans have been visiting Prasanthi Nilayam and Whitefield every year since then; their Shrine at Tustin, California, is known to many as the Jasmine Shrine, since the fragrance of

jasmine that pervades it is an indication of Bhagavan's Presence; the Picture in that shrine was mysteriously placed there by Bhagavan, in answer to the prayer of Mrs. Cowan for that particular Picture, which she could not get while in India. An eight-rayed star jewel appeared on that picture once, for all to see for many days, when the Cowans prayed for some sign that Baba was with them. Vibhuti showers from the pictures of Bhagavan at Tustin even as it does in the homes of countless devotees in India and elsewhere. Hundreds have seen the shower and returned convinced that Baba is a Divine Phenomenon, transcending the laws of Science. The Cowans are happy in the lap of Baba's Love. Elsie Cowan writes, "He gives us strength and power. He is compassionate. In time of need, He wraps His Grace around us like a very warm blanket, soft and lovely, to soothe us into a state of Bliss. Without Him, there would be no one to turn to."

The Astounding News

In April 1972, when the Cowans returned from Brindavan to Tustin, Elsie Cowan told the Sai Group, "We have come back from India, my husband and I, brim full of the most astounding news that can happen to anyone. It is so fantastic that many of you may doubt it, because, hardly any of us realise the great importance and the tremendous Power of this Great High God, who not only walks the Earth, but, cares for all the planes from earth to eternity. *Walter died at Madras; Sai Baba resurrected him.*"

Dr. John Hislop, himself an ardent Sadhaka for many years, who like the Cowans, travelled through many Gurus to the Presence of the Highest Living Master, was at Madras, Whitefield (Brindavan) and Prasanthi Nilayam, throughout almost the entire Experience, and so, Elsie Cowan asked Dr. Hislop to tell the story to the American Sai group. He recorded his narrative on tape, with the words, "Walter and you arrived in Madras on December, 23, 1971, and came to the building where Sri Baba was holding a Conference with some 3000 Presidents of His Seva Samitis. Sri Baba at once came to you and gave Walter and you a warm and affectionate greeting. Walter was obviously not feeling well, and ushers provided chairs as soon as you arrived. On the morning of the 25th December, news spread quickly that an elderly American had a fatal attack of what was thought to be heart trouble, and had passed away. My wife and I at once went to your hotel. You confirmed the news. You told us how the attack had felled Walter in the hotel room. You had prayed to Sri Sathya Sai Baba at this most trying moment of your life; but, with great self-control, and recollection of human mortality, you had ended your prayer with 'Let God's Will be done'. Mr. and Mrs. Ratan Lal were staying almost next-door; you remembered this, and when you called her, she came immediately. With her help, you summoned a room boy, and Walter was lifted from the floor to the bed. It was soon evident to you that Walter had indeed passed away from the body. Some one called an ambulance to take Walter to the hospital, but, it was your experience that Walter had died in your arms, soon after having been lifted from the floor to the bed; and you were so exhausted that you could not accompany the then lifeless body into the ambulance. These events took place in the early morning hours."

Baba Visits the Hospital

"At 7 A.M., you had recovered sufficient strength to go with Mrs. Ratan Lal to Sri Baba's place of residence, to tell him the news and ask for advice, and help. (Sri Baba we learn, told the devotees around Him in Telugu that it would be a great pity if the old lady had to return to the States with the corpse of her husband, after their long longed for visit to Him. Ed.) Sri Baba said,

he would visit the Hospital about 10 A.M. At 10 A.M. Mrs. Ratan Lal accompanied you to the Hospital, but, you were told that Sri Baba had already been there and had left, just before you arrived. Upon entering the Hospital, you found Walter alive."

"The attending physician of the Hospital, is well known to Sri G. K. Damodara Rao, Retired District & Sessions' Judge. He told the Judge that Walter was indeed dead, when he examined him shortly after arrival. There was no sign of life. He said that he pronounced Walter as dead, that his ears and nose were stuffed with cotton, and that Walter was covered with a sheet-and moved into an empty room. The doctor had then left the hospital on some professional duty and had missed seeing Sri Baba, when Sri Baba was in hospital. When the doctor returned to the hospital, Walter was alive."

"I saw Sri Baba at His place of residence, after He had returned from the Hospital," continues Dr. Hislop. "He told me and others within hearing that Walter Cowan had died and that the hospital had stuffed his ears and nose, and covered him with a sheet. Sri Baba said that he had brought Walter back to life. I did not enquire of Sri Baba as to the details of how he had brought Walter back to life or His reasons for doing so, nor, to the best of my knowledge did any one else."

Another Crisis

"On December 26th, Sri Appa and I accompanied Sri Baba to a meeting of the lady members of the Nagara Sai Samiti. Sri Appa and I were sitting on the platform, just a few feet from Sri Baba and were able to closely observe Him. He gave a spiritual discourse, all without any break or any moment of hesitation. From the meeting, we were to go to a devotee for lunch."

"As soon as we got into the car, Sri Baba turned to us and said, 'While I was talking in the meeting, Mrs. Cowan called me. I at once went to the hospital and did what was necessary. Mr. Cowan's health has taken a bad turn.' When we arrived at the house of the devotee for lunch, Sri Baba turned to us and said, 'Take this Vibhuti to the Hospital and give Mr. Cowan some in his mouth, and rub the rest of his forehead and chest. If you will walk to the corner over there, you will find Mrs. Hislop there, in a taxi. She will take you to the hospital.'"

"The fact was, my wife had been following Sri Baba in a taxi. However, she had taken great pains to stay out of sight, but, her effort was of no avail, for, as usual, Sri Baba knew everything!"

When we reached the hospital with the Vibhuti, Mrs. Cowan said, "Walter took a very bad turn just a little while ago. I thought he was dead; I was terrified; I at once called Baba in a loud tone of voice. When I called Baba, I felt His presence, at once"

The Third Time

"A week or so later, I was speaking with Baba at the Prasanthi Nilayam. Walter and you were still in the Hospital at Madras. Sri Baba said, 'Today I received a telegram from Mrs. Cowan. Mr. Cowan was again in a serious condition. I answered the telegram. Mr. Cowan will soon be out of the Hospital; he will come to Bangalore. It is My Sankalpa, My Will.' Of course, you told

me it was no physical telegram. The telegram was your `prayer'. Baba told me, during the same conversation. 'Cowan died three times. I had to bring him back three times'."

The Cowans in Bangalore

"I and my wife saw Walter and you at the West End Hotel; Bangalore. Walter appeared to be extraordinarily well. Sri. Baba visited Mr. Cowan twice at the Hotel. During the second visit, He told you that Mr. Cowan was strong enough to make the 15 mile drive, out to Whitefield each morning, and that he was to return to the Hotel at noon each day.

Dr. Gnaneswaran was the physician who attended on Mr. Cowan at Bangalore. He had Walter's medical history, with its specific laboratory tests, showing severe diabetes lasting for many years and various other diseased conditions. After assuming responsibility as Walter's physician, he, as a standard medical man, rechecked the findings of Walter's American doctors, with his own laboratory tests. He could scarcely believe the results. ... Not only were the diabetic symptoms completely absent, but, the tests for the other diseased conditions were also negative!"

"He explained; `Only the Divine Baba, only God, could do this.' The extraordinary fact seems to be this: When the total organism that was Walter, died, the only entity that returned to life was Walter himself. Walter's various diseases died with him, and they were not reborn. Only Walter was reborn! A most marvelous and inscrutable event, is it not? Walter is alive again, free of disease, and filled with enthusiasm to tell people about the Divine Presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. His mental state has also changed. You say and Walter agrees, that he was one of the world's champion worriers. Now, Walter is calm and free of worry," says Dr. Hislop.

The Journey with Baba

Walter Cowan too has much to say about his death and subsequent events. He says in the tape that is now circulating in the USA, "While in the Connemara Hotel at Madras, two days after I arrived, I was taken very sick, with pneumonia, and was in bed. As I gasped for breath, suddenly all the body struggle was over, and I died. I found myself very calm, in a state of wonderful bliss, and the Lord, Sai Baba was by my side. Even though my body was laid on the bed, dead, my mind kept working throughout the entire period of time, until Baba brought me back. There was no anxiety or fear, but; a tremendous sense of well-being, for I had lost all fear of death."

"When Baba took me to a very large hall, there were hundreds of people milling around. It was the hall, where the records of all my lives were kept. Baba and I stood before the Court of Justice. The one in charge knew Baba very well. And, he asked for the records of all my lives. He was very nice and kind, and I had the feeling that whatever was decided, would be the best for my soul."

"The records were brought into the hall... arm-loads of scrolls. They seemed to be in different languages. As they were read—Baba interpreted them. In the beginning they told me of countries that have not existed for thousands of years and I could not recall them. When they reached King David, the reading of my lives became more exciting. I could hardly believe how great I apparently was, in each life that followed. As they continued reading my lives, it seemed what really counted was my motives and character, as I stood for out-standing peace, spirituality and political activity. I do not remember all the names; but, I am included in almost all the history

books of the world, from the beginning of time. As I incarnated in the different countries, I carried out my mission, which was peace and spirituality.”

The Return

"In about two hours, they finished reading the scrolls, and the Lord, Sai Baba said, I had not completed the work that I was born to do, and He asked the Judge that I be turned over to Him to complete my mission of spreading the Truth. And, He requested that my soul be returned to my body, under Baba's Grace. The Judge said, "So be it." The case was dismissed; I left, with Baba, to return to my body. I hesitated to leave this wonderful bliss, but, I knew it was best to complete my mission, so that I could merge with my Lord, Sai Baba.”

Walter Cowan says that he talked all of it over with Baba, later. And, he says, "Baba said it was not my imagination, it was a true experience.” Dr. Hislop too asked Sri Baba if Walter had this actual experience. He writes, "Sri Baba replied, 'the experience was a real experience, not an illusion. It was an experience occurring within Mr. Cowan's own mind, and I was myself there, directing and clarifying the thoughts.’”

More Light on the Accountant

Dr. Hislop wanted a little more elaboration. He asked Baba, "if every person had a similar experience at death, Sri Baba, he says, replied, "It is not necessarily so. Some had a similar experience and some had not."

Dr. Hislop, in the tape referred to above, spoke also of the Hall of Judgement and its significance. He said, "Now, there is something most interesting here. At the time Walter recounted his experience to my wife and myself that day, neither of you, that is, neither Walter nor you, had seen Volume VII of "Sathya Sai Speaks"; nor had we seen Volume VII. Yet, in Volume VII, Sri Baba made a statement about the mind, that exactly corroborates Walter's quite independent and uniquely personal experience.

Just listen to this! Volume page 468: II paragraph: A portion of a talk given in Telugu, at Prasanthi Nilayam, in February 1971. "The mind plays many tricks with you, the chief of which is to foster the ego, and hide the Prompter and the Power within. You must have heard of an Accountant in the Court of the King of Death, Chitragupta, by name. He maintains a Register of the Good and the Bad done by each living being, and, on death, he brings the Books to Court and strikes the balance between debit and credit. Yama, the King, then, metes out the punishment that can expiate and educate. This Chitragupta has his Office in the mind of man, all the time, awake, alert. The words mean "Secret Picture"; what he does is to picture all the secret promptings that blossom into activity; he notes the warning signals as well as occasions when these signals were ignored or wantonly disregarded. You must see that the warning of the Divine, against the merely human or even the bestial inclinations are heeded.”

The Vedic Ceremony

A few days after Mr. Cowan had fully recovered from his unique adventure, Baba called the Cowans to His Presence, at Brindavan, Whitefield; a few American devotees like Indra Devi, Dick Bock, and the Hislops were there; also, some Indian devotees like Dr. S. Bhagavantam,

D.Sc. Baba blessed the reborn Mr. Cowan and his wife, at what Dr. Hislop refers to as "a very beautiful and very significant Vedic Ceremony."

He explained the meaning and purpose of the, rites celebrated when persons reached the ages of fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety and a hundred. He blessed the septuagenarian Mr. Cowan and his wife, Vedic hymns were recited; bhajans were sung by the American group and the students of the College at Brindavan. Baba created 'wedding rings' and jewels for the happy couple and filled their hands with other gifts He created. He asked the Cowans to relate the story of the death and resurrection; he referred to the 'call' of distress that Mrs. Cowan raised the next day from the hospital, and the 'telegram' He sent the day when there was a relapse. He declared that when devotees whom He chose, were threatened with fatal accidents or 'untimely' death, He rescued them, so that they may continue to be instruments for His Task. He also said that He gave His Presence during the dying moments and showered consolation, courage and comfort to devotees who had won His Compassion. "They pass is Peace into Me," He said.

Truly, Bhagavan is the Highest Living Master, the Incarnation of the Lord. "Why can't we know God?" the Cowans asked, in their anguish. They knew God. God has revealed Himself to them in all His Glary. —*Ed.*

Post Script

On May 8th, Walter Cowan wrote to the Editor, "We are delighted that you are printing the story of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, bringing me back to life. Every one seems very interested to hear this story, and it gives them encouragement to hear that there really is no death, but, just the loss of the physical body. It rids people of the fear of death. I am really feeling fine. Would you believe this? I have gained about 30 pounds since 'coming back'!" —*Ed.*

Baba and I

A Conversation

Sri Sathya Sai: People think that Baba rests until 4 P.M. But, he never rests. He is never tired. He is always working. People are upset when 3 or 4 relatives visit. But, Baba's visitors are endless. Baba is attending to every detail of the schools and colleges and the millions of devotees. And, for most people, the responsibility for their work rests elsewhere. But, Baba is responsible for the results as well as the work.

Devotee: Baba is responsible also, for His other Worlds, is He not?

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. Saints, Rishis, Yogis, everywhere. He is attending to the guidance protection and welfare of these, wherever they may be.

Devotee: I mean; Baba is responsible for the entire Universe, not just this world.

Sri Sathya Sai: It is like this: Baba is the switch. The switch is turned on and all goes forward automatically. As the key is turned in a car, all parts work automatically. In similar way, the Universe is automatically regulated. So called miracles are not miracles, nor do they prove Divinity! Baba's endless work in all the worlds—easy, no weight, always happy—that is the miracle.

Devotee: Baba has the inconceivably immense task of the Universe. How can He afford to spend time talking to people like us?

Sri Sathya Sai: Baba, with his limitless bodies, is everywhere doing the tasks, a thousand heads—hands—feet "Sahasra seersha purushah sahasraksha ssahasrapad" It is just this body that sits here talking to you. That is Baba's omnipresence.

Devotee: All the forms and personalities one sees around are impermanent. Baba also appears to be one of these objects.

Sri Sathya Sai: The difference is that men come into bodies with tendencies and the results of actions. Baba takes this body without any tendencies, completely free, no desires, no attachments, always happy.

Devotee: When one sees Baba as a form amongst all perishable forms, cannot one point to Him as the One Reality amongst all these impermanent dream—like forms?

Sri Sathya Sai: Yes. The One Reality is Baba, Baba means, Being-Awareness-Bliss-Atma, the One Reality.

Devotee: The Avatar is never born, but, He appears to take birth in a body, which then gradually grows to full size in the ordinary way. Does the Avatar have additional similar bodies?

Sri Sathya Sai: No. The Avatar takes only the one body, such as you have described. For, example, there is one sun; but, the sun's rays are everywhere. Are the rays of the sun different from the sun?

Devotee: Just: under the skies, about an inch, there seems to be a mirror; when I see Baba outside, I also see Him in that mirror. The reflection mirror mirrors Baba's every move. Of these two, the Baba I see with my eyes, and the Baba of the inside reflection, which is the most real?

Sri Sathya Sai: Consciousness is a reflection. If pure, it is a clear reflection. It is by the Sankalpa of Baba that the reflection is seen.

Devotee: Is it to the inside Baba that prayers and devotion should be addressed?

Sri Sathya Sai: When Baba is found within, he will be seen everywhere outside.

Devotee: When one enquires within, "I" is found to be "I"; that I is thought to be oneself. But, then, it seems to me that "I" is not me at all; but, is Baba.

Sri Sathya Sai: That is correct. "I" is Baba. Have no doubt. You and Baba are One. Not the tendencies and so on. But, the essential "you", and Baba are one and the same..."I" is Baba.

—*Recorded by an American Devotee*

Confessions of a Wanderer (On glimpsing the long road ahead)

Someone said, that ashram life is 'going back to a primitive life'. I had never given it a thought; but, I instinctively disagreed. I feel that a primitive life and a sophisticated life are two sides of the same coin. The life that one leads in the shade of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is another and far more elevating life. For one thing, there is love. As Swami says, 'Where there is life, there is love'. And, so, there is love everywhere, in the sophisticated as well as in the primitive life. But, close to Swami, one is conscious of love; whereas, at other places, one has to look for it.

All my life, I have loved my mother most anxiously, and feared her disapproval. I can remember instances of my wanting to please her, that are very far away in time. I can think of numerous occasions of doing the same in more recent times, as recent as yesterday and this morning. It is through my mother that I first heard of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and through her too, that I met him. I have seen her devotion to him and his affection for her.

I am scared of Swami. It is a new experience for me to be seen through, and helped, despite, what I believe to be, my miserable self. I am scared because, I know that, through a lifetime of fear, pretension and habit, I cannot help but strike attitudes and pose, as it were, trying to please some one, who sees right through all the lying and cheating and acting 'devout'. My artifice is so deep-rooted, that I do not know how to get rid of it. My thoughts are full of lying pride. For

example, since the first time Swami walked into my life, I have wondered: Do I love Swami to please my mother? Or, a more sinister thought, am I using my mother to gain access to him?

I feel a wretch for being so deficient; but, I know now, with Swami's help that its no use at all chastising myself. What I have to do is the same thing that every one else must do; discipline myself, so that thought speech and action can flow in the same straight way, of loving truth and truthful love, for ever united in peace and harmony.

I can see that the hardest part of applying Swami's teachings to my life is going to be: controlling my thoughts, to face my self, fairly and squarely, without flinching at the reflection I see. How horribly difficult it is, to be honest with oneself, Polonius; and, nothing in my previous life has prepared me for the hard road ahead. And, though I realise that I should not, I doubt my strength and my ability and finally, my motives to remember the hope that Swami has given me. And, finally, I doubt even my motives!

Is this all another pose? Am I doing this to gain some one's approval for instance, my mother's? Will I always be able to turn a truthful light on the opaque night of my mind? Dear God! May you always help me to know myself.

It is only recently that I have been able to stop torturing myself with these hideous doubts. In the case of my feeling for my mother, I realize now that it is not entirely selfish love. I am close to her and love her, not to derive any personal advantage from the proximity, but, only to love her.

With Swami, it is a bit more complex. I have always suspected that it was useless trying to 'impress' him, since my thoughts and feelings are not hidden from him. Now I know it, at last; and, many little loving goads from Swami himself. And, I am overwhelmed.

Also, I understand that I cannot judge any one—and, that includes me. He knows better; he knows best; I cannot err in taking a cue from him. And, again, since he so often speaks to me of my mother, I feel perhaps unreasonably, that those words sanctify my love for my mother.

It is no doubt arrogant of me, but, I am no longer ashamed to be fallible. It's a start. May the hope Swami gives, blossom into courage, to see me to the end of the long road ahead which I have but glimpsed. And, to remember that, 'where there is life, there also is love'.

—*Makunda D. Jadeja*

Divine Discontent

Human psychological maturity is a predictable process. The milestones from the first day of birth, from infancy through childhood, through pre and post adolescence and on to adulthood are clearly defined. If a child is to develop as a normal psychologically healthy adult he has to progress through these phases of development. He cannot skip any of them nor can he have the maturity of an adult while still a child.

The mind is the most subtle and complex of all earthly phenomena and naturally its scientific analysis has been slow and difficult. Spiritual development, pertaining to supra-worldly phenomena presents far greater subtlety and complexity to the mind. Avatars are born. Bhagavan Baba has often said he was born as a God—that there was no question of 'growth' or development in his spirituality. He was, as he is, and will always be. Apart from God-men, the attainment of enlightenment and spirituality among men are varied and complex—some change over-night, some take long years, some attain it in childhood, some in old age, some reach high spirituality only to drop away into darkness.

Yet, we in the field of mental health have to tread where angels fear to peep. We have often to decide whether a person is truly a spiritually developed individual or is mentally ill with religious mania and spiritual delusions. Yet again mental health and spirituality are closely allied. An individual is considered mentally healthy only when he has implicitly or explicitly evolved a consistent philosophy of life which answers for him the question of existence, the meaningfulness of various activities and relationships in this world.

Our study of mental health has brought us to certain conclusions about the development of spirituality for the large majority of people. Only an individual with a healthy and psychologically mature personality, with a loving heart that understands and accepts others and himself and a clear mind that can perceive and reason about himself, others, and the universe is ready to evolve spiritually.

There are dialectical processes by which a child becomes a psychologically matured adult. An infant is totally dependent on the mother at birth. Slowly over the years he asserts himself but always in the security of the love and dependency on his parents. Adolescence is the period of storm and stress, the squally weather through which all children must pass to become adults. Those who are able to constructively meet with this conflict of dependency on parents and independence from them, achieve a higher level of synthesis as adults. They have psychologically weaned themselves from their parents. In their new-formed independence, they venerate and respect their parents but no longer look upon them as infallible. They come to form relationships with their parents and adults as equals and evolve their own material, psychological and spiritual values. They adjust to society as independent members, productively earning their living and having families of their own.

This adjustment to society is a high level of psychological maturity and only about fifty to seventy percent in a society are able to adjust productively, creatively and happily. Of these well-adjusted and psychologically mature adults some are filled with divine discontent. They are dissatisfied with the limitations of society, its shams and emptiness. All adults feel this discontent occasionally but do nothing about it. Those few who have the psychological strength and readiness have an inner compulsion to realise their true selves.

They have to pass through a far more intense period of storm and stress than the adolescents. These are the religious leaders, the reformers, who repudiate their culture and society as not being suitable or satisfactory enough to realise their inner potential. But in so alienating themselves from the security and 'belonging' of their society, they feel far more conflicts and

anxieties. There is loneliness, uncertainty, oftentimes depression and despair alternating with excitement and stimulation. They have to discover a new path after numerous trials and errors. Many fall by the wayside or get lost in the forest. Only a few, after years of tribulations can attain enlightenment and spiritual peace.

The Vedas delineate the four stages of man in society—Brahmacharya, Grihasta, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. Psychological and spiritual evolution is implicit in these four stages. Of course individuals in society can forego the stage of marriage and of being a householder. A Brahmachari is already a full-fledged member of society partaking constructively and productively in it.

The Buddha illustrates the dialectical process of psychological and spiritual evolution very well. He grew up a loving son and was a loving husband and father. The divine discontent made him break away over-night, from all his ties. No divine revelation came his way. Through anguish, conflict and suffering he tried many paths. After long painful years he gave up the path of extreme asceticism. He found the middle way to be right for him and evolved the eight-fold path of developing spirituality and attaining liberation. He is a supreme scientist and psychologist. He claimed no divine status for himself and left the question of God and Man's relationship to God unanswered. He was an experimentalist. He gives scientific conclusions of his experimental study regarding Man's existence and his need for liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

Jesus Christ is another example. He spent thirty years of his life growing up as an adult in society and being subservient to his earthly parents. Then he spent forty days and nights in great spiritual conflict in the desert. He emerged from there as an enlightened and divine person come to save the world.

Prophet Mohammad is yet another example. So are a long line of Saints of the many religions. Even Reformers and Leaders of people show this evolution of emancipation from society so that they can serve all peoples. Gandhiji is a good example. Gandhiji went through his normal adulthood, did his training as a barrister and became a householder. It is then he started his life-long fight against social injustices. Satyagraha was a spiritual tool he evolved as a result of intense spiritual growth within himself, breaking away from cultural ties.

Bhagavan is very particular that his devotees do not use him or his teachings as an escape from their responsibilities and duties in this world. Many young men come to spend long years with him, following him from place to place. Many he sends back to the world to shoulder responsibilities and duties. They come to him later. The Annual conference on Indian culture and spirituality for students is an example. He wants young men to be good citizens of their country and the world. Thus equipped they have the foundation for developing deep spiritual insight and to be the leaders of men.

Divine Baba in his mission on earth exemplifies the broad, social and cultural foundation on which he wants to build his spiritual edifice. Schools, colleges, hospitals, and Seva Samiti spreading across the face of the earth are the basis for his devotees to find their early bearings in spiritual life and then to evolve further. Divine Baba requires each of his devotees to be better men of the world as a first step. When I sit with thousands upon thousands of devotees for

Swami's Darshan as he walks among us, I find it edifying to watch the devotees, faces. We come to Baba for special favours—but what happens is a recharging of our batteries, as Baba so often says. We recharge ourselves psychologically as well as spiritually so that we can live better in our various walks of life. We resolve to be better husbands, better children, better workers, better professionals, better citizens etc. I can see it in the faces turned adoringly to Baba as they recharge themselves with these and other resolutions. Development of personality makes for better relationships with persons around us and that in turn leads to spiritual development. Reversely spiritual evolution should make persons psychologically healthier so that they become better persons to live with. Psychological and spiritual development are two sides of the coin. Bhagavan has this double effect on his devotees. We evolve spiritually as well as psychologically.

—Dr. Desaraj Dhairyam, D. Ph. (Psych) Dip. Clin. Psych. (Columbia)

Listen to the Lament

*What a Saline waste am I,
For the Divine Feet I sigh!*

*I have pined, I have cried for Nectar Divine
To sweeten my waters, blue and saline,
I have lashed the shores for long,
Have wept and sighed in song
To taste the Nectar Sweet!
To wash His Lotus Feet!*

*During the Treta Age
His blue Face red with rage!
I tasted Amrita Sweet,
Beautiful! Rama's Feet!*

*On the Kanyakumari shore,
He sweetened my inner core
He stood! I washed His Feet!
I offered pearls at His Feet!
Beneath the Red Robe, the Beautiful Sage!*

*I found them again!
During the Yadava reign,
On the Dwaraka shore
The Avathar's Feet, for sure!
How Sweet were Krishna's Feet!
I found them again in the Kali Age*

*I saw with these eyes of mine
A miracle Divine!
From the mere sand,
The touch of His Hand,
Hush! Krishna's golden image
Released from ages, cage!*

*Tell me! Will you tell me
When shall I be saved?
Ebb and tide I cry!
Sai! Sai! I sigh!
Where now are those Divine Feet?
The Sweetest! Sai's Feet;*

—Narayana Murthy

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Minister Returns

Sumantha drove the chariot back to Ayodhya. The horses were reluctant to retrace their steps; they turned back towards the place where Rama was, longing to be with Him and loath to move away. Despite prodding and persuading, they could scarce move on. They neighed pathetically in protest; they stopped off and on craning their necks to catch a glimpse of Rama.

Sumantha too was turning back in great unbearable sorrow; he was wiping the stream of tears that flowed down his cheeks; he kept his head hanging down as if unwilling to show his face to men. When Guha saw the plight of Sumantha, Guha was so over powered with agony that he leaned on to a tree, sobbing, with his head pressed against its trunk. Sending the aged Minister thus, back to the Capital, Rama proceeded to the bank of the Ganga, with his wife and brother.

A Boat to Cross the Ganga in

When even dumb animals found it impossible to live away from Rama, what can be said of the anguish suffered by the parents who had born him and brought him up so lovingly and with such great hopes, and by the subjects of the realm, who adored him with profound loyalty and love. Alas! Who can measure the grief that was harrowing the heart of Queen of Kausalya? Guha thought within himself thus.

The sorrow seared into his soul. His eyes soon fell on Rama, Sita and Lakshmana walking towards the Ganga; so, he hurried towards them, and realising that they desired to cross the river, he shouted across to the boatman who was on the opposite bank, to bring the boat to this side of the ferry. When the voice of his master, fell on the ear, the boatman hastened to row it along and, within minutes, it was ready where Rama was awaiting its arrival.

Guha called the boatman aside and told him to clean the boat and make it fit for the Prince of Ayodhya, the Son of Emperor Dasaratha, his Consort and brother, to sit in it, and go across the Ganga, on their way to the Forest, where they intended to spend some years.

The boatman had heard from his Nishada brothers the sad tale of the exile of the heir apparent to the throne; so, he lost no time in agreeing to do so. But, he had one disturbing doubt that had to be resolved. He had come to know that Rama had placed his foot on a rock and that it has been transformed into a woman; was this the same Rama, or was he a different person? That was the question he asked Guha. Guha said, "Hello, dear boatman; what a strong memory you have! I am glad you remembered that incident which happened long ago, and you have reminded me too of it!" He turned to Rama and said, with great exultation, "Rama! Listen! This man, my tribesman, this boatman has treasured in his mind your majesty and glory; he is now bringing back to my memory, how you released Ahalya, the wife of Sage Gautama, from the stone into which she was cursed. My subjects were very much agitated over the terrible curse that was inflicted on that lady. And, they were delighted when they knew of your Divine Power that liberated her. O, how fortunate are my people, that they are aware of your Divinity!" Guha was describing the faith and devotion of his boatman in great joy.

Wait a While

Meanwhile, Rama moved towards the boat, in order to board it. The boatman stood before Rama, with folded palms and said, "Ramchandra! All the years of my life have become worthwhile by means of the good fortune that has come to me today. The Rama, of whom I had heard long ago, I am able to look upon today. That I could row across the Ganga you, your consort and your brother is the reward I have earned by accumulating merit through many previous lives. Let me pray for one blessing: Allow me to sprinkle on my head the water sanctified by washing your feet, before I row you across." Guha had not realised that his servant, the boatman was so deeply rooted in devotion to Rama. He was surprised at the request he had so humbly laid before Rama; he was supremely delighted at heart that the man had prayed so. He said, "Listen to me brother! Let Rama take his seat in the boat; then, you can wash his feet with the waters of the Ganga taken in a vessel; it is not good manners to wash them while he is, standing on the bank." Guha reprimanded him for his obstinacy and simplicity.

But, the boatman would not yield. He pleaded, "Lord! You possess vast wealth. I am helplessly poor. I am scraping together the wherewithal to maintain my family, through the fees I get for ferrying people across. I find my daily income insufficient even for running my little family. How can I be happy, if even this income is taken away from me? Therefore, please do not misunderstand me. Permit me to wash your feet, even before you step into the boat."

The Strange Request

Rama grasped the undertone of the boatman's strange request; he smiled and turned towards Sita, saying; "Did you notice this boatman's fear?" Guha could not understand what it all meant, and why Rama had smiled. He was perplexed at the fellow's behaviour. He said, "Hello, boatman! I don't understand what you are talking. How is the cost of maintaining your family related to this present duty of yours—taking Rama across the Ganga, so that he might enter the forest and live there? Are you demanding more fees from Rama for this hereditary task? If so, you are only revealing your foolishness. In case your earnings are not enough for the support of your family, I

am ready to supplement it; as the chief of this realm. Don't yearn to get it from Ramchandra. Attend to your business and get the boat ready." Guha grew angry at the persistence of the fellow.

At this, the boatman submitted that he had heard people say that the feet of Rama had some specially peculiar power. They say when the feet contacted a stone, it turned into a woman. My boat is made by putting together many pieces of timber. If each piece becomes a woman, my Lord would leave them all to my care, disowning any responsibility, for, they were born from the parts of my boat! How can I bear the additional burden? But, if the feet are washed before he places them in the boat, I can be free from fear. Besides, when I sprinkle the wash on my head, my sins too would vanish. Therefore, please permit me to have my wish fulfilled.

Rama Agrees

Guha was lost in thought. But, Rama called the boatman near him, and he said, with a smile lighting up his face, "My dear fellow. Come. Wash my feet," and he placed his feet in the palm of the boatman! His joy knew no bonds. He kept the feet within his palm and washed them both very carefully and lovingly, including the space between the fingers, using the sacred Ganga water. Then, he sprinkled the wash on his own head, and over all parts of the boat, to strengthen them against mysterious powers. He was immensely delighted at the success of his plan. He held the hand of Rama, as he placed his foot in the boat and got in. Rama helped Sita to board the boat, holding her hand firm in his grip. He made Lakshmana sit beside him on one of the cross planks. They spoke to each other of the devotion and childishness of the boatman, and enjoyed the movement of the boat over the waters. They conversed with Guha on various topics and the time passed so quickly that they found themselves on the other bank, without being aware of the journey.

Wages for the Ferryman

Rama pretended to be ashamed of himself, when he found he had not even a cowrie shell, to offer the boatman, in lieu of the fees due to him. Sita knew the feeling of her Lord's hearts, by instinct. She removed a ring from a finger of hers and placed it in the hands of Rama. Rama hailed the boatman, and said, "Here, Boatman! This is your wages. Take it." The boatman fell at the feet of Rama, exclaiming, "O Rama, this day, I achieved the reward of my life. All my sins have been smashed into smithereens. I am liberated from the awful doom of birth and death. The pangs I endured for many lives on earth have borne fruit; my God has blessed me; my line of forefathers and my progeny have all been freed from sin by this Blessing. Lord. Enough for me, if I receive and deserve your blessings. And, when you return, O Lord! Come this way, and confer on me the chance to do this service. That is the reward I value most in life." He fell full length on the ground, before Rama, and prayed with tears rolling down his cheeks.

Rama and Lakshmana consoled the boatman and tried to assuage his ecstasy. They attempted to persuade him to accept the gift. But, the boatman protested, saying, "If I accept wages for taking you across this tiny stream, tell me how much are you receiving as wages, for taking generations of my line, and billions and billions of my fellowmen across the vast and terrifying ocean of Samsara which involves all beings in the fast moving current of change. I am immersed in bliss that I got this chance; please do not bind me further, by forcing me to accept wages for this lucky chance that fell my way." These words touched the heart of Rama; he felt that it would not be

good to compel him or put pressure on him, Rama blessed him most liberally and gladly and allowed him to depart.

Rama and Lakshmana placed their bows and arrows, on clothes spread on the bank, and they descended into the river, for bath. When they finished, Sita too stepped into the sacred river and after bath, she offered prayers to the Ganga, and vowed that she would return after spending fourteen happy years with her Lord in the forest, and sprinkle on her head the sacred water in thankfulness for the conclusion of the exile.

Guha Accompanies

Then Rama called Guha near, and said, "Dear friend! I have already used for my own purpose too much of your time. Now, you must go back to your town." When this command fell on his ear, the face of Guha fell. Tears flowed down the cheek in streams. With palms folded, he prayed, "Rama. Please listen to my words. I shall be with you for, some time in the forest; I know all the paths of the jungle and I can give useful information. I am desirous of serving you this way. Please do not say, no." Rama was happy when he noticed Guha's love and devotion, and he took him with him. Walking some distance, they rested awhile when evening fell, under the shade of a wide-spreading tree.

Guha and Lakshmana hurried to sweep the area clean and make it fit for Rama and Sita to sit awhile. The fruits on that tree were looking very eager to fall down and be of service to the Divine visitors; they turned red with excitement and joy. Guha and Lakshmana collected the fruits and placed them on broad leaves before Sita and Rama. But, Rama asked his brother, "Lakshmana, can we eat these fruits, without first performing the evening rites?" So, they proceeded to the confluence of the holy rivet, Prayag, which was nearby and had the holy sight, before they took their bath. Rama described to them the glories of the spot, while returning from the river. He said that the efficacy of the waters at the Confluence of the three holy rivers was so strong that it could cleanse man of all the sins that tarnish his mind.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sai Family News

1. Bhagavan at Manipal

Intensely busy with the Second Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality for about 500 students from the Colleges of all the States of India, (May 21 to June 21) held at Brindavan, under His affectionate care and guidance, wherein He Himself discoursed daily, for over an hour on some aspect of our invaluable spiritual heritage, exhorting the students to dedicate themselves to a life of Duty, Devotion and Discipline, Bhagavan found time to respond to the prayers of the people of South Kanara District on the West Coast of India, and proceed by plane to Bajpe on 30th May. A vast multitude welcomed Him with Bhajan and Sankirtan.

He motored from thereto Manipal giving Darshan to thousands who had lined the road, all through the long distance. At Bajpe, Ekkar, Katil, Permude, Mulki, Hejmadi, Padubidri, Kapu, Katpadi, Udipi and other villages and hamlets on the way, Baba was received with acclamation and He graciously got down from the car to give Darshan and bless the vast gatherings. Baba visited and blessed the educational institutions forming the Manipal Academy—Medical College and Hospital, the Engineering College, the Power Press etc. He visited the Sri Venugopal Temple in the centre of the Campus and laid the foundation of Brindavan, the garden around the temple. He planted a sapling of the banyan tree to commemorate the Inauguration.

Representatives of the 48 units of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in the South Kanara Dt; were privileged to offer garlands to Bhagavan on this solemn occasion: Hon'ble Sri T. A. Pai Minister for Heavy Industries who accompanied Bhagavan from Bangalore, presided over the Public Meeting.

On the morning of the 31st, Bhagavan motored to Mangalore, halting at Surathkal Engineering College (Dr. Adke, Vice Chancellor, Karnataka University welcomed Him here), and at Panambur, where the Chief Engineer, Harbour Project, received Him and offered the homage of the officers and workers. He visited the Sri Sathya Sai Mandir at Pentlandpet, and arrived at Pandeswar, where He laid the Foundation Stone for the Mangalore Branch of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Dr. M. P. Pai, received Him at the entrance of the site, where more than 50 thousands had gathered to have Darshan and to listen to the Discourse.

2. Convocation at Brindavan

The Convocation of the, Summer Course was held at Brindavan, on 21 June, at the 'Amphitheatre' at Brindavan, with Dr. D. S. Kothari as President. The student participants (including more than 250 girl students) were clothed in impeccable white shirts and dhotis; and plain simple saris given them by Bhagavan Himself.

The procession was led by the beautifully caparisoned elephant Sai Gita, followed by the Sathya Sai Arts and Science College Students' Band. With the students and about forty two teacher-leaders (who accompanied them from their Colleges) on both sides of Him, Bhagavan walked in the centre of the Procession, with the group of Faculty Members including Dr. Gokak, Dr. Bhagavantam, Justice Eradi, Sri K. Guru Dutt I.A.S. (Retd.), Sri Kapur, I.C.S. (Retd.), Prof. Mugali, Prof. J. Madhavarama Sarma and others. Dr. Gokak read a brief report of the Course, and Bhagavan graciously distributed prizes to six students who had distinguished themselves in the Elocution Competitions held during the Camp and seven participants who had won distinction at the examination's held at the end of the Course. A few students addressed the gathering and spoke of the impact the, Course as well as the Personality of Bhagavan had on them. Prof. Bhatnagar of Delhi spoke on the same theme, on behalf of the teacher-leaders who had come from each State Dr. Kothari spoke on the uniqueness of the Course, designed and directed by Baba and appealed to the students to ruminate on what they have learnt and to nourish in their hearts the atmosphere of love and reverence they found in Brindavan Bhagavan assured the students that He would always be with them, wherever they might be, and reminded them of their duties and responsibilities in the days ahead towards parents, elders, their villages and their country.

Two books—"Summer Showers in Brindavan," (Bhagavan's Discourses during the Summer Course, 1972) and "A Value Orientation to Our System of Education", (Summaries of the Lectures delivered by distinguished scholars during the Summer Course, 1972, with an Introduction by Dr. Gokak) were released by Bhagavan on the occasion.

3. Assam Letter

"Baba in His eternal Grace has said that He will visit this State and asked us to "make your hearts clean"! I feel that the idea of `inviting' Him, who is always with us everywhere, is wrong. Let us cleanse ourselves of sophistry, jealousy and egoistic prejudices and predilections; and, await His

Will, His Appearance amidst us, to give us Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan. 'Thy Will be done'. Many of us are beginning to have this feeling of surrender. To crave for Darshan of Sai without inner Darshan of His Will is meaningless. That is why Baba has exhorted us to "make your hearts clean", so that His Will might shine therein, clear and bright.

Our Shillong brothers have started, a "Workshop". That is to say, a. special session of the members of the Samiti, where some problem is faced by all in Satsang fashion, and solutions found, according to the teachings of Bhagavan. The first problem taken up was, "How to control anger". Solutions mentioned by Bhagavan were presented by members; also, from Scripture and other Texts. Individual experiences were also related and commented on. "Have I been able to control anger in my day-to-day activity?" That was the theme. The meeting revealed valuable lessons which could be learnt from the writings of Sai and His Message-cum-Life.

Next we are taking up `Silence'. 'How should I benefit myself by Silence? In what ways can I practise and promote silence?'

I feel that such workshops, occasionally held, and operated with sincerity and intelligence will be valuable supplements for the lectures and discourses we listen to.

—From Sri Muktinath Bardoloi, State President, Assam

Instead of transforming his home, his village, his State and his country and thereby this World into a Prasanthi Nilayam, (the Abode of the Peace that passeth Understanding), man has made them all arenas for the wild passions of anger, greed, hatred and violence. Instead of making the senses (which are at best very poor guides and informants) his servants, he has made them his masters. He has become the slave of ephemeral beauty, evanescent melody, momentary softness, fragile fragrance and transient taste. He spends all his energies and the fruits of all his toil, for the satisfaction of the trivial and degrading demands of these untamed underlings. O, the pity of it

—Baba

Sai Yoga

Raja Yoga

MOST of you know, what Yoga is; i believe, though even in India, young men and women are fast falling into the intellectual fashion of cutting away from their moorings in their own national culture. Yoga is a system of physical, mental, and spiritual development; there are several branches of Yoga—Karma Yoga where the individual consciousness strives to merge in the Higher Consciousness, the Universal Consciousness, through Work; Jnana Yoga where this Union is achieved through study and knowledge; Bhakti Yoga which aims at the same goal through self-less Love and Devotion and Raja Yoga, the Yoga of Higher Consciousness.

Raja Yoga is the most important of all these, for, it is part of all the others. The first four steps in Raja Yoga are called Hatha Yoga, the last three belong to the realm of Raja Yoga. The preliminary disciplines of Hatha Yoga are the five Yamas and the five Niyamas, which are like the Ten Commandments, rules of moral conduct, basic for spiritual aspirants. The next step in Hatha Yoga is Asana, or Posture, followed by Pranayama, which is very often translated as breath control, but, it is actually the control of Prana. The next step, Pratyahara, consists of checking one's outgoing thoughts. Then comes Dharana, mind control, where one holds the mind's attention just on one part of the body, to the exclusion of everything else, be it the heart or the toe. It is followed by Dhyana, meditation. The last stage is called Samadhi, the State of spiritual enlightenment, ultimate Bliss the fullest that this physical body can experience on earth. The last three stages, as already mentioned, belong to Raja Yoga. In his book, "Raja-Yoga," Swami Vivekananda gives a succinct and authoritative account of the Raja Yoga. All know that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was more or less perpetually in the state of Samadhi during the last year of his life.

"Baba Named It so"

i am to talk to you on Sai Yoga this morning. You may ask me, what is Sai Yoga? Well. Until a little over a year ago, i did not know myself, what Sai Yoga is! One day, during the Teachers Course which i was conducting, at our Yoga Center in Tecate, Mexico, the students were assuming the Yogamudra, all of a sudden, i started telling them something of which i had never planned, read or heard before i gave them some directions not knowing at the time, what they were. And, when the class was finished, the students confessed, "Mataji! We have never experience anything like this before. What is this?" "Sai Yoga," i said, without knowing why. They asked, "When did Sai Baba teach it to you?" "Right now. This very moment!" For, it was Sai who directed that lesson and prompted me to name it so.

Since that day, i am teaching only Sai Yoga, lecturing on Sai Yoga, and holding Seminars on Sai Yoga whether in the States, Hawaii, Mexico or in India as part of the Yoga Classes at Bhagavan's Summer School in Brindavan. You may ask how is Sai Yoga different from the Yoga i taught until that day. In the usual Yoga classes, where Asanas or Postures are taught, the idea is to regulate the inhaling breath and the exhaling breath, while performing the postures and on sending the current of the Prana (the vital principle of the breath) to the glands or organs affected by this or that posture, in order to regulate their functions and so that one could enjoy good health, and well-being, and live a longer life. The Asanas are recommended as, curative, preventive and recuperative measures.

For example, in the Bhujanga Asana (the Cobra Posture), you have to inhale during the process of slowly raising your head and chest and imagine that the Prana (vital cosmic energy) is flowing down the spinal column and settling in the kidney region, and doing its healing work, affecting the adrenal glands. But, in the Sai Yoga, something that was never thought of before has been added. Here the Asanas are done with a meditative attitude. In fact, one is not concentrating on glands or organs, or muscles or even on Prana, although physically, one performs all the Asanas in the same prescribed way. But, you develop the spiritual faculty and attain spiritual strength and happiness, in addition to the mental and physical benefits.

Yoga Mudra

i just mentioned about the Yoga-Mudra, and how the pupils were amazed at the exhilaration they experienced when the Sai Yoga was for the first time introduced to them. In Yoga-Mudra, you sit in Padmasana, (the Lotus Pose) and then bend forward until your forehead touches the floor. i told the class, when they all sat erect in Padmasana, to close their eyes and to imagine that the body is as a Temple and heart as an Altar, on which a Light is burning. You are the high-priest or priestess in charge of that light and your duty is to keep it alive, to make it burn bigger and brighter day, by day. Ask yourself what you are doing to keep it alive what you will do hereafter to keep it bright, to keep that light brightly shining in your heart. If you have done anything unjust or harmful to anyone, that will dim the Light. So, repent and remove that hindrance. Clean the temple of unworthy desires, vulgar thoughts, dictated by low senses. Fill it with light and love and compassion. Having done that, offer that Light to the Giver of Light, whoever He is, to you. To me personally, it is Sri Sathya Sai.”

Having placed that Light which is your only real treasure, as an offering to God, remain for as long as you can in that posture, forming your own words of homage, to God, who is Truth, who is Love, who is the Light Eternal. With eyes still closed, place the image of your Ishthadeva in your heart, meditate upon it for a few minutes. Finish the Mudra with the chant of Om.

Let us now take the Bhujanga Asana (the Cobra Pose) as another example. While flat on the floor with arms along sides, think of yourselves as what you really are most of the time—glued to the dark, earthly material world of the senses, fearful and anxious, touching the earth with stomach, chest and face, fulfilling only the material and earthly needs and desires, always doomed to crawl like a worm or snake, without ever lifting yourself up to the Light of the Spirit. Then into the mind there enters the desire to lift the head, to see the Light.

You begin slowly inhaling while raising your head, shoulders and chest. You were able to raise yourself a little above the darkness of the material world, but, not enough and you think you cannot lift yourself higher. But, you CAN. All you need is confidence in yourself. You then place both palms on your sides as a support and suddenly, you find yourself facing the bright Light, drinking its shining rays, letting them stream down from your face to the heart. You feel now like the fearless Sphinx in the desert. Man is made in God's image, you know; think; so, i can raise myself from this earth-bound role. By daily practice, I will raise myself from the material world, now engrossing me. When you return back, to the original posture, imagine bringing the light into the darkness from which you came. Bring it into your family, into your co-workers, and your companions. They will wonder what has happened to you. You are

different now, because, you could not lift your consciousness into a higher plane. Sai has helped you to do so. After this experience during the Bhujanga Asana, don't get up at once, but rest a while allowing yourselves some joy at the new step which it was possible for you to take. Then, sound the OM.

Ardhamatsyendrasana

In Sai Yoga, the attitude to life; to nature and to fellow beings, will undergo a change. You make the change yourself. You are not forced from outside. It is prompted and promoted from inside you.

As a last example, let us take the Ardhamatsyendrasana, where the upper part of the body has to be turned once to the left and another time, to the right. It is done with proper inhalation and exhalation, and affects the adrenal glands. In Sai Yoga, you not only assume this Asana but also regard it as spiritual practice. When turning to the left, you look back at your life, whether a day or a month ago, and think of something that you have done, that was a wrong deed, whether intentionally or by mistake. And this has been eating you up. Decide what you will do to make it good, send to it, the Light from your heart cover it with the Light and let it be in the past. It is not any longer a part of your new phase of life. Now, turning to the right. Imagine a ray of light streaming from your heart. The rays are not as powerful as you would like them to be, since the light in your heart is still not bright enough. So, you pray to the giver of Light for help. Suddenly, you perceive a big ball of light rolling towards you and joining these rays of light from your heart and forming a long luminous bright path of Light. And, you hear the Voice of Sai calling you to walk on this path, telling you to make the first two steps—He will take the rest towards you in order to sustain your strength to prevent you from falling off the path, to protect you and guide you on the spiritual path of light which will lead you to Bhagavan.

You will find that Sai Yoga is charged with spiritual aspiration and discipline. It gives a higher meaning and purpose, a greater possibility of fulfillment. Sai is there, as soon as you call on him. He can be called upon by any name for, all names are His. Sai Yoga is permeated with love, reverence and adoration. None of us fully realises what a wonderful rare chance we have, to live at the same time when the Avatar is in our midst—to be guided by Him, to experience His Grace Sai Yoga will make a tremendous transformation in our life, for it brings us to Bhagavan and it brings Bhagavan to us, to be with Him now and for ever.

Asato ma Sad gamaya,
Tamaso ma Jyotir gamaya
Mrithyor ma Amritham gamaya.

—Spoken at the Summer Course at Brindavan, 22nd May, 73

Seek Ye First

Science and Religion, between them, embrace all human experience. Science is the systematic knowledge of the Universe. Religion is the bond, between us and the Source from which we have come, namely, God.

Normally, we call a thing real, if we can see or feel it; but, our senses are so feeble and fallible that the impression they convey are not often true. The surface of this paper is smooth and clean to the eye; but, a microscope will reveal much dust and even bacteria on it, and an electron microscope will show even more surprising details. The paper appears solid; but, it is composed of molecules with vast spaces between, and of atoms, with various subtle particles, of energy travelling at fantastic speeds in them! The ultimate nature of matter is primordial vibrant energy, or Cosmic Energy.

Baba has told us that when Rama asked Sita to reveal to Hanuman the mystery of their careers on earth, Sita announced that Rama is the eternal unchanging Self and that She Herself was the Maya Shakti that agitates in all matter and urges all activity. She is Mula Prakriti, Primal Nature, that is to May, matter broken down to its ultimate Form. The Energy transmutes Itself into various Forms of Matter, which creates delusions of Reality and causes attachment in the mind. God is Omnipresent, say the scriptures of all religions; today, we have scientific evidence of this Omnipresence in the Form of cosmic energy; which pervade everything, and is the source of all matter. In tissue culture, it is the primordial life force that makes the cells grow and multiply in the laboratory, long after the original owner is dead.

Let us investigate this bond, between man and God. Baba has said that Sanathana Dharma defines Matham as Mathi, that is, Religion as Awareness, Awareness of I. I exist, I am. This notion is direct, spontaneous, indisputable. To be aware of the I is real religion. The I is the bond.

Now, what am I? Who is I? The usual answer is, I am Mr. So-and-so. But, when talking to his father, Mr. So-and-so is a son; when he meets his son, he is father; when he dictates a letter to his secretary, he is a boss! The awareness of 'I am' is not affected by these shifts of personality. The 'awareness of self-existence' is not affected by these changes. You may grow from six to sixty, and undergo a multitude of transformations, but, the awareness of self-existence remains constant. So, 'I am' does not change, but, perceives all change; it is the Witness; it is the Absolute, the Atma.

"That and this" is the same, Tatt-tvam-Asi. There is only One, the Unchanging Truth, the I. Baba has a fine story to illustrate this point. A sculptor fashioned a Statue of Krishna, chipping the rock away, and installed it in the temple. He discarded the chips on the hill itself. The chips consoled themselves saying 'Tatt-tvam-Asi'. For, the basic material of the Statue was their own. So, too, the individualised Jivatma is the same in substance as the Paramatma or Supreme Being.

This feeling of Mathi or Awareness is something apart from the body and different from it; it is present even during deep sleep, when the body, the senses, the mind and the reason are all inactive. The body is but an instrument which is operated by the Self. Am I love, anger, fear, joy or the emotion which takes all these forms? No, for they come and go, whereas the awareness is constant. The mind, which is a nonstop stream of thoughts which change with greater rapidity than even the feelings cannot also be the I. The body is the horse and the rider is the Eternal

Self. The reins are the mind. The duty of man is to realise this Divine I in himself; When Jesus announced that 'the Kingdom of God is within you', he meant that the most desirable thing in life is to turn inward and acquaint yourselves with the unchanging Witness, the Atma or the Over-Self. Jesus also said, "Neither shall they say, to here, to there, for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and the rest will be added unto you."

Muhammad was asked by his kinsman Ali, "What am I to do, that I may not waste my time?" and he answered, "Learn to know thyself." He says in the Holy Quran, "He who has understood himself can understand God." The Biblical statement that God was made in the image of man means 'in the image within man', and not the external physical body.

Since the Self is the same in every being, the same I that shines as Witness in all, service to a fellow-being is an act of worship of God, for, there is God within the body of that other person, too. The bond between man and God is not the bond which binds two distinct entities together; it is the bond that binds the mouth of the river to its source, the sea to the wave, the spark with the flaming fire.

—Dr. E. B. Fanibunda

The controversy about the adequacy of one or other of the four Yogas—Bhakti, Jnana, Karma and Raja—is needless waste of breath, for, all four are useful and all four contribute to the ultimate victory. Karmayoga is the earthen lamp. Bhaktiyoga is the oil. Rajayoga is the wick. Jnanayoga is the LIGHT.

—Baba

The Ladder and the Steps

India was the nursery of halos who adventured into the realms of the spirit, and achieved victories against the final of evil; they opened up the paths to God that are described in the texts of Sanathana Dharma. India is the sacred land from where the Voice of the Vedas rang over the world. It is the land which still retains the splendour of Yoga, and the glory of Renunciation. But, every Indian has now to question himself whether he is aware of this fact, and whether he is helping by his acts, words and thoughts to promote that glory and that splendour. One has to admit that the glory is being dimmed, the splendour is fast fading out. The Gayatri Mantra, enjoined on all, because it is the crucial mantra of the Vedas, has become a ritual of holding, the nose while mumbling illegible sounds. Pranayama and its later stage of Pratyahara (the control of the senses and of their listless pursuit of external pleasure) are discoverable only in dictionaries. Yama and Niyama—the first steps in spiritual discipline are not practised at all, even by those who claim to teach and guide. Members of the monastic order, who have vowed to detach themselves completely from, worldly involvements and attachments are running about frantically, accumulating and investing money, with even greater fanaticism than householders. One wonders whether this is the same land that one reads about, the land that held high the ideals of the spirit and of mental peace!

With the return of Krishna to His abode after the Incarnation Interlude, the Age of Kali darkened the World. Many Preceptors, Saints and Sages tried subsequently to remind the people of their heritage and guide them, along the ancient path. Of these, Sankara, who realised the weakness of a dualistic interpretation of the Universe and the need for a unifying philosophy, was the most effective. He was born in the village of Kaladi, situated in the Kerala State. Initiated into the Gayatri Mantra in his fifth year, he mastered the Vedas and their Supplementary Texts on Grammar, Logic, Prosody, Astrology, etc., and in his fourteenth year itself, he ventured forth on his mission of counteracting the forces of doubt, dissent and denial and establishing faith, wisdom and devotion throughout the land. He encountered many scholars reputed for their dialectical skill and convinced them of the validity of the non-dualistic Basis of the subjective and objective worlds. He wrote commentaries on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and the Brahma Sutras—generally accepted as the Authentic Texts of the Hindu Faith. He dedicated his short life of 32 years to the re-vitalisation of the Sanathana Dharma.

When Sankara was residing at Varanasi (Benares City) on the Ganga with his pupils he used to visit the pundits in their own houses, and draw them into beneficial conversation on themes of philosophy. One day, when he went to a pundit, he found him immersed in complications of rules of grammar. When asked why he had taken up the intensive study of grammar, he replied that it would fetch him a few pieces of silver. "If I am designated a Pundit, I can go to the homes of some big Zemindars, and hope to receive alms and offerings from them, for the upkeep of my large family," he said. Sankara advised him in appropriate terms, and charged him with self-confidence and courage.

Returning to his hermitage, Sankara wrote a verse summarising the advice he gave the poor struggling Brahmin householder.

*Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam,
Bhaja Govindam, Moodha Mathe!
Sampraapthe Sannihithe Kaale
Nahi Nahi Rakshathi 'Dukrn' karane,*

Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, you fool! When death does knock at door, rules of grammar cannot save.

Sankara exhorted his pupils to disseminate the ideal of this verse, and, they too, responded with a set of verses on the same lines, each of the 14 contributing one verse. Sankara added another twelve of his own, as well as four more verses about the transformation that the teaching would confer. Thus, there are 31 verses in all, in the text called Bhaja Govindam, or Moha Mudgaram. The latter name means, "The weapon with which delusion can be destroyed."

The study of these verses and the inspiration derived from them will promote discrimination and detachment, and thus, prepare the mind for the vision of the Supreme. You have to be initiated into these disciplines now itself, when you are young and entering on the adventure of living, and so, I have decided to expound to you one verse a day, during this Course.

Sankara addressed these verses, to "moodha mathi" "the foolish person". Now, who are these fools? He has given the answer in another context: `Nasthiko moodha uchathe' (These who deny the Atma are fools.) Those who assert and believe that "I am not this perishable body; I am not this feeble intellect; I am the undying everlasting all-knowing all-inclusive Atma" are few indeed. The vast majority assert and believe that "I am the moulder of my destiny I am the captain of my ship. I choose my likes and dislikes. I fulfill my desires through my own efforts."

But, even this vast majority pay taxes in ordinary life for the water they use, the electricity they consume, the houses they live in, and the professions they are engaged in! Now, what tax are they paying to Him who provides them with the essential requisites for mere living—the sun, the moon, fire, water, air, space etc? Those who do not recognise the Giver, the Provider, the Principle, the Person, they are the fools.

Scientists can weigh, measure, and analyse materials that already exist. They can, by means of permutations and combinations, put into currency strange forms and shapes from out of existing matter. But, they cannot *create* oxygen or hydrogen or any other thing anew! That can happen only, through the Will of God. Without any matter originally supplied, no scientist can deal with things from the very beginning. They are helpless in the realm beyond earth, water, fire, air and space, the subject matter of the senses. Their activities are confined to nature, which is but the part manifestation of the Divine.

The verse with which Sankara started off the Moha Mudgaram speaks of the moment of the approach of the end of life. This indicates that of all the fears of man, the fear of death is the fiercest as well as the most foolish. For, none can escape death, having committed the error of birth. To get rid of the wheel of birth and death, awareness of the undying unborn Atma which is one's Reality is the only method available for man.

So, Sankara advises man to pray to Govinda. He refers to God as Govinda. Govinda means, `He who is a Cowherd'. Man is both an animal and a divine being. He has risen from the animal level and is on the way to reveal his divinity. He should be vigilant that he does not slide into the animal again. Man alone can rise into God-hood, for, he is equipped, with the endowment needed for the achievement.

Cattle come near when a handful of grass is shown; they are scared and run away when a stick is shaken before them. Man should not fear; nor should he cause fear. Without cowardice; without aggressiveness, he should examine words deeds and thoughts, and progress from animality to divinity.

The Word `Go' means also sound, all sounds from the mooing of cattle to the chanting of Vedas. All sounds, emanating everywhere, praise or adoration, elation or adulation, are offerings to God. `Go' also means the Earth. Govinda means, overlord of the Earth and all its phases and objects. The Earth is the arena of His Glory, the Stage on which His Play is enacted. So man has to remember Him in grateful joy.

Through this string of verses, Sankara called upon `foolish persons' straying away into misery and mortality to proceed towards Mukti or liberation. Moodha-mathis or foolish persons were

exhorted to set their feet on the ladder of 31 steps (each verse being a step) and climb towards Mukti-mathi, the mind illumined by release from the bonds of desire.

Baba: Discourse on 21-5-73: Summer Course

To be Continued

I am quite a little fellow, aged only five years; for, I was born, really born to the wonders of this world and its magnificent mystery, only in 1968, when I was able to look upon Baba in person. I have therefore no right to teach; I am only an observer. I hope to continue as an observer for the rest of my life, for, it keeps me happy, Once Baba enters your life, many wonderful things happen to you. Each one has his own glorious experiences; mine too are unique. Baba builds Love within us, Love of God, Love of Nature, Love of Man.

Love is the sweetness in Baba. He never fails us; he pours Love into the empty vessels we hold, he cleanses the vessel and fills it into overflow. He lifts our burdens for us, he answers all questions that torment us, and guides us all along the road. He is everywhere at all times.

We lay great emphasis on 'problems' of all kinds, and feel the weight of the world upon our shoulders. Baba asks us to have faith in him and live in the 'now', for, the past is gone and the future is uncertain. I never know what I am going to speak upon, when I stand before gatherings like this. I pray, and usually, Baba comes through; he gives the word, he directs the delineation. On one occasion, the word was, "Conditioning." Yes. I spoke as he directed me that day, on the desirable reaction to whatever person or situation is around you. That is the measure of your delight, I said. I gave an example from my own, experience: The fence between my garden and my neighbour's had been damaged, and when I sat with hammer and nails to fix the planks in position, he took umbrage, and challenged my, right, standing on the other side, but, very close and very red in the face. He was six feet six and bristling for a fight. We stood chest to chest, he with a clenched fist and I with a hammer in my hand. His diminutive wife stood beside him and after watching me for a while, she exclaimed, "Why are you smiling?" I could not scowl. I had conditioned myself on a different pattern, set by Baba. And I won.

On another occasion, he gave me the word, "Conflict." He wanted me to talk about the positive and the negative attitudes and the conflict that arises between the two, and the need for more understanding and more Love. Another time, the word was, "Hub." He wanted me to elaborate on the benefits of being in the centre, not the periphery; that would make life slower, more meaningful, sweet with the joy of silence and balance, and from that position, one can see the world for what it really is.

The greatest lesson Baba has taught me is that God walks with you and talks with you everywhere, all the time. With this knowledge, you have all you need; all obstacles are removed. Baba encouraged me to meet my 89 year old mother in Australia, when I came to him this time. Baba wrote to me that the mother deserves the highest reverence; I was able to arrange the stop-over and I could spend some time with my beautiful mother, whom I found to be more

beautiful than I ever knew. We are all approaching old age fast and Baba's advice to pour love makes life sweet to both the giver and the receiver.

There are thousands of young people in America who are earnestly trying to discover God for themselves. In the Meditation Groups that meet at our place every Sunday, they sit very quiet, and pray that He be with us. And, Baba always appears. He comes to us, and we learn about His Grace and His Love, which bring Him to us, and persuades Him to be with us.

Millions of people in America are spiritually minded. They seek the path earnestly and sincerely. The Churches are filled with them; lots of people turn to the Eastern Religions for Light and Peace. They are very much in need of good teachers who can guide them. They have come to learn what Baba is declaring so convincingly, that all religions are facets of the same truth. In our centres at Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, New York and other places, many hear for the first time of Baba, and they experience Him quite soon. They find that it is not necessary to travel 25,000 miles to discover Him; He is right in their midst, in their own homes and hearts. "That is the wonderment of Baba. Once He enters your life, He fills it completely! It becomes totally different, totally delightful. One will be free from pain; from jealousy and animosity.

Baba says, only the Timeless, the Beginning-less and the End-less is genuine. Therefore, I shall not end my talk here and now. I shall say, before I resume my seat, "To be continued," somewhere, sometime, when Baba so wills.

*** When Faith and I were preparing the American Edition of the First Part of "Sathyam Sivam and Sundaram," with the help of Dr. Tyberg of the East-West Centre, Baba told a devotee at Prasanthi Nilayam, "An Australian in America is taking out all the Sanskrit words from the Book about me."*

—Charles Penn (Summer Course 24-5-73)

"Truth is Strange"

Heart Block

I belong to a middle class Chitrapur Saraswat family of Bombay, enjoying good health, having been a sportsman during my younger days. I retired from the New India Assurance Co., Ltd. in 1970 after 41 years' service, and am now 63.

It was about 4.30 a.m. on 17th May 1972, when I got up to go to the cloak room, that I suddenly felt the whole building rudely shaking as in an earthquake. I had a little vomiting too and there was profuse sweating. Apprehending some trouble, the family Doctor was summoned and under his advice a Heart Specialist too was brought. On a detailed examination, including cardiogram reading, the Specialist declared that it was a case of "Complete Heart Block" and that the pulse rate being as low as 38, I should be immediately rushed by Ambulance to the Intensive Cardiac Care Unit of the K.E.M. Hospital, before I became unconscious or got an apoplectic stroke. Thanks to my resourceful relatives and helpful neighbours, in less than an hour I was admitted to

the air-conditioned I.C.C. Ward. Within minutes, the most competent, conscientious and ever ready medical staff there, passed a cardiac catheter through my right hand vein and connecting it to an Electric Pacemaker, raised my pulse to over 60 p.m. All other routine tests were also conducted from time to time systematically, and before long they assured my people that, as there were no complications and as I was responding gamely to the treatment, I should be O.K. within a few days. While I was lying flat on my bed, with my right hand tied to the Oscilloscope, I was neither allowed to talk nor be talked to. Luckily I was permitted to read.

It is most truly said that "Man remembers God when he is completely helpless." I was no exception. I decided to spend my enforced bed rest by reading a couple of Books on Sri Sathya Sai Baba—"At His Lotus Feet" and "Sai Baba—Man of Miracles" by Howard Murphet presented to me by a Doctor relation of mine more than two years ago, but which had been lying untouched all the while.

Pace Maker

In the meantime, though over a fortnight had passed since my hospitalization, and despite the excellent and latest treatment meted out to me, the authorities, to their surprise and disappointment, observed that, the moment the Pacemaker was disconnected, to check up my real pulse rate, it would invariably fall below 40 and would never rise. After several consultations and meetings between themselves, they ultimately came to the inevitable conclusion that the only way open, to raise my pulse to a reasonably higher level permanently, was to perform an operation below my chest and implant a thin tiny instrument known as "Artificial Pacemaker", available in U.K. at a cost of Rs. 7,000. This, they said, was absolutely necessary if I had to move about and lead a fairly normal life. This instrument works with the help of two batteries and helps to raise the pulse to about 70 p.m. The guarantee for the batteries, however, is only two years and hence the patient has to undergo a further operation after every two years for replacement of the batteries at a cost of another Rs. 4,000 each time. Thus, the initial cost was Rs. 7,000 and a recurring cost of Rs. 4,000 every two years, apart from the pain and risk that go with each operation. This position was made known to all my family members including Doctors, and they were all reconciled to the same. At last on 6th June they slowly told me all about it, as after all I was the person ultimately to pay the costs and also undergo the operations. This naturally gave me a shock of my life.

I was at my wits end. All that I could do was to surrender myself completely to Sri Sathya Sai Baba and to pray to Him to save me from the catastrophe. I had by then read innumerable incidents from those two Books as to how Baba had rushed to the rescue of his Bhaktas—not only in India but also abroad—in different ways and in different forms. With utmost faith in Him, I prayed continuously that night without a wink of sleep. It was by then about 2-30 a.m. and I was feeling more and more restless. I, therefore, requested the Doctor on duty for some light sleeping dose that could put me to sleep and give me some rest. This was done, and in a few minutes I began feeling dozed. What happened from then is undoubtedly a Miracle so hard to describe vividly. I cannot say whether it was a dream, an illusion or a vision. It happened as follows:

The Dream

I was lying flat on my bed, with my right hand tied to the Oscilloscope through the Catheter and the time was apparently 4 p.m. Visitors were slowly wending their way to the patients. And suddenly I saw a most distinguished visitor and who could it be? Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba! With a saffron silken robe flowing from shoulders to feet, with his soft dark luminous eyes shining with love, and with hands folded behind in his characteristic style, Sri Sai Baba slowly entered the door of the Ward. In a trice two sisters rushed to him to know whom he wanted to visit. He spoke nothing, but with majestic steps, Baba came straight towards me. With his awe-inspiring smile and standing so close to me, keeping his left hand a little above my head, Baba addressed me in a soft but assuring tone "My son, I know how much you are worried about the Artificial Pacemaker and the operations. Do not worry in the least. I have decided to give you back your own pulse. No Pacemaker will be needed for you. Forget all about it. From now on, your pulse will gradually improve. Count the days from today and on the 11th day, which will be Saturday 17th June, you will be discharged from here straight to your home and from then on you will be perfectly O.K. Have faith in me and continue to do always the little good things you have been doing."

In a moment I was fully awake, only to find that it was 4 a.m. and not 4 P.M. It was still dark all around and only the sisters were seen reading silently in the middle around a dim table lamp.

The Rising Pulse

That very morning at about 6.30 a.m., a sister came to record my B. P., Pulse and Temperature as usual. When counting my pulse, however, I saw on her face some sudden surprise. I also noticed her repeating the counting over again. When asked what the matter was, she replied that my basic pulse rate, which had been all the while below 40 since about three weeks had suddenly risen to about 46 p.m. In a flash my thoughts silently went to Baba's blessings only a couple of horse ago. I even confirmed that the 11th day from then was Saturday and 17th June. What further proofs should there be to instill that unshaken confidence in Baba's blessings? The next day the pulse rose further to 50 and the third day it was 54.

By this time the authorities had another Conference and decided that gradually and by stages, over a period of a week, I should be made to sit down, then stand up and then slowly made to walk-first within the Ward and later outside in the Corridor, of course under the guidance and supervision of a Physio-Therapist and also recording each time the B.P. and Pulse rate, both before and after each exercise, to ensure that there was no adverse reaction. After being satisfied with my steady progress, on the morning of 15th June, one of the senior Doctors examined me very carefully, and after going through all the relevant papers, asked me how I was feeling. I replied that I felt very much better and humbly asked him when I could be discharged. The Doctor assured me that I was progressing nicely, but that I should not be worried about my discharge. The moment they found me fit enough, he said, they would automatically send me away in order to make room for more urgent cases waiting in the queue. He also added, in a soft tone, that mostly I would be kept in that very Ward for about a week more and then shifted to an adjoining Ward for another week for observation and check-up. This naturally upset me considerably, because I was pinning my faith on Baba's blessings that I would be discharged on 17th June; all the more so, because every other thing had proved too true.

17th June

The next day, 16th June at about 12-00 noon, the top-most Doctor came to me on his usual rounds, after the Conference and discussions. After examining me in all minute details, and also consulting the cardiograms taken from time to time, to my utmost pleasant shock, the Doctor declared that they had decided to discharge me the very next day Saturday, 17th June. He also added that the improvement was so rapid and so marked, that there was no need for my being kept in the other Ward for check-up and that I could go home straight. Permission was also granted for going to cloak-room, self-shaving and for even taking bath daily, if I so wished. He also advised that I could completely forget about the Artificial Pacemaker and even the fact that I was ill. He only insisted that I should observe certain diet, take medicines regularly and come to the O.P.D. for periodical check-up. What amount of Ananda, Excitement and Ecstasy was experienced by me could better be imagined than expressed.

Thanks to Bhagavan's grace, I am now quite O.K. My pulse is stabilized between 52 and 62. I am moving about quite freely, talking as much as I like, typing whenever I want and climbing staircases, though slowly, wherever necessary. And all this without the least strain nor the least adverse reaction.

—*H. Narayan Rao; Bombay*

Baba is the Remedy

We hear a great deal about student unrest and the revolt of youth these days. Americans have coined the phrase "generation gap" for the consequences of this phenomenon in their country. But it is not confined to America. We see it all over the world. It is likely that what we see else where, in part at any rate, is imitative. It is also obvious that in India vast numbers of students have become tools in the hands of political parties who are using them to foment strife and to pull their chestnuts from the fire. This has been going on from the days of our struggle for freedom, but during that period students formed only a small segment of our society and the catastrophe was not conspicuous. In 1936-37 there were only 1,26,000 students in the universities and colleges of undivided India which had a population of 3,630 lakhs at the time. But according to the University Grants Commission the number rose to 17,28,733 in a population of 4 870 lakhs in 1965-66. The growth during the 30-year period was phenomenal from 1:2885 to 1:281. There is an old jingle which says that "more means worse", and this we see as an empirical fact in the sphere of education in our country today.

But why? What is the cause of this "youthquake" which is convulsing the world? Devotees and even agnostics turn to Baba for an answer and wonder whether He has any remedy. I have no doubt at all that there is a remedy. BABA is the remedy. I am convinced that that is why He has chosen this epoch for the advent. But let us have a close look at the disease first.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, which includes most of the nations of Europe stated recently in, its annual report that if governments-do not respond quickly to a growing disenchantment with the kind of technological growth provided by "free" economies, the consequences could be grievous. "The world-wide culture of educated youth, which is deeply concerned with ecological perspectives and is increasingly anti-materialistic, egalitarian, anti-meritocratic and anti-bureaucratic could conceivably even adopt anti-rational views and could become much more influential in the next decade than our extrapolations suggest, especially if established methods fail to bring about improvement. Such a failure could lead to retardation of scientific progress to the point where the world lacked the intellectual tools to cope with the complexity it has created."

This diagnosis is good so far as it goes and the prognosis too may be correct; but they do not go far enough. The cause of the ferment is not of recent origin. Science and technology are not the primary culprits either. The architects of modern western civilization, starting with the Renaissance in Europe, the explorers and empire builders who set out to conquer the world for material wealth by subjugating other peoples beyond the seas and destroying their civilizations, have to bear the entire blame. Untold wealth tainted with blood and tears flowed into Europe creating the capital which made the flowering of science and technology possible and which ultimately led to the industrial revolution. A totally brain based, almost mechanistic, conception of life and the world at large, emerged in the course of the next 300 years. And now within a span of just one generation after the global holocaust of the Second World War humanity is confronted with an "all-or-none" choice in respect of this great gift of the west. The older generation of today is unwilling to give up its adoration of materialism. It clings tenaciously to a misconceived humanism, technology and industrial development and shudders at the very thought of a world without them.

But the young have no such inhibitions. They were born into this dehumanised, mechanistic civilization; they have not known what went before it and are in no mood to compare. They are new comers on this scene; their inborn sensibilities have not been numbed and this is the crucial reason why they find this acquisitive, high-powered enormity flourishing on greed, that is called life today, as unbearable. It is their basic, uncorrupted, humanity that is revolting against the tyranny of this culture of commerce and industry. The sympathetic observer can discern a deep sense of helplessness in their reactions to an increasingly abstract world devoid of human values. It is a tragic irony that this has happened in an age which has been extolled for its humanism, its rationality and its liberal outlook. Their addiction to drugs and sex and music and to a vagrant style of living is the direct result of this despair. The current phrase for this syndrome of the spirit is "search for identity", which is only another way of saying the old, old, thing: desire to know oneself, not in philosophical concepts, but in flesh Y and blood, by actual living experience. It is the reaction of the sensitive, soul, the real man in human life, that unseen entity which is at once the victor and witness of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, and all that is felt within.

Baba has His eye on that inner man. That is the reality that He, sees in every individual in the unending concourse of humanity that flocks to Him. He knows it is easier and far more important to mould the young and this, I guess, is the secret of His intense educational endeavour. Perception of Truth is the first of His exhortations, but Truth to which He leads the offspring of the species is not a mere synonym for veracity or truth in the philosophical sense. It is Truth in the prophetic sense, which is not an intellectual concept or logical conclusion, but spiritual realisation at the highest level of introspective life. The path to that supreme goal is paved with Prema—Love—the primal yearning of life, condemned to individuation in its earthly existence. This is the secret of the irresistible attraction that children and youth feel towards Him. He appears to them as the very embodiment of Prema. The very sight of Him fills their hearts with joy. This is why we say that His life is His message. He has no philosophy to teach, no esoteric doctrine to inculcate. We get from Him what we do not get elsewhere instant fulfillment of the deepest aspirations of our soul. In His presence Love is a palpable reality. Young or old, man cannot ask for a greater blessing than this. Fortunate indeed are we who live today; we have the chance of receiving God's Love directly from Him.

—Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair, D.Sc.

Behind the Mind

Many of us are drawn to Baba because of the 'miracles'. Others are drawn to the Lord because they want the fulfillment of some particular desire. Most of us travel long distance from different states in India to reach His Feet. The physical journey merely constitutes the transportation of the body from one place to another. However, upon reaching Bhagavan, the journey is of a different kind: this journey is inward, a search within the mind for the Truth.

Baba is not a sage or a saint; neither is He a man of God-realisation. He is that Ultimate Principle of Consciousness and Truth, which has taken up a Name, and a Form, in order to communicate with humanity and lead it back to the path of God-realisation. He is the embodiment of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema.

The difference between an Avatar and a man of God-realisation is that man through his conscious effort, has to transcend his limitations and ascend to higher levels of consciousness and come to realise his identity with God. He can, through his efforts gain control over the 5 elements the 5 Karmendriyas and the 5 Jnanendriyas—but, the 16th, the all-knowing aspect of God he cannot acquire.

This all-knowing aspect is the inherent nature of God. Another major difference between an Avatar and a man of God-realisation is that, the ultimate principle of consciousness, Nirguna Brahman, has to come down to a much lower form of expression and allow itself to be restricted by a body. On the other hand, man has to raise himself to a higher level of consciousness to merge in God.

Just because Baba moves amongst us, talks to us, laughs and jokes with us, we are deluded into the belief that He is one of us. Baba Himself has warned us against this mistake. No one can ever come to know who Baba is, regardless of how close one may live physically to Him, unless one comes to know his own true nature. Our attempts to describe Baba are merely pompous expressions of our intellects, clothed in deceptive ignorance.

With what can we know Him? He is the One who is behind the mind. It is in His Presence that all thoughts are able to rise. With the mind, how can we perceive that which is beyond it? The mind is an instrument; the microscope can never analyse the one who is seeing through the eye-piece. The mind is turned outwards. Before I become aware of what passes through my mind, Baba is aware of it! For, they rise in His Presence, and are capable of being cognised only through His Grace. We become conscious of them, only when they have transformed themselves as thought. That is why Baba is referred to as Antaryamin.

The subtle changes that we undergo in His Presence, the impact of His Grace on us, may not be perceptible immediately; but, the years ahead will reveal the full story. This transformation can best be described as the 'miracle of love', that no man or super-man can ever hope to duplicate.

—Shiv Pandit—Student participant, Summer Course, 1973

Life itself is a market. In life, giving and taking, bargaining and speculating is part of the game. Life has its ups and downs, its profits and losses, its joys and sorrows, depreciations and appreciations and balance sheets, but the giving of 'Bhakti' in exchange for 'Mukti' is the most powerful business of all.

—Baba

The Proof of the rain is the wetness of the ground, likewise, the proof of true devotion is in the peace of mind that the aspirant has, been able to attain, the peace which protects him against the onslaught of failures, the peace in which he is unruffled by loss and dishonour, the peace that

does not perturb his mind with anger, hatred, jealousy, conceit and lower passions, the peace which makes him feel tranquil, unconcerned and unattached under all circumstances and with all human natures. Know that you are the embodiment of that peace.

—Baba

From Over the Ocean

A two syllable pilgrimage brings me to You—Sai Ram!

*Ram is that—which—pleases, delightful—Sai is Ram—
Across the ocean a bridge is built with Sai Ram.*

*Sai Ram is in my heart, in all hearts. Endlessly we draw on
Sai Ram's endless sweetness. Sai Ram is the strong
center song of living perfection, one's true, Self—Sai Ram.*

*I wondered 'what shall be my song, my saving sound,'
You came along; I heard You say 'Sai Ram' I laughed.*

*I leaned upon a shadow and fell until I reached the
support of Sai Ram. Sai Ram!*

*I stopped but felt too low to touch Your Feet; so I,
imagined doing it. You felt my feeling and blessed me
bountifully—how to thank You, Sai Ram?*

*You are the white Light of purity itself, Sai Ram,
And my impure hand You held! I was ashamed my hand
seemed unclean, but how else can You show Your pure Love
Sai Ram, unless You touch us, even as You did from over
the ocean, when we first heard of Sai Ram. Sai Ram!*

—Bill Jackson

I am All

Beloved Sai! I am nothing without Thee.
O, Holy One, I am all, because of Thee.
I am Thou and art me. I am Thine.
And, Thou art mine. I am, because Thou art.
By Thy Grace, I live and move and I have

My being in Thee. All that I am, all
That I have, (I have nothing of my own,)
All that I give, that I receive, come
From Thee, Giver of every good and perfect Gift.

Thank You for the Anger that flushes me
And, grants me Peace.
Thank You for the Pride, that reveals
My egoism to me.
Thank You for jealousy, when she raises
Her wild and poisonous head
I remember to remember
To rejoice and be happy in the well-being
And blessings of my other selves,
Knowing "we are One,"
When I feel envious of the success of another
I must be still
And realize that too is my success.
When I unify in One-ness of Spirit
The Consciousness of Thy Presence
Teaches me the value of humility
And, detachment from all else save Thee.
In the realization of Thy Truth
I am unified in Thee.
We merge in divine love and everlasting Bliss.

Thank you, Sai, for restoring me in-spirit,
Mind and Body. I cannot live without Thee.
I cannot see, except thru Thy Divine eyes;
I cannot hear except thru Thy Divine ears.
I cannot feel, unless I touch
The living Flame of Thy Light.
I cannot believe, except I experience
The electric current of Thy Love.
I cannot live, without the living
Price of Thy breath, in me.
I cannot think, without the moving Spirit
Of Thy Life in me. I cannot move
Without Thy Omnipotence. Or, remember
Without Thy Omniscience. Or, forget,
With remembering Thy Omnipresence,
—*Jessica de Vaughn*

SAI!
You walk;

*the Advent.
You smile,
and something is reborn.
All that was forgotten
is remembered.
You look on me
and i am yours,
no more i,
but Thou..*

—*Christopher Curtis; New York*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

43

Sage Bharadwaja

THUS, Rama entered the hermitage of Bharadwaja, taking Sita with him and accompanied by Lakshmana and Guha. The sage appeared at the doorway and walked forward to welcome him, as if he was waiting since long to be blessed by the Darshan; seeing him, Rama prostrated before him, and when Bharadwaja lovingly embraced him and invited him to enter the hermitage, he was very happy to comply. The sage made them sit on the seats he had already spread on the floor, for each according to his status and position.

He inquired after the welfare of every one of them and declared that his heart's desire was fulfilled that day. He asked his pupils to bring fruits and roots, and placing them before his guests, he pleaded that they might partake of them. They spent the night in that hermitage, accepting the sage's hospitality and service.

When day dawned, Rama proceeded to the confluence of the three rivers, at Prayag, and requested the sage too to give him company. Bharadwaja said, 'Listen O Lord! I chose this holy spot for my hermitage and austerities, since I knew I could get here, the Darshan I longed for since years. To get the thrill of your contact, I undertook vows and performed Vedic Yajnas and Yagas. I immersed myself in the chanting of Divine Names and in meditation on the Divine Form, so that I might be rewarded with the chance to converse with you. I was awarded all three by you. I have no more wants. I am no more concerned with bath or with food, I do not want to be reckoned as a fool who continued consuming drugs, even after he was cured of the illness. I am free now from the fell disease of birth-and-death. I have seen God.'

Seeing him filled with ecstasy, speaking with tears flowing from his eyes and listening to his sincere outpourings, Guha was overwhelmed with surprise. He said to himself, "O! What great good fortune is mine!" He was overcome by supreme joy. Meanwhile Rama suppressed His Divinity and acted as if he was just a man with common human attributes. While Sage Bharadwaja was dilating delightedly on the Rama Principle that was God standing before him,

Rama listened, as if it all related to another person called Rama and not to himself! He replied, "O! Foremost among sages! All those who are recipients of your hospitality are, by that very proof, adorable. All such are full of virtue and wisdom." The pupils, ascetics, sages and monks of the hermitage who heard the words of Bharadwaja and those of Rama were struck with wonder and filled with joy.

Pupils of the Sage

After the holy bath at Prayag, Rama left the hermitage with Sita Lakshmana and Guha, taking leave of the great Sage, and entered the deeper recesses of the forest. Bharadwaja followed them as far as the riverbank, and there, he clasped Rama in loving embrace, wishing them a happy journey. Rama prayed for the blessings of the Sage and said, "Master! Tell us which direction is best." The sage replied, with a laugh, "Lord! There is no path unknown to you in all the worlds, is there? You are playing the role of a mere man, in this habiliment. Well. Since I have been asked, it is my duty to reply, to the best of my knowledge." Thus saying, he beckoned to four of his pupils, and sent them with Rama to show him the track that led to the next hermitage complex. Those boys were delighted at the chance they secured to journey with Rama for some little distance at least. They felt that it was a gift earned in previous lives. They walked in front, showing them the forest track. Behind them, Rama went with Sita, Lakshmana and Guha. They went as far as the bank of the Yamuna river, and there, they took leave of Rama and turned back, without the will to do so. They trekked back with heavy hearts.

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were very pleased at the pupils for the help they rendered; they blessed them with all their hearts and allowed them to leave.

Departure of Guha

Then, they got ready to have the holy bath in the sacred Yamuna. Meanwhile, inhabitants of the villages on the bank noticed these visitors of extra-ordinary charm and splendour, and gathered around them, wondering who they were and whence they came and what their names were. They were too shy and too afraid to ask. They were talking in whispers among themselves.

Sita, Rama and Lakshmana finished their bath, without paying heed to them; and, coming on to the bank, Rama called Guha near, and said, "Dear one! It is a long time since you joined us: it isn't proper that you should spend so much time with us. You must carry out your duties to your subjects. Go home now, to your post of duty." He then gave him permission to leave. Guha found himself helpless to answer him; "Can any one give up the wish-fulfilling gem that he has come by? How fortunate I am to be forced to do so!" he wailed. He could not disregard the command of Rama. So, he prostrated before Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, and showered on his head the dust of their feet. He left their presence, most unwillingly.

The Citizen's wonder

A short time after Guha left them, the three resumed their journey. Soon, they saw before them a City, which shone brighter than even the City of the Nagas and the City of the God. As they neared the light, they wondered which city it was. The nearer they came, the more delighted they were at the grandeur and charm of the City and its suburbs. Reaching quite near, they took it to be Amaravati, the City of the Gods and they still mote delighted. They felt that the citizens must

be gods not men. They sat under a tree in its cool shade and admired its splendour and magnificence.

The people came around them and questioned among themselves whether they had come down from heaven, and were the Immortals themselves. They ran into the town and spread the good news that some divine personalities 'were coming into the City bringing great good luck with them.

Every one who heard them ran towards the visitors and vied with each other in attending to their comforts. Some placed milk before them; some spread fruits; all looked on at them without even a wink! No one could leave them alone and go back. They stood unwilling to depart.

The Query

One of them, bolder than the rest, came forward towards them, and addressing them spoke thus: "Sirs! Your charm and imposing personality makes us infer that you are princes of royal blood. But, you are journeying by foot along these rough inaccessible jungle paths, with this damsel. You are climbing mountains and crossing rivers; you are hard travellers braving all the dangers of the trek, so, we have to conclude that you are like us, mere citizens. We cannot understand how you manage to travel across this thick forest area where lions abound and herds of wild elephants roam. And, you have with you this tender embodiment of loveliness and beauty. Have you no kith and kin, no friends and comrades, no well-wishers? If there were any such, certainly, they would not have allowed you to venture on this journey. "He inquired into the nature and cause of the journey and put a number of such questions to Rama.

A Woman's Prayer

Meanwhile, a woman advanced from the gathering towards them, and addressed Rama thus: O Prince! I am placing a prayer before you. Woman that I am; I am afraid by nature to express it. Pardon my effrontery. We are common folk, unacquainted with verbal finesse. Your physical charm reflects the lustre of emerald and gold, which seem to be the source of your brightness. One of you has the complexion of the rain-cloud, while the other is resplendent white. Both are as enchanting as a billion Gods of Love, moulded into human bodies. Again, we are not aware how this sweet damsel is related to you? She has the exquisite charm of the Goddess of Love, Rathi Devi. Watching her modesty and innate humility, as well as her charming attributes, we women are ashamed of ourselves. Kindly tell us who you are, and for what reason or purpose you have come thus wise."

Sita Replies

Listening to their prayers, and watching their eagerness and joy, Rama and Lakshmana were very much amused. Just then, Sita turned towards the women, and spoke to them thus: "Sisters! This simple sincere person with the golden complexion is Lakshmana. He is my Lord's brother, a younger brother. Then, about the dark-blue complexioned person, he with the lotus-petal eyes that enrapture the worlds, with the long strong bow-arms, (here, she turned towards Rama), this is my Lord, the very breath of my life. Saying this, she bent her head and looked at the ground. Just then, a young maiden interjected, Ma! You haven't told us your name!" Sita immediately said, "My name is Sita. I am known as Janaki, the daughter of Janaka." The women looked at each other in wonder and appreciation and then, with one voice, they blessed Sita profusely,

saying, "May you both be as happy a couple as God Siva and Goddess Parvati and may you live together, as long as the Sun and Moon, as long as the Earth rests upon the hood of the snake, Adishesha, in harmony and unbroken joy.

Rama Speaks

Rama too spoke to the men and informed them that they had come to see the grandeur and beauty of the forests, and that their travels so far had been quite comfortable and useful, that they were not in the least exhausted or inconvenienced. He asked their permission to leave, and then, they turned to the forests again. Having nothing left to do, the men and women hied homeward.

Sita Rama and Lakshmana wended their way, talking among themselves about the citizens and the questions they asked, the affection they manifested and that glinted in their eyes. Suddenly, Rama noticed signs of exhaustion on the face of Sita, and proposed that they rest awhile under a shady tree. A cool road stream flowed near by. Lakshmana ventured into the jungle and soon gathered some fruits and tubers, which all three ate with relish. They spent the night there, quite happily.

The Hermitage Garden

At dawn, they awoke, and finishing the morning ablutions, they started off on the next lap of their journey. Soon, they entered the fearsome recesses of the forest. The lowering peaks, the dark dreadful tangle of trees, and the deafening roar of flooded streams, produced a feeling of awe and mystery.

Right in the midst of that frightful scene, they came upon a patch of garden, nursed and fostered by man, and upon it, a hermitage that was charming to behold. That was the ashram of the sage Valmiki. On one side of the hermitage rose the cliffs of a tall mountain; on the other side, far below, at the bottom of a deep trough flowed a murmuring stream. The hermitage was a picture of beauty; it shone like a gem in that green background. Sita felt considerably relieved and assuaged when her eyes fell on that picture.

Learning that they had entered the garden (from his pupils), Valmiki emerged from inside the hermitage and appeared at the door. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana hurried forward and fell at the feet of the sage. The sage too, moved forward and, as if he had known them for long, he welcomed them, with fond embrace. He invited all three to enter the hermitage.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

*O Bhagavan, there's nothing You can't do
And that is why men your darshan woo;
For us devotees its only you
Who forgives sins be he Hindu, Jew.
O Baba, have mercy on us all
And all calamities please do stall;
What is man on this stage but a doll,*

Its You who lifts and prevents its fall.
—**Solomon Benjamin**

Sai Family News

1: Gratitude from Sri Lanka

The Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samitis of Colombo and Jaffna sponsored a twelve-day visit by the Vice-President of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Mangalore, Mysore State, for the Exhibition of the films on the various Festivals and Functions at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan, Dharmakshetra, and Anantapur, wherein Bhagavan showered Grace on huge masses of devotees. Mr. Rau evinced tireless enthusiasm in showing the films to thousands of delighted spectators, at Colombo, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Trincomalee, Anuradhapura and Kandy. A devotee from Vavuniya writes, "A very suitable climate has been created for the reception of the invaluable teachings of Bhagavan Baba by this unique film festival that thrilled the soul of every one who was fortunate to witness it."

2: Thrown Six Feet Away

"I was going by car to Naini Tal from Lucknow, with Dr. Joseph Tatar from Hungary," writes Dr. S. C. Datta, M.Sc., D. Phil., D.Sc. (Penn, U.S.A). "On the way at Lalkua, a little girl, five years of age ran across the road and the driver could not stop. The car dashed against the girl and she was thrown about six feet away. She lay unconscious on the road; hundreds of people gathered and they were about to beat the driver in their anger. I tried to pick her up for taking her to the hospital. The crowd was too excited. Being at a loss what to do in this situation, I looked at the Sai Baba Ring on my finger and prayed to Baba to save the girl. The moment I took HIS NAME, the girl opened her eyes and began to cry. I took her to the doctor, and he declared that she was all right, except a few scratches which he dressed. She came out of the doctor's chamber, walking and talking as if nothing had happened. Dr. Tatar was amazed at this miracle. I bowed my head to the Feet of Bhagavan for saving the girl.

3. Gurupoornima

Sunday 15th July, was the Full Moon Day, prescribed in the Hindu Calendar for the adoration and worship of the Preceptor by their pupils, disciples, devotees and followers. Baba is the Avatar, come with the specific mission of correcting, consoling mankind; He is the World Teacher, the Guide, Guardian and Goal of all spiritual endeavour, by whomsoever done in whatever clime, in whichever manner. Therefore, thousands gathered in His Presence at Prasanthi Nilayam that day (there were more than a hundred devotees from Patiala in the Punjab), and secured Darshan. Baba gave a Discourse that evening, on the fundamental incompleteness and insufficiency of science, and the need to practise religion in order to make life full of joy and peace.

4. Letter from Fiji

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Suva, is actively engaged in propagating and practising the teachings of Baba. A Mahila Sangha has been formed; members hold meetings every month; they have inaugurated a Bal Vikas Centre, where many children have learnt to sing Bhajans and

to enjoy them. The Bhajan Mandali has held Thursday Bhajans without interruption, on every Thursday. Study Circles to master the holy gospel of Baba are held on Saturdays and Sundays and are very popular. The film, the Advent of the Avatar, is owned by the Samiti and has been exhibited in many places to enthusiastic gatherings. Many devotees from Fiji have been blessed by Bhagavan at Prasanthi Nilayam, to which Place they have journeyed with ardent fervour. Srimati Indra Devi of California has agreed to pay us a visit later this year.

5. Katmandu, (Nepal) Letter

We have started Bhajan in our residence, and Bhaktas are joining in larger numbers with every passing week. Recently, Mr. Philip Swartz and Miss Betty dropped in on a Thursday evening during Bhajan. The lady sung a couple of Bhajans in most devotional manner. They related their experiences at the Prasanthi Nilayam. Well. It is a matter of clicking. Satsang takes place, without our knowing it. We cannot say when Baba showers His blessings. He knows that it is those who have gone astray that needs His guidance and blessings.

6. Drought Relief

Seva Samitis of Mysore State established four food Distribution Centres in areas worst affected by drought, in Bijapur Dt. This is the photograph of the recipients of Sathya Sai Prasadam at one such centre. Each centre worked for more than 4 months.

The Lord is most pleased with Dharma; for, in order to save Dharma and restore Dharma to its ancient purity and clarity, He condescends to assume human form and walk among mankind! So, if you yearn for the grace of God, let Dharma be the inspiration behind every thought, word and deed of yours. Let the faith that all are repositories of the Divine inspire you with love, tolerance, sympathy and reverence.

—Baba

The Garuda Purana—seen through Sai Teachings

During the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality at Brindavan, in, May-June, 1973, Dr. A. P. Narasappa, M.D. gave an interesting speech on 'The Garuda Purana, as seen through the Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.' Dr. Narasappa, with the collaboration of two other doctors, has recently published a translation in the Kannada language of the Second part of this Purana—the seventeenth among the traditional eighteen—consisting of 1280 verses, distributed over sixteen chapters.

Sri. K. Guru Dutt, M.A., I.A.S (Retd.), reviewing this Translation has written, 'In the popular Hindu mind, this Purana has unpleasant associations, as it is generally recited during post funeral ceremonies. But, there is no valid ground for holding that there is anything inauspicious about it. On the other hand, the Purana furnishes rare insight into the deeper significance of various myths and rituals. The first six chapters deal with the course evildoers take after death; the next seven describes the ceremonies to be conducted after death; the last three treat of the subsequent career of well doers and of Ultimate Release or Moksha.

The distinctive feature of the translation is a valuable selection from the writings and speeches of Sri Sathya Sai Baba bearing on the philosophical concepts appearing in, the text of the Purana. These are given as footnotes to the verses; there are 528 such footnotes, of which as many as 480 are from the writings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Read continuously and by themselves, they provide a compact and authoritative exposition of the teachings of Baba." Dr. Narasappa has gathered hundreds of illuminating passages from the writings of Baba and from his own conversations with Him to shed new light on various rites, practices, symbolic ceremonials and philosophical conundrums which the Garuda Purana presents. His book, as well as his lecture, revealed that Baba is the "Wisdom behind the Puranic Lore and the Dharma that they inculcate." This article is a summary of the lecture that Dr. Narasappa gave to the students during the Course.

The Purana

Garuda Purana is described as the teaching imparted to Garuda, the foremost disciple of God Narayana, by Narayana Himself, at His Eternal Residence, Vaikunta. Vaikunta, says Baba, is the Place or Stage where there is no kuntitha or dullness, stupidity, mutilation or misery. And, about Garuda, Baba says, "Garuda is the symbol of Karma (Pure Activity)—a Bird with the two wings of Sraddha (Faith) and Bhakti (Devotion). Garuda is the bird on which, the Lord takes His Seat, the hridaya vihaga (the Heart; symbolised as a bird). About Narayana, the Guru who teaches disciples, Baba says, "If you do not get a Guru from outside yourself; if you pray, the Narayana inside you, will Himself reveal the road and lead you on."

The Uttarakanda or the later parts of the Purana are declared to, be Saroddhara, or the "Quintessence of the Sastras." Bhagavan's Teachings are also the quintessence of the Sastras and so naturally, there is complete identification noticeable.

Course of Sin

As a matter of fact, the first six chapters of the Garuda Purana, which deal with papa-gati or the course of sin can be summarised best by quotations from Bhagavan's discourse! "In the Garuda Purana, Sri Hari (Narayana) instructs Garuda about the daily decline of human life and the attacks that Death deals on him, with his army of diseases, accidents and natural calamities. You have earned this human body by the accumulated merit of many lives as inferior beings and it is indeed very foolish to fritter away this precious opportunity, in activities that are natural only to inferior beings." "Whatever acts, good or bad, man may do, the fruits thereof follow him and will never stop pursuing him." "You must have heard of an accountant in the Court of Yama the King of Death, Chitragupta by name. He maintains a register of the good and bad done by each living being and, on death, he brings the books to the Court and strikes the balance between debit and credit. Yama then metes between the punishment that can expiate and educateThis Chitragupta has his office in the Mind of man; he is all the time, awake, alert. The word means, "the secret picture what he does is to picture the secret promptings that blossom into activity; he notes the warning signals, as well as the occasions when those signals were ignored or wantonly disregarded." "On the Day of Judgement, Virtue and Righteousness will bear witness on your behalf; neither your bank account, nor your income tax returns will speak on your behalf."

Rituals

The subsequent seven chapters of the Garuda Purana deal with rites by the dying person, and his sons before and after death. The various 'bodies' which the Jiva or individual soul puts on after death, and the rituals which can release it from them and raise it to higher levels of uplift are given in the Purana. The validity of these rites are described by Baba, whose incarnation is designed to restore faith in this 'spiritual science'. Baba says, "Take the question of offering food in the fire to the departed parents on the anniversary days of their deaths There are those who laugh, ridiculing this rite, saying that such offerings cannot reach them. But, the mantras uttered while making the offerings reveal that these deceased ancestors are addressed as identifiable with Gods, Vasu, Rudra and Aditya, and, the rite is highly, sublimated! You post a letter in the box and it goes straight to the addressee, whoever he is, however far; the ritual fire is the authorised Post Box, the fire is the authority; the stamps are the mantras. There is a science of the spirit, as there is a science of matter. It has its own categories, its own modus operandi, its own experts and authoritative theses."

Course of Virtue

The last three chapters describe 'punyagati', the course that merit-filled persons take after death. The Purana says that pre-tattwa or 'ghost-ness' is ended and the departed are saved, by the adoration of Narayana. I have quoted in the book an incident where Baba himself explained a midnight incident at the Nilayam as the liberation of a ghost that prayed for the blessings of Baba and came to the Nilayam seeking Him. Baba told Penn (Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram - III p20 - 21), "You, Charles, saw at Bombay the tens of thousands of seekers of Liberation striving to catch even a glimpse of Me. These numbers are but a drop in the ocean, compared to the countless unseen souls who try to reach Me from beyond, towards Liberation." This confirms that Bhagavan is Narayana Himself.

The Moment of Death

The Garuda Purana prescribes fasting for the dying man; he should recite the Name of God, recite slokas from the Bhagavata Scripture, sip Ganges water with Tulsi leaves etc. These are means to bring thoughts of God to the mind of the dying man, and ensure a good birth for him later on, or, liberation itself. A study of the dying moments of many Sai devotees given in the translation reveals that Baba's Grace has given each of them, the things that the Purana recommends as beneficial. One example may be related now. Janakamma (82) living at Prasanthi Nilayam for over 20 years had often prayed to Baba to give her sips of holy water at the last moment of her life, and He had often assured her that He would do so. When the last day came, Baba was at Whitefield. At 9 A.M., when she was engaged in Bhajan at the Prayer Hall at the Prasanthi Nilayam, she felt a sensation to vomit. She hurried home to her house in the Nilayam area and vomited. Afterwards, she did not take food or drink. About 12 noon, she noticed a stream of holy water flowing from the right foot (placed over the left knee) of the idol of Shirdi Baba that was in the domestic altar, close by. She sat up saying, "O! Teertha is falling from Baba's Feet" and collected the water drops and drank them. Within a few minutes, she peacefully left this world. On the third day after this, when Baba came to the Nilayam, He told her son, "Did not your mother vomit, while Bhajan was going on? It was I who induced the vomit, so that her stomach may be empty to receive the Teertha."

This incident illustrates four important points. Baba confirms the Garuda Purana Injunction that a dying person, should fast 2) Baba is the Narayana from whose Feet the Ganga emanated 3) Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba are one and the same 4) Baba is eternally vigilant about His devotees and He fulfils His Promises wherever He may be near or far.

The episode of Baba bringing back to life Walter Cowan is also included in my translation of Garuda Purana, for, it corroborates many passages of the Purana. Why did Baba allow Cowan to die and then, bring him back to life? I feel it is mainly to take a Westerner who had no knowledge of Hindu Scriptures like the Garuda Purana, to the Court of Yama and have him as a witness to the truth of the Purana.

Merging of the Light

Garuda Purana says that the soul of the Jnani, the One who has visualised the Truth reaches the Paramapada (the Highest Stage). Baba is the 'Paramapada' and merging in Him is the supremest stage. The Sanathana Sarathi of March 1958 records the good fortune of a Jnani thus: 'It was on Friday, 8th November, 1957. A pleasant moonlight night it was. Bhagavan was lying on the bed and some of us were near Him. All of a sudden, a Jyoti (flame of Light) was seen darting through the thick wall. It moved along, up to His Head and disappeared! What could it be? We were eager to know. After a while Babaji Himself revealed it Sri Keethamala Swami, the Mahatma of Malabar, had attained Samadhi (Death) and it was the Jyoti of his soul that had reached its destination and become one with the Lord.'

Leaf to Lord

Garuda Purana says that one has to rise from a State of Sthavara (unmoving vegetable) through a series of lives as animals and then, after many lives as man, and, acquiring merit, he becomes ultimately God Himself. On 27th April, last, Bhagavan plucked a leaf from a plant as He passed along the garden at Brindavan, with a, batch of students. "What is there in my hand?" He asked. The boys replied, "A leaf." I was standing by and I said, "It can become anything, by your kindness." He opened His palm. Lo! His palm had a small locket with a beautiful portrait of Narayana, reclining on the serpent couch! "This corresponds to what you have written," He said, while handing it over to me. Yes. The quintessence of the Garuda Purana is that man can rise from the leaf to the Lord. Baba also indicated that, when one can unconcernedly sleep over the Serpent of desires, he can be deemed to have attained Divinity. Baba also revealed that He was Narayana, the Purana Purusha, the Person extolled in the Puranas as the Timeless Entity.

Garuda Purana characterises God as the Sadguru (which Baba is) and as Bhaktavatsala (Compassionate to devotees), Paramadayalu (Most merciful), Sarva-devataswarupa (Manifesting in the Forms of all the Gods). We all know that Baba is all this and much more.

The Goal of Grace

What should we do to earn the Grace of this Sadguru (Great Preceptor) Sai Narayana? He Himself has told us how, in the following verse, sung as Bhajan, at the Prasanthi Nilayam and elsewhere—a verse which is also the summary of all the teachings of the Garuda Purana. It is also the meaning of the very last verse of the Garuda Purana.

Hari Hari Hari Hari, Smarana Karo

(Hari Hari Hari Hari, Remember Him)

Hari Charana Kamala Dhyana Karo
(Hari Feet Lotus, Meditate on)

Murali Madhava Seva Karo
(Flute Krishna, Serve ever)

Murahari Giridhari, Bhajana Karo
(Krishna, who bore the Hill, sing His glory)

I call this song 'the Sai Narayana Sukta', the Adoration of Sai Narayana.

—Dr. A. P. Narasappa

The Shape of Things to Come

The Summer Camp

The Summer Camp in Indian Culture and Spirituality, which was held at Brindavan, in Whitefield, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, from May 21 to June 21, 1973, marks another milestone in the Renaissance of this great country. It was indeed epoch-making. Last year's Camp brought nostalgic memories of the past, with its sylvan sanctuaries, forest hermitages, and Vedic Academies, pulsing with incessant and earnest enquiry into the enigma of life and the mystery of the Godhead. Life in ancient India was integral and in tune with the Infinite. Sages and rulers alike led exemplary lives which were moored to abiding faith in the Almighty; and, under their guidance and governance, the different strata of society at all levels could enjoy the blessings of peace and order. The rumbling peals of thunder scarcely affected them; the Rag of Dharma was the sign-post to the 'here and hereafter'. It secured to them the summum bonum of existence.

Bhagavan, hailed as Avatar, is eager to revive the glory that was India. He has declared that He trusts in the youth of India. If properly trained in our traditional and cultural lore, they can avoid the pitfalls of the present and be the torch-bearers to the rest. Geared to false and foreign ideologies, they have forgotten their heritage—even the elders hardly differ from the youngsters in this respect—and have blindly be taken themselves to alien' loyalties. They have become a terror and nightmare to their countrymen. They are a threat to the future of their motherland.

Modern education, for all its technological advance, dazzling splendour, glamour, is a silly negation of basic human values, with their uplifting code of conduct and impeccable sense of righteousness. Its facade has deceptive cracks, behind its deceptive lining of scientific, technological and artistic progress. No nation can progress on empty and mouthsome slogans. Faith in the dignity of man as a spark of the Divine, is the corner-stone of a virtuous life. Truth and honour are its hallmark. The wisdom of hoary India with its grand synthesis does not date; it is embedded in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Brahmasutra and their

Commentaries; they are sempiternal in their sense and sanity and they can remould our lives without compromising the urge for change.

The Disease

The good old earth has becoming a simmering cauldron of violence and vengefulness. Bhagavan has diagnosed the disease and prescribed the remedy—the resurrection of Sanathana Dharma and its medium, Sanskrit. It is the only hope for human survival, amid the turbulence and turmoil of a war-torn and exhausted world, reeking with all the horrors, actual and potential, of, the nuclear age. Even space has become the highway to anarchy. The evils of gross materialism are rampant and must be laid. The brotherhood of man is a fundamental concept of peaceful co-existence. Pragmatic and comprehensive training has to be given to the youth of all lands to enable them to see the error of their ways, and to rehabilitate themselves.

The Cure

With a re-oriented outlook, Indian youth can be an asset to the motherland, as well as to the globe. Of course, the aim of the Camp is not to supplant but only to supplement the present education and to rectify its inherent defects.

In a solemn atmosphere of buoyant hope and ardent piety, the Camp was inaugurated by Dr. H Narasimhiah, the Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, who pleaded for the triple tenets of social justice, economic equality and personal security. Dr. V. K. Gokak, the Director of the Summer Course and Camp welcomed the gathering and outlined the aims and ideals of the Camp. He referred to its predecessor of 1972; and its profound impact on the participants and remarked that it would be an annual long-vacation feature. In fact, it is an all-weather course for man's integration with the Eternal, and his complete cultural re-orientation. Bhagavan deplored the virtual extinction of the old salutary relations between the teacher and the taught, and stressed the imperative need for discipline, devotion and duty. Dr. S. Bhagavantam, the eminent scientist, proposed the vote of thanks.

There were 500 participants, both boys and girls, from the Colleges of different States, under their respective group-teachers. There were observers, resident and external, lecturers, visitors, invitees of all ranks and grades including the intellectual elite, business magnates, and others. It was truly an international Festival, without the usual furore, a salutary treat for body, mind and soul, and it brought home to every one present, the imperishable India that could endure and survive all encounters of time and fortune. It made a panoramic glance at the immemorial India and gave a glimpse of the shape of things to come, the Supra mental Evolution, with the Divine permeating the Human to the core.

The Schedule

The daily schedule—rather hard, for a soft and sophisticated generation, but, cheerfully undergone—was as follows: Recitation of Omkar, the Sacred, Pranava at 4-30 A.M., and Suprabhatam, after primary ablutions, followed by Nagarsankirtan (street carols) by separate batches of boys and girls, and Yoga Classes for boys taught by Sri C. M. Bhatt of Mysore and for girls taught by Mataji India Devi of Mexico; after breakfast, three lectures of an hour's duration each from 9 A.M. to 12 noon; with a break for lunch and rest, followed by two lectures from 3 to 5 P. M; after tea, Bhajan with the whole Congregation joining, from 5-30 to 6, along with the

evening heightening the atmosphere. Brief reports of the lectures delivered in the forenoon and afternoon sessions were given in succession by two students chosen state wise. Finally, Bhagavan would deliver His Divine Discourse, on the varied aspects of Sanathana Dharma, and exhorted the students (and others, too) to adapt all adopt invaluable traditions, to renovate the irrational temper of the day.

Bhaja Govinda

He spoke in His inimitable way, in chaste and simple idiom, interpreting anew the old texts and their symbolic meaning. He dwelt at length with Adi Sankara's 'Bhaja Govinda' verses, on several evenings and sang Bhajan songs for the congregation to repeat after Him a few songs from the choice repertoire of His own popular improvisations. After Arati an occasional film show, dealing with the diverse activities of the Avatar, dinner, preliminary to curtained sleep.

The Campus

The Campus at Brindavan was a buzzing drone-less beehive. Food was simple and sumptuous. Medical aid was available in an improvised but well equipped hospital, with two doctors always in attendance. Every care was taken to make life in the Camp quite comfortable. On Sundays, regular classes were suspended to enable the students to do voluntary cleaning of the premises, as an object lesson in social services. Bhagavan spoke to them on the practice of Seva as a Sadhana. There were elocution, competitions and poetic recitals to enliven the Sunday evening. Bhagavan was present at Brindavan during the entire duration of the Camp, except for a flying visit to Manipal, for less than a day. He was indeed in evidence everywhere, all the time, directly as well as indirectly. He gave tokens of His Grace, and of the gratitude of the Students, to many of the Lecturers, as well as to a few of the group-Leaders, notably Prof. Bhatnagar from Delhi.

Speakers

The speakers at the Camp included men famous in their fields of study, those who have made signal contributions to this unique Jnana Yajna of post independence India. A royal touch was provided by Sri Rajamata of Nawanagar to the galaxy of talents. Sri Gulzarilal Nanda, Sri L. K. Jha, Sri B. K. Kapur, I.A.S General Cariappa addressed the students imparting inspiration for sharing in the task of national uplift. Without intending any invidious distinction, some notable names may be mentioned, like Dr. S. Bhagavantam, Dr. V. K. Gokak, Dr. R. S. Mugali, Prof. G. P. Rajarathnam, Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, Dr. P. K. Sundaram, Justice V. B. Eradi, Dr. R. R. Diwakar, Dr. V. K. R. V. Rao, Prof. N. A. Nikam, Sri K. Guru Dutt I.A.S. (Retd), Prof. H. Sunder Rao, and Pundits J. Madhavarama Sarma, S. Chandra Mouli Sastry, P. Krishnamurthi Sastri, Rishi Devaratha, Dr. Diwakarla Venkatavadhani. The subjects they spoke about traversed fully the entire field of Indian Culture, besides the various paths to God-realisation followed by all the religion, as well as outstanding contributions to spiritual knowledge by poets and, seers of all nations. The lecturers offered honorary service; they were indeed happy to share in this great adventure in moulding the future citizens of the world.

The students are the vanguard of the salvation army, recruited and regimented on a new pattern—the Lord of Hosts has Himself taken the field for a total war for peace and harmony, altogether different from all previous campaigns; and, under His transcendental aegis, will stamp out the evil of the ages, and usher in a golden era of amity, faith and fellowship.

Concluding Day

The Valedictory Function was held on Thursday, June 21. It was a simple but colourful ceremony under a warm and genial sky. As at the Commencement, at the Conclusion also of this Jnana-yajna, Vedic Chants preluded the programme. The Chief Guest, Dr. D. S. Kothari, former Chairman, the University Grants Commission, dwelt upon the need to retrieve the 'shelved' or shattered inheritance. Dr. Gokak spoke on the diverse aspects of the Camp and thanked all those who had readily co-operated to make it a triumphant success.

Bhagavan gave an illuminating discourse on the role of students in the Sai Yuga, when Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema will course through every man, woman and child, all over the globe. Bhagavan also released two volumes of speeches, "Summer Showers" and "Value Orientation," delivered during the Camp in 1972. A few, students spoke on their impressions of the Camp, and their response to the deathless and uplifting gospel and promised to cherish the instruction they had imbibed.

Dr. Bhagavantam spoke on the signal success of the Camp which was entirely due to the Love and Grace of Bhagavan.

After Dinner, several scholar lecturers received from Bhagavan gifts in token of His Grace. As the final item in the month-long festival of spiritual awakening, participants were shown a film on Swami Vivekananda, the prophet of resurgent India, and the eternal Sanathana Dharma, Her most precious gift to mankind.

Time will reveal all the marvels of Baba's radiant and rapturous skies, now glimmering with His Ideals and panting for their fulfillment.

—Prof. P. G. Narayan

Vedapurusha Yajna

The Vedic Yajna

AT Prasanthi Nilayam, in the Magnificent Poornachandra Hall, Sri Sathya Sai Baba arranged the celebration of the Navaratri Festival, 1972, with many Vedic and traditional rites. They thrilled the participants and the vast mass of people who witnessed them. In pursuance of the directions given by Baba, persons proficient in the ancient ceremonials performed them with scrupulous sincerity. The nature and significance of these rites can be summarised thus, for the sake of readers who are eager to know them.

Devi Bhagavata

One scholar is assigned the task of reading from his place on the dais, the sacred text, Devi Bhagavata. It is mentioned therein that, during the opening days of this festival, as well as of the nine-day-festival in Autumn, Yama, the God of Death, harms people with his bared fangs and, so, the world would be afflicted with illness, both physical and mental. Disease, distress and disaster would stalk the land. The Festival itself is designed to avert these calamities. The mother Goddess is propitiated and prayed to, for this very purpose. The Devi Bhagavata narrates the ways and means of attracting Her attention and adoring Her, and winning Her Grace.

The Bhagavatham contains, according to its votaries, the Bhuvaneswari Vidya. The Mantra Sastra and the Tantra Sastra posit special attributes like Kala, Tattwa, and Bhuvana, to the Goddess. Bhuvana means, World. The Sastra declares that there are worlds much greater than ours in plenty within Cosmos. The Mother Kali is the Sovereign of all these Bhuvanas. Worshipping Her in this Form and as performing this function is the Bhuvaneswari Vidya, described in the Devi Bhagavata. Reading the text is itself a form of verbal worship, which will win Her Grace.

It also contains the Gayatri Vidya, and in the 12th chapter, it has the 1008 Names of that Goddess. Again, in this scripture, we have the Devi Gita, which is, according to sadhakas, the vital part of the entire text. The Bhagavata narrates how the Mother incarnated as Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati and brought about the destruction of the demons of sloth, aggrandizement and violence. These narratives are symbolic of the eternal fight inside the consciousness of man between good and evil.

This text prescribes several remedies to correct the evil and ensure the good. It reminds man of his inner faculties and potentialities, and exhorts him to develop them through prayer and penance. Since the Devi Bhagavata dilates upon various mystic formulas its study helps to purify the inner regions of the consciousness and strengthen the spiritual urges and vibrations in man. Even if one person recites it sitting at one place, the vibrations will affect every one else wherever he may be, and cause invisible transformations. This is the reason why the 18000 verses of this text are recited during the nine days.

Rudra Yaga

Secondly, we have the Rudrayaga. As part of this, Abhisheka (Ritual Pouring of Sanctified Water) is done to the Linga Form of the Absolute, that encompasses the entire Cosmos. The scriptures say, "Abhisheka priyah Sivah," Siva is pleased when you perform Abhisheka. Pundits learned in the Rudra-Siva lore recite the Namaka and Chamaka (two Vedic hymns adoring Rudra also known as Siva) and pour on the Linga various liquids, coconut-water, milk, honey, cane-juice, fruit juice, and finally water. Rudra is the terrible aspect of God and Siva, the beneficial one. The terrible aspect of God—Rudra—destroys evil, averts calamity, arrests distress. The beneficial Siva grants various boons listed in the chamaka hymns.

In order to perform the Rudrayaga, the altar on the dais of Poornachandra has five sacrificial pits for lighting up the sacred fires. Their measurements are laid down in the Sastras, and have to be literally observed. Around each 'pit' three pundits sit and reciting Vedic hymns they pour libations into the flames. They repeat the hymns eleven times over, as laid down in the scripture. The God of Fire with His Seven Tongues of flame accepts the offerings of ghee, and conveys them to God in the Form which is invoked.

Why have we five 'pits' for the sacred fire? Siva has five forms, the Linga has five faces, Mrityunjaya (Conqueror of Death), Dakshinamurthy (The Great Teacher of Wisdom), Kameswara (The Lord of Desire), Neelalohitha (The Blue Coloured), and Bhoothesa (The Lord of all the Elements).

The 700 Verses

A pundit can be seen reading the Sapthasathi, the 700-verse sacred text. This is a section of the Markandeya Purana. This holy book contains the Chandi Mantra, on the fierce aspects of the Mother, and the various accoutrements blessed by then that guard and protect the seeker, ritualistic accoutrements, like Kavacha, Argala, Keelaka etc. Recitation of the 700 is beneficial to all.

The story is that Mahavishnu Himself was overpowered by the Grand Delusion, or Yogamaya. When the demons Madhu and Kaitabha had to be destroyed, the gods found that only Mahavishnu could do it. So, they prayed to Yogamaya to release Her Victim, and afterwards, Mahavishnu woke up to a sense of His responsibility and slaughtered the enemies of Divinity! The inner meaning of this legend is noteworthy. Delusion sends man to sleep, forgetful of his duty and burden. When he is free from it, he can achieve victory over evil.

As in the Devi Bhagavatham, the 700 also speaks of the demons, Chanda, Munda, Sumbha, Nisumbha, Mahishasura etc., but, they are all symbols of the lust, greed, envy, greed etc. that reside in man. The 700 is a text full of mantras (potent formulae) and so, it is used to ward off hostile forces from home and society, nation and the world. Many recite it as a daily chore; in some Yagas, it is recited, with oblations in the fire, 9 times, or a hundred times or even a 1000 times, during the festival.

The Ramayana

Another pundit reads the sacred epic, Ramayana. It is not merely the story of Rama; it is the story of man, of life, of the Cosmos. Rama is the supreme Gad, as Valmiki, the Sage has depicted Him. Valmiki has ensured the welfare of the world, its security and happiness, by delineating the personality of Rama in such a captivating and uplifting manner. He has incorporated the unique Gayatri mantra in the text of his poem, and made it doubly holy.

We have in the Ramayana, the description of hermitages and palaces, the analysis of personal and social, as well as national and world-wide crises, and the prescription of remedies based on righteousness and truth. It has 24,000 verses and the entire text is recited during the nine days. Moreover, though the epic is called Ramayana, Valmiki himself acknowledges that it is, "Sithaayaascharitham mahath" (the Great Story of Sita," the Consort of Rama, His Queen, Companion and Shadow). Thus, it is specially obligatory to read it during the Mother's Festival.

Also, the reading will help to focus loyalty on Hanuman, the incomparable hero and devotee, whose very breath is Rama. There is a regular ceremonial fixed for the ritual reading of this elevating epic and it is followed by the pundit, at the Poornachandra too. Each sloka (verse) when uttered removes shoka (sorrow), it is said. Bhagavan has arranged these readings to impress on all the efficacy of these texts to alleviate distress and infuse faith.

The Sun God

You will find another person performing prostrations before the Sun, adoring Him by means of certain Vedic Hymns. Every one is attracted by his steady and systematic spiritual exercise. He circumambulates chanting the hymns glorifying the twelve names of the Sun-God and prostrates very elaborately more than a few hundred times a day. The Sun is the visible form of the

Supreme; God is tejassam tejah, the splendours; the Sun rises and sets, the Sun warms and drinks up the seas and lakes, by means of the power given to Him by the Source of all Light and Heat, of all Energy and intelligence, God. Thousands have noticed with delight and devotion the scene where Bhagavan Baba stands before the prostrating Sadhaka, assuring him that He is Himself the Source of the Solar and the Comic Energy.

There is a technique or Vidya known as 'the drawing-in of the solar power'. By this means, and the regular prostration routine for 128 days, it is possible to arouse the splendour latent in our hearts by contacting the subtle power of the Sun. The temple is but a device to locate in one place the majesty and might of the Sun, so that worship and meditation may be facilitated. The idol in the innermost shrine is believed to be surrounded by celestial bodies, just as the Sun is the centre of a heavenly galaxy. The body is the temple each of us carries with him. There too we have to install the effulgence of the Sun, and offer prostrations. Rama prayed to the Sun-God, as is mentioned in the Ramayana; the mantra He used is called Aditya Hridaya. The scriptures say, Aarogyam Bhaaskaraadiccheth, plead with the Sun for health. The prostrations induce people to dwell upon the values of Sun Worship.

The Sri Chakra

The Holy Dais also has a place where the Sri Chakra is worshipped in traditional style. This mystic drawing is also known as Meru Chakra, the Highest and the most supreme Stage of Yoga represented in geometrical design. The enclosures which mark off the Chakra represent the entire Cosmos; the centre of the Chakra or Wheel is taken as representing the Siva-Shakti Principle, the Positive-Negative, the Active-Quiescent Force. The Universe is Shakti, Energy; Siva is the Atma, the Witness, the Soul. In the Meru Wheel, on the central Dot or Bindu, the Mother-Goddess, the Prakriti Principle, Shakti is installed. The Sri Chakra too has to be meditated upon as symbolic of the mystic forces that operate in man, in the thousand-petalled lotus on the zenith of the head is the bindu where Shakti is established. There, from the Lunar Region, nectar drops flow and purify all the centres of one's being. Bhagavan is the Source of Nectar and the Sri Chakra worship serves to remind us of the Divinity that He is.

Chanting of Vedas

The Dais will also seat some scholars who recite the Vedas. They are joined by the young students from the Vedic School, at Prasanthi Nilayam. They recite the Yajur Veda, the part that deals with Yagas and other ceremonial acts. When the atmosphere resound to the loud chanting of Vedic hymns, the rays of Grace shower upon mankind, say the Vedas. There is a widespread belief that a single person who has mastered the Atharva Veda can save the land by his very presence from calamity. The Vedas are chanted here for promoting the welfare and prosperity of the world. Bhagavan is blessing the students of Veda to chant the hymns, so that Vedic Culture can be sustained. Once upon a time, the number of Chaturvedis (those who had mastered the Four Vedas) was very high; then, faith weakened and men contented themselves with the mastery of three, and the name, Trivedi; in time, Dwivedis multiplied, (those who have mastered only two Vedas for men found three, to be too difficult; and as the years passed by, even those who mastered one. Veda became too small in number. So, Bhagavan is restoring honour, and prestige to Vedic Scholarship.

The Chandi Chanting

There are some on the dais wearing red silk clothes, having ash marks and kumkum dots on their foreheads. What are they doing? They are repeating sacred formulae or Names, of Chandi (the auspicious Shakti), of Ganapati (the Chief of the Divine Forces), and of other Divine Forms. And, at the conclusion of the nine days, they offer the fruits of the 'Japa' to the Universal Absolute, with the words, Om Tat Sat Brahmarpanam.

The Japa is done; with concentrated on the Form of the Divinity which the Name indicates; it is done half silently, half aloud or fully within the inner consciousness. The Japa is a symbol of the continuous repetition by the breath of man, of the mystic formula, Soham, meaning I am He. This is called the Hamsa Gayatri Japa.

Bhagavan who is the goal of every mantra, of every mystic formula, or potent Name is enjoying us to give ear to this ever-present Soham and realise the unity of the Sight, the Seer and the Seen.

The 1008 Names of Lalitha

The 1008 Names of Sri Lalitha, the tender hearted Mother is also recited on the Dais, for promotion of, human welfare and peace in the world. 1008 is a symbol of infinity. She has infinite Names, infinite Forms; infinite Glory. 1008 is also reminiscent of the thousand petalled lotus on the head-end of the Yogic canal. The list does not repeat any name more than once. Nor is there, any Name that is added just to make up the number. Each Name is a step in the progressive realisation of the Reality. The first name is Sri Mata (The Mother), the second, Sri Maharajni (The Sovereign Queen) and the third, Srimath Simhasaneswari (The Goddess on the Lion Throne). And, towards the end, we have, 'Srichakra raja Nilaya' (She who is installed in the Srichakra), Srimath Tripurasundari (She who is charming the gross, the casual and the subtle bodies of living beings) and Sri Sivasakthyekaswarupini (She whose Form is the mergence of Siva and Shakti, the Positive and the Negative).

Siva burnt to ashes the God of Desire by casting on Him His fiery third eye. And, the story goes to say that mankind was rendered neuter and was saved only by Devi, the Mother, arising out of the Chid-agni-kunda, the Fire-pit-of-intelligence. They were devoid of all yearning and ardour, even for their own liberation. The demons were destroyed and the path of spiritual devotion was cleared of obstructions.

To restore to man the thirst for salvation, the reading of the Glories of Lalitha is helpful. She has to be known as the Kundalini, the unawakened Yogic Power in man. There are six traditional paths—the 3 paths of Sound and the 3 paths of Meaning, to reach the state of realisation of the full potency of the as Yogashakti, Lalitha. When the 1008 Names are repeated, the splendour of the Goddess adored will illumine all around us. When one recites them, the neighbourhood will undoubtedly be affected by the vibrations. That is the reason why Sankaracharya established the rule in every Mutt, from where He resolved to propagate the A-dvaita philosophy, that the Sri Chakra has to be installed and worshipped and that the 1008 Names of Sri Lalitha be recited. His Siva-Advaita and the Shaktiradvaita were thus harmonised.

Every Dasara

Bhagavan being the Supreme Harmoniser and the Avatar who has come to revive the Vedas and the traditions of Sanathana Dharma has directed the magnificent and meaningful Veda-Purusha-Sapthaha-Jnana-Yajna be celebrated every Dasara at Prasanthi Nilayam. The expression means, The Seven-Day Adoration of the Divine Personality glorified in the Vedas, with the Understanding of His Might and Majesty.

—*Brahmasri Jammalamadaka Madhavarama Sarma*

Almighty God

*Give me the strength to stand for the Truth,
to do the Right according to my light,
to be just and generous in all my dealings,
with my fellow-men.*

*Let not an angry or unkind word, or an un-sympathetic look,
pass from me which might hurt
the feelings of others in any way.*

*Keep me free from envy and hatred,
and fill my heart with Love and Good-will.*

*Make me, oh Lord! a Vehicle of Hope and Faith,
scattering Sunshine and Happiness,
before all those with whom I come into contact
in my passage through Life.*

—*H. P. K. M*

A Song from beyond the Seven Seas

You are in my heart, as I am in your heart,
We are just one heart
Called Soham, called Love.
Sai, you are in my heart, as I am in your heart
There is only one heart
Eternally Love.

You are the Ocean, I am your wave,
You are the Mountain, I am the cave,
You are the blue sky, I am your star
Sai, You are my Lover,
Wherever you are.

You are the flower, I am the bee,
You are the brown earth, I am your tree,
You are the father, I am your son,
Sai, Omnipresence
From you, I have come.

You are the green tree, I'm your clinging vine,
You are the poet, I am your rhyme,
You are the raindrops, I'm your flower wild,
Sai, Divine Mother
I am your loving child.

You are the full moon, I am your beam,
You are the dreamer, I am your dream,
You are the year, I am your day,

You are the river, I am your flow,
You are the director, I am your show,
You are the wild wind, I am your cry
You're Durga Mata, Your tiger am I.

You are in my heart, as I am in your heart,
Sai, We are one heart,
Called Soham, called Love.

sung: Lite Storm, California.

Atmic Relationship

Our Relationship is Atmic, not Secular or Trained. It is an attachment that Narayana has for Nara, the ocean for the Stream, the Universal for the Particular.

(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. I Page 186)

This penetrating, stimulating statement of BABA is a vast treasure of meaning. It reveals a new dimension that can wipe out the frustrations of our day-to-day experiences, as also perennial ones. It touches the very core of our being and exposes immensity and oneness all at once.

The statement must be meditated upon.

With anything and everything material or circumstantial or with personalities with which or with whom we come in contact, we form a relationship—a concernedness. This relation or the concernedness is based on some conventional aspects or trained aspects or biases of our mind; especially in case of relation with human beings, clashes of egos of persons concerned also take place.

For example, with relatives we have set notions of how we should deal with them or how they must or must not behave towards us. In offices or place of work, we have codes of behaviour and of expectations from our colleagues. In the armed forces, discipline of behaviour is rigorously taught and established. Travelling in a bus, loose social traditions expect one to behave in a particular code of conduct. In particular circumstances, such as of death, we are supposed to look sorry, or gay at a marriage party and so on. All these are relationships and however much we try to learn what is correct and act accordingly, we always feel we have been short and feel frustrated. Egos also always somehow seem to clash. Whatever the choice of contentions or action, for a person, life seems to be hollow, ingenuine and unsettled and vexing.

From this bewildering morass of relationships, BABA is lifting us into a new dimension of relationship—Atmic-transcending all the normal realms of our life activity and touching the core of our beings—which that is, the core of our beings. BHAGAVAN BABA says, all are identical nay absolutely the same—such as of streams essentially born out of ocean—all heading on towards the Ocean and their basic relation with Ocean—the same, serene, calm, quiet, undisturbing, blissful and unchanging—eternally established.

Oneness—that pages and pages, mountains of words and words, practices and practices cannot explain is just darted at us in this little graceful sentence.

Dat Pethe

Bhagavan in Bombay

Bhagavan reached Bombay, on Thursday 19th July, at 10 A.M. Thousands were awaiting Him at Dharmakshetra, singing Bhajans. At 4 P.M., Baba inaugurated at Dharmakshetra the Industrial

Service Training School, to serve as a supplemental Vocational Orientation to the Primary and Secondary School, already working there for the benefit of the poor people around Dharmakshetra. The Inaugural Function was presented on Bombay Television.

On the 20th, in the morning, Baba gave a valuable discourse to the members of all the Sri Sathya Sai Study Classes in the City. In the evening there was a gathering of the members of the Mahila Vibhag, Bombay. Sri M. M. Pingre, State President, Maharashtra, spoke of the service that the members could render to the drought stricken villages, preparing and serving food packets to the famished. Baba told them that Seva is the most beneficial form of austerity, the most satisfying and the most joy giving.

Later, Bala Vikas Children presented a few playlets before Bhagavan. They were a childhood episode from the life of Swami Vivekananda, on Ekalavya (by children from Dombivli, Thana Dt.), and a drama on Ramzan, by the children of Mill Workers from Worli. There was a Hari Kirtan by another boy, on the theme of Seva Dharma. The children of the Dharmakshetra school presented a few delightful cultural items before Bhagavan, on Saturday, the 21st, in the morning.

On the 21st, in the evening, Bhagavan blessed the members of the Seva Samiti, Bombay. He exhorted them to set an example, by their conduct and practice. On the 22nd, the pre-Seva Dal students of Bombay gathered in the presence of Baba. Sri. K. V. R. Rao reported that the Class had just completed a full year of work. Sri Indulal Shah placed in the hands of Baba a File, containing all the lectures delivered during the Course. In the evening, there was a Public Meeting at Dharmakshetra. Sri. Deepak Kombrabail a student who attended the Summer Course at Whitefield in May-June, 73, spoke of his experiences. Bhagavan inspired the thousands who had assembled to lead a more sincere, straight forward spiritual lives. Later, the Bal Vikas Children of Khar-Santa Cruz presented a Ras Dance, at Sathya Deep.

On the 23rd, in the evening, a Public Meeting was held at Juhu, in the Bai Maganlal Auditorium Hall. Sri. V. S. Page, President, Legislative Council, Maharashtra, spoke on the educational revolution that the schools and colleges established by Bhagavan are ushering in for the betterment of mankind. Bhagavan stressed, in His discourse, On the true ends of education.

On 24th, Bhagavan left for Poona in the afternoon, by car. On His way, He accepted the reverential offering of flowers made by the inmate of the Protection Home for women. He alighted at the Government remand Home for delinquent children, and blessed the children of the Bala Vikas being run there. He listened to the Bhajans sung by the little children and made them very happy. Bhagavan spent a few minutes with the fisher-folk at the village of Koliwada on the sea-shore, where members of the Bombay Seva Dal and students who attended the Summer Course are engaged in sanitation, rehabilitation and spiritual awakening items of Seva. The children of the fisher folk received Baba with Poorna Kumbha, and the women waved Arati. Devotees were reminded of the Ramayana Scene, where Guha, the chieftain of the fisher-folk welcomed Sri Rama into his realm.

Reaching Poona, Baba stayed in a bungalow, one of the two, offered for Sri Sathya Sai Seva, to the Trust, by Sri. F. P. Pocha. More than three thousand people were singing Bhajans there, that evening.

On the morning of 25th July, Baba inaugurated the Sri Sathya Sai Students Hostel for College Students in those bungalows. The residents belong to various districts and are studying in different Colleges. Baba spent over two hours with them, conversing with them in Hindi, and thereafter He had lunch with them. Mr. Tare, the Superintendent of the Hostel was also blessed by Bhagavan.

In the evening, Bhagavan gave a Discourse at the mammoth gathering of the citizens of Poona. Sri P. K. Sawant presided; Sri Bhimsen Joshi sang Maharashtrian Padas. A student of the Summer Course, Srinivasan, spoke on His experience. Bhagavan spoke on Sadhana as a way of Life.

The Bhajan Sessions every day attracted thousands from all sections of the city, while throngs of thousands joined the long lines for Nagarsankirtan, in the early morning hours on the Mahakali Caves Road.

On Saturday, 28th July, Bhagavan visited the Central School for the Deaf and the Central Institute of Teachers of the Deaf, Bombay. He went into the classrooms, where the children who had learnt to speak and lip-read were seated. Baba the Supreme Teacher asked them. "What is my name?" and they answered. "Sai Baba." A little boy who had painted a portrait of Baba in water-colours was very happy when Baba expressed He liked it. Each child had the thrill of receiving Vibhuti from Baba's hand. He posed for a photograph with the children. He listened to Bhajans sung by the children—He told the teachers, "You are giving these children a new life and bringing happiness to their parents." Baba commented on the peace and joy that the school radiated, because the teachers work with love in their hearts and the children speak and sing so well. They had sung the Bhajans watching the lip pattern of their teacher and also looking at a board upon which the words were written. Baba told the Principal and the members of the Executive Committee, "Teach them to lead self-reliant and contented lives." When Baba departed, the children said, "We shall be good and we promise to work hard. Please Baba, Won't you come again?"

On Sunday, 29th, there was a huge gathering at Dharmakshetra for a discourse was announced. Sri P. K. Sawant who presided said, "Baba has transformed the Industrial (Udyog) City, Bombay, into a city of Yoga." On 30th July, Baba left by car to Whitefield, Bangalore. Thus for eleven days, Bombay was steeped in bliss—the city basked in refreshing sunshine, during the monsoon month of July.

~Editor

Friends?

The need

While in this transient world, wading through joy and grief, man has sore need of some one of his kind to whom he can communicate his feelings, with whom he can share his discoveries and depressions, his moments of bliss and sorrow, to be by his side while trekking the hard road to truth and peace, encouraging and enthusing him towards the goal.

Who is one's true friend? Who is one's false, fake friend? It is clear that, as understood today, friendship and friends are far off the mark, of the ideal. Friends who can confer real counsel, comfort and consolation are precious gifts, rarely found today.

The Bond

A friendship knit by monetary bonds is disrupted as soon as the loan is asked to be repaid. So, when you oblige your friend with a loan, the friendship too is broken at that very moment. How can friendship be cemented by words or by coins? Heart must understand heart, heart must be drawn to heart, if friendship must last. Friendship must bind two hearts and affect both of them beneficially, whatever may happen to either—loss or gain, pain or pleasure, good fortune or bad. The bond must survive all the blows of fate, and be unaffected by time, place and circumstance. Each must have full knowledge of the other; each must correct the other; and each must welcome criticism and comment from the other, for each knows that they come from sympathy and love. Each must be vigilant that the other does not slide from the ideal, cultivate habits that are deleterious, or hide thoughts and plans that are productive of evil. The honour of each is in the safe keeping of the other. Each trusts the other and places reliance on the other's watchful love. Only those deserve the name-friends-who help in uplifting life, cleansing ideals, elevating emotions and strengthening resolves. Those who drag you into pomp, pedantry, paltry entertainment and petty pranks are enemies, not friends. Do not be misled in your choice of friends, by social status, financial squandermania, outer scintillation and verbal assertions. See into the very soul, the inner motives and motivator, the deeper aspirations and achievements, and then, yield your loyalty to such.

Krishna, as friend

You might have heard of the friendship between Kuchela and his 'class-mate' Krishna. How could the friendship between these two survive the immense gap between their worldly positions and their spiritual status. Krishna was God Incarnate. Kuchela was a mere man. Krishna was a Ruler, a Kingmaker, an unsurpassed Hero, Monarch, and preceptor. Kuchela was so poor that he was ever at his wit's end to procure his next meal. They had studied together for a few years at the hermitage of the sage Sandeepani. That had sown the seed of friendship.

King-maker

So, his wife sent him to Krishna, assuring him that he would not be turned away from the door. Kuchela agreed to proceed, but, he hesitated long to send word that he had come, even when the guardsmen enquired why he had come and who he was. How could he, a broken, beat, befogged, beggar dare stand before the Lord in His palatial Hall with its jewelled throne, and announce himself as a 'friend'? He was aghast at his own audacity.

But, all his fears melted away, when Krishna recognised him and came forward to receive him warmly and with evident joy. Krishna filled him with supreme bliss, by His words, His acts of hospitality and His attitude of hearty welcome. Krishna also blessed his wife with enormous wealth and comfort, peace and prosperity, in quantity much more than ever she hoped for or prayed for. No one asked Him for it; but, His love took that shape, His Grace awarded them the happiness. But, Kuchela was ever content with the friendship of Krishna; he never desired anything other than that. He was overwhelmed with delight when he experienced the compassion

and love of the Lord.

Friendship purifies

The feeling of friendship must activate every nerve, permeate every blood-cell, and purify every emotional wave; it has no place for the slightest trace of egotism. You cannot elevate the companionship which seeks to exploit or fleece for personal benefit into the noble quality of friendship. Perhaps, the only friend who can pass this rigorous test, is—God!

To understand and practise this noble emotion, the Bhagavad-Gita is an invaluable guide. When Arjuna was dispirited and dejected, Krishna injected courage and a high sense of duty into him and helped him to avoid disgraceful defeat. And, Arjuna, too, like good friend, took the advice in good spirit, with the full confidence that Krishna meant well by him. Why, we know how confident he was of the wisdom and power inherent in Krishna. When Krishna gave him the choice, "To help you in battle, you can have either my entire army or myself alone, unarmed and determined not to fight in spite of any provocation". And, Arjuna did not hesitate to decide which of these two he wanted. He chose the unarmed Krishna, and prayed that He might be his charioteer, during the days when he rode into the field.

The three friends

Long ago, there was a person who had three friends. Quite by accident, he was charged for some crime and a warrant was issued against him by the Court. He approached one friend and asked him to bear witness to his innocence. He said, "I will not move out of this house; I can help you only from within this". The second friend said, "I can come only up to the porch of the Court. I will not enter the witness box. The third friend said, "Come, I shall speak for you, wherever you want me to." The first friend is the 'property and possession' which can bear witness only from house. The second is 'the kins-men, the members of the family', who come as far as the cemetery, but, would not accompany the person to the Judgement seat. The third friend is 'the fair name earned by one's virtues and service,' They persist even after the death and burial; they stand witness for ages, and announce the innocence and greatness of the individual. They decide the nature of the next birth too.

Young as you are, you must make efforts to acquire good friends and keep them. Do not postpone this task, listening to some elders who advise that the path of spirituality can well be trodden later, when you have retired from active life. They say that you can take on hand the Bhagavad-Gita, when you have grown old. But, that advice is like telling a nation that it can afford to wait till war is declared, to train an army to encounter the enemy! Long years of preparation are needed to have an army that can meet any contingency; otherwise, if arms are distributed to the untrained, it spells disaster even to the persons wielding the arms!

The friend you need

The good deeds and thoughts that one welcomes and entertains during the years of life will stand in good stead, firm, like a good friend, when one is nearing the end. So, you, young men and women, must resolve to engage yourselves in acts that promote your peace and progress and the peace and progress of all mankind. Do not damage your future by pursuing temporary benefits and selfish aggrandizement. Yearn for and earn good friends, who will keep you on an even keel. Have above all, God, as your unfailing guide and friend. The hearts of the Gopis had struck deep

roots in the Love of Krishna and when Akrura came to Gokul to take Krishna with him to Mathura, the Gopis struggled heroically, to keep Him with themselves. They held on to the steeds of the chariot; they gripped the wheels and sought to prevent them from moving. Friendship is the expression of unshakeable Love, Love that is noble, pure, free from desire of egoism. I bless you that you may have such friendship from others and that you too make others happy by granting this holy type of friendship.

**Summer Course '73
Brindavan**

Progress and Spirituality

In the history of ideas, the notion of progress is, comparatively speaking, a newcomer. In ancient and medieval times people used to place the Golden Age in a remote past. A corollary of this was the belief that there has been steady deterioration since then down to contemporary times. The myth of the Fall from Paradise gave expression to this feeling in the European context. In India, the idea of the four YUGAS represented a similar situation, the first being the Age of Truth, KRITA YUGA, and the decline of Righteousness (DHARMA) through the succeeding epochs of TRETA and DWAPARA, until the arrival of the present period of KALI, when evil prevails over the good.

The idea of progress first emerged in Europe as a sequel to the birth of science in the 17th century, when Galileo and Newton laid the foundations of physical science. The 18th century witnessed the all-round and rapid development of science. This was followed by the applications of science in the industrial field. The phenomenal change in methods of production with the use of machines and consequent modification in patterns living is usually described as the Industrial Revolution

Throughout the 19th century, human welfare and progress meant in effect the advancement of science and technology. On this basis the entire texture of living came to be transformed. By and large, no one doubted that these two were bound up with each other, and that the latter was a measure of the former. It was this faith that has brought into being contemporary civilization which is spreading over the globe like wild fire.

But this naive faith was badly shaken up by two World Wars during the first half of our own century, when the destructive potentialities of a scientific civilization were fully brought out. But no doubt was yet cast on the beneficial applications of science. These were thought to be wholly desirable, and as outweighing the incidental evil. However, a change of outlook in regard to this also seems to be on the way.

In recent times, it is being more and more realized with increasing alarm that even the helpful uses of science create more problems than they solve. Thus we have the population explosion on the one hand, and the pollution of environment, earth, water and atmosphere on the other, not to speak of destruction on vegetable and animal life, and the reckless squandering of natural resources. The incidental and indirect effects of the use of fertilizers and pesticides, of antibiotics

and wonder drugs, of combustion in factories and automobiles, even the building of irrigation dams, are mostly unforeseeable. When they first come to light, the damage has already been done, and it is impossible to put the hands of the clock back. Scientists and technicians embark on a frantic chase to catch up with the damage and its causes.

It looks as if every remedy turns into a disease requiring itself to be remedied, and so on endlessly. We count the good, but do not reckon the price paid for it. But nature seems to keep her accounts by a subtle form of "double-entry" book-keeping, where very credit is balanced by a corresponding debit on which interest compounds: a long-term liability for short-term spectacular results. The wise Old this Greeks called this Hubris and Nemesis; and medieval Europe immortalized the situation in the legend of Faust who sold his soul to devil in return for a short period of immediate enjoyment. So we have the strange spectacle of men fearfully speculating on the possibilities of survival in a world poised between the Devil and the deep sea: destruction by nuclear weapons and the deadly hazards of radiation, or a slower but not less sure death by pollution of environment on the other. This is indeed an ominous commentary on the dream of progress harboured not so long ago. The irony of it is that it is the scientists who have awakened mankind from the spell which they themselves had cast.

It is at such a juncture that the story of Alladin and the Wonderful Lamp comes home to us in its full significance. Was mankind wise in exchanging the old lamp for the new? By what standards are we to judge this? In brief, it is essentially a problem of values, in other words, of religion which is or ought to be synonymous with spirituality. Jesus put the issue in its most poignant form: "What shall it profit a man, if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?"

So we naturally come to the vexed question of the need for religion or spirituality. At the outset, it has to be made clear that it is by no means a question "Either/Or" Each has its own place; but religion has priority as being the arbiter of values, am the essential corrective of all other knowledge. It is for this reason that all knowledge of finite things is called AVIDYA by the Upanishads while knowledge of the ultimate reality alone is termed VIDYA, The Isha Upanishad says: "Those who are attached to AVIDYA enter a region of darkness; but those who are devoted only to VIDYA are lost in an even greater darkness Those alone who know both together will cross over the ephemeral world of affairs with the help of AVIDYA and will achieve immortality (AMRITAM) with the help of VIDYA." Neither the one nor the other can be described as "religion". Religion is rather the passage from the one to the other—the bridge between the two.

Some features which distinguish the one from the other may be examined. In the first place the several disciplines and the values which make up AVIDYA are often inconsistent with one another and mutually exclusive. VIDYA is inclusive of harmonizes all values and embodies them. It is itself the *Summum Bonum*.

AVIDYA deals with things and is concerned with common features and predictable regularities; in one word with necessity. Its sphere is the determined region of experience. On the other hand, VIDYA leads to the world of spontaneity, and freedom, the feeling for the unique. The former is impersonal, while the latter is eminently personal and is compact of individual experience. In Indian terminology, we may say that AVIDYA is knowledge of PRAKRITI, while VIDYA is concerned with PURUSHA, the Gita (XIII 20) puts it succinctly when it says that PRAKRITI is

the area of cause and effect while PURUSHA is the locus of the experience of pleasure and pain. The quintessence of Indian wisdom is that PRAKRITI (Matter) functions for and at the behest of Spirit (PURUSHARTHA). Gandhiji loved to stress this point.

But it must be borne in mind that in ordinary experience PURUSHA and PRAKRITI are conjoint. In the embodied human being, the body is called KSHETRA or the field, and the soul or JIVA is KSHETRAJNA the knower or owner of the field. The objective of religion in its most fundamental sense is the achieving of the recognition that it is the same KSHETRAJNA who is present in all KSHETRAS (Gita XIII. 2). Religion may be termed the Science of Sprit (PURUSHA).

In modern scientific civilization however, the relationship is, as it were, reversed. Knowledge of PRAKRITI (Science) is the ruling value, in fact a passion, a passion for so-called "objectivity". The "subject" is looked down upon and sought to be eliminated to the utmost extent. So far as values go, it is indeed a topsy-turvy world standing on its head. A second Copernican revolution is needed in order to put humanity firmly on its feet again. That is the function of spirituality in the modern world if humanity, in both senses of the word, is to survive at all.

But this is not so much a matter of intellection as of feeling—realization (BHAVA). It requires a way of life in which the craze for externals is reduced, resulting in a measure of detachment (VAIRAGYA), the impulses and senses controlled (SAMYAMA), and distraction gives place to concentration (EKAGRATA). This is the negative side. But there is a positive side, which is even more important, comprising the four values comprised in Sri Sathya Sai Baba's great formula: SATHYA (Truth), DHARMA, SHANTI (Peace) and PREMA (Love). These are not exclusive Hindu ideals but aspects of one and the same universal and supreme value acceptable to all religions as symbolized in the Lotus Emblem and incarnate in the Person of Baba. His presence in our midst today redeems the Gita pledge that whenever DHARMA decays, the Lord will himself descend (AVATAR) for its reinstatement.

Om Sai Ram

RamaKatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Valmiki's Delight

The sage Valmiki provided comfortable seats for Rama whom he loved as his very breath, and for Lakshmana and Sita; he called for fruits and edible tubers, and placed them before the three. As desired by Valmiki, they partook of them, and expressed their pleasure. Valmiki sat before them, watching Rama and quenching the thirst of his eyes. He was filled with inexpressible delight.

With utmost humility, Rama addressed the great sage thus: "Most venerable Sage! You are conversant with the past, the present and the future of all; so, the reason why I have entered this

forest must be as clear to you already as fine berry in one's own palm. Nevertheless, I feel it right that I should discharge my duty of informing you why I am here, with my wife and brother." Then Rama described how Queen Kaikeyi sent him into exile in the forest and how brother Bharatha was crowned as the realm, according to the promise by the father.

The sage listened to the story, and communicated his joy with a face lit with smiles. He said, "Rama! As you fulfilled their desires then, you have satisfied my desire, now. My austerities, vows and yearnings have at last yielded fruit today. I shall confer on Kaikeyi my heartfelt gratitude and a share of the bliss I am now enjoying."

Valmiki sat long in silence, with his eyes closed, while he was trying to keep within control the emotions of gratitude and joy that were surging inside him. Tears gathered in his eyes, tears of Ananda, and they rolled down his cheeks in big drops that chased each other.

Valmiki Knows the Truth

Rama broke the silence and said, "We shall reside at the place where you direct us to live. Indicate to us a place, where we shall not cause any trouble to any one and where we shall not come in the way of hermits and hermitages, creating loss or damage to anyone else; give us proper advice, paying due attention to these points. We shall put up a 'thatch' of leaves at that place and spend some time."

These words from a pure sincere heart moved the sage; he said, in reply, "O Rama! I am indeed blessed. You are as the Flag that proclaims the glory of the Raghu dynasty. For what reason are you voicing forth thus? You are the force that fosters the path laid down in the Vedas; you are the power that safe-guards it from harm. Sita is 'the deluding half' of your personality, your Maya. She creates, maintains and destroys (as *you* 'will') worlds beyond worlds. And, Lakshmana is the very basis of the movable and the immovable, the 'Thousand hooded serpent' the Primal Sesha Nag which upholds the Universe.

You have assumed human forms, in order thereby to carry out the wishes of the gods, that you should re-establish righteousness in the world. You will, I am sure, destroy all demonic hearts, pretty soon. You will protect the soft and the compassionate. Rama! You are the eternal Witness of the play named 'The World'. The Universe is the 'seen'; you are the witness. Even the gods fail to gauge your Reality, and your Glory. How then can ordinary mortals understand your Mystery? Only those who have received your Grace namely, Wisdom, can claim to have known something of your Truth, your Majesty.

You have taken this human form in order to promote the peace and security of good men and gods; as a consequence, you are conversing and behaving like one of us. Only fools are misled into believing that you are but a man among men! You adhere to the given word; you act strictly according to the assurance you give.

We are all puppets who play about as you direct, as you pull the strings. Who are we to direct you, to act thus wise or stay at a certain place? Rama! Are you planning to delude us, ascetics, by your words? O, how wonderful is your play! How realistic is your play-acting! Don't I know that you are the Director of this vast unreal cosmic drama? I cannot understand why you are asking

me to select a spot where you can stay for some time in this forest. Which spot can I choose and recommend? For, is there any spot in the whole Universe where you are not, already? Answer me this question, and thereafter, I shall point out the place to which you can go and where you can stay". Valmiki said, looking at the charming face of Rama; in the extremity of his delight, words melted away on his tongue.

Where Rama resides

Rama laughed within himself, when he listened to the revered sage. Meanwhile, the sage spoke again, soft and sweet, with a smile beaming on his resplendent face. "Rama!" I know you reside in reality in the hearts of devotees. Now, I shall tell you, the best place where this form of yours can stay. Listen. You can reside there with Sita and Lakshmana. Select those whose ears, like the ocean, receive gladly the streams of stories recounting your exploits, whose ears are ever full and happy, listening to the narratives of your divine acts and words, whose tongues are ever busy repeating your name and tasting its nectarine sweetness, whose throats recite—and revel in the recitation—of your praise, your words, which are soft and refreshingly sweet, whose eyes yearn to see your cloud-blue form, as the Chataka bird yearns for the first cloud-burst, whose ever-present longing is to discover you anywhere, in any quarter, and delight in the discovery; when you find any such, O Rama, dwell there, with Sita and Lakshmana.

Rama! If you wish that I elaborate further, listen. Stay in the heart of the person who discards the evil in others and loves them for the good they have, who trudges along the journey of life in the path of morality and integrity, who observes approved limits of conduct and behaviour, and who has the faith in thought, word and deed, that the Universe is your creation and that the entire objective world is your body.

Chitra Kuta

Nevertheless, since you have assumed now this human habiliment, and come here in order to carry out the commands of your mother and father, and questioning me as part of that role, I am also venturing to answer, as if that role is real. You can reside on the Chitrakutta Hill. It has all facilities for a comfortable stay. It is a holy place, and a charming beauty spot. The atmosphere is saturated with love and peace. Lions and elephants roam *together* there, with no trace of hatred or rivalry. The river Mandakini, extolled in the Vedas, flows round the hill. Sages like Athri live there in hermitages, which you can visit and render sacred. Confer blessings on that sublime spot and on that dear divine river.

As soon as Valmiki finished giving this direction, Rama agreed to the proposal and receiving his permission to leave, he resumed his journey with Sita and Lakshmana. Within a short time, they saw the Mandakini, and were happy to bathe in its sacred waters, and perform the prescribed ceremonial rites. They rested awhile under a shady tree, and ate some fruits, before walking along the grassy tracks for some distance, admiring the verdure and the scenery.

Then, Rama spoke to Lakshmana, thus: "Lakshmana! I am at a loss to decide on the exact spot where we can erect a cottage of gross thatch and bamboo poles, for our stay in this place; I do not find it easy to say, which place is good and which is not. So, select and fix upon a spot; then, erect a simple hut there, and we can move in."

No Will of His Own

No sooner did these words fall on his ears, than Lakshmana crumpled on the ground right at the feet of Rama. He was in evident anguish. "What wrong have I committed, that you should speak to me thus! Is this a hard sentence for any sin? Or, are you testing me, and my nature? Or, are you joking and making fun of me?" he asked. He was in great sorrow and his head bent with fear and anxiety.

Rama was surprised at his behaviour. He went near him and clasped him to his bosom. "Brother! What happened to make you so sad? I cannot guess why you are so heart broken," he said. "Tell me," he pleaded, "tell me the reason, do not prolong my astonishment and sorrow at your condition."

Lakshmana replied immediately. He said, "Brother! I have surrendered every thing to you. I have no likes and dislikes. What is pleasing to you, is on that account pleasing to me. You know, that this is the fact. But, yet, you now ask *me* to select a place which I like and erect a cottage on! My heart really received a shock, when you directed me to exercise my will. Order me, where it is to be created, I shall do so. Be merciful, do not in this strain, bless me by accepting the surrender I am offering at thy feet of all of me, the will, the intelligence, The mind, the senses, the body, all, with no exception and no reservation. I am your servant following you in the hope of having the chance to serve you. Use me, as you wish. Command me, and have the commands obeyed and the actions accomplished."

When Lakshmana prayed and supplicated so sincerely, Rama consoled him and pacified his feelings with great affection. "Lakshmana," he said, "Why are you worried so much on this little matter? Do not take it so much to heart. I gave you that direction in just a casual way. I am not unaware of the loyalty that fills your heart. Well. Come along with me. Right! I shall select the spot myself?" And, with Sita by his side, he took the forest track, along with Lakshmana, and shortly, they sighted the northern bank of the Mandakini river. That length of bank was carved like a bow; it appeared as if the bow was held by the Chitrakuta peak standing behind it like a hero. One felt that the arrows it was ready to let loose were 'Sense-control, Mind-control, Charity, Renunciation etc and that the target they were intended to destroy was the Gang of Sin. Rama described the spot thus and added, "This hero will not withdraw from the fight!" He directed that the cottage be built on that captivating spot.

The Thatched Hut

Lakshmana requested Rama and Sita to rest awhile under a tree, and set about collecting poles, leaves, creepers and fibre-from-tree-barks to spin ropes from. In order to raise a hut spacious enough for three, he dug pits, planted poles, and laboured quickly to complete the construction. When Sita and Rama rose from the shade after some rest, they found the cottage rising before their eyes, a thing of beauty, certain to be a lovely home by all counts. Rama felt that he too should give Lakshmana some help in his work, and so, seeing his brother on the roof, giving the finishing touches, he handed him from the ground bits of string to tie the bundles of dry grass to the cross-poles in order to thicken the thatch. Sita too desired to give a helping hand; she plucked long leaves from the tree-branches Lakshmana had brought, and gave sheaves of them into Rama's hand to be passed on to Lakshmana.

The house was ready for occupation, even before sunset. Rama looked often and long at the neat little cottage, and he praised the devotion and earnestness of his brother to Sita, in very high terms. Sita too appreciated the house and said that she had at no time seen a dwelling of such charm; she had for a long time yearned to live in just such a habitation. She told Rama that her long cherished desire was fulfilled that day. She added her praise for the devotion and earnestness of her brother-in-law.

Meanwhile, Lakshmana came down from the roof; he went round the cottage to examine whether anything was wanting, in the form of a last touch. Then, he asked permission from Rama to proceed to the Mandakini for a bath, and left. A short while after, Sita and Rama both went to the river and had their bath; they returned to the cottage and partook of the fruits that Lakshmana had gathered in the morning, and slept soundly on the floor of their new home.

Ascetics filled with joy

Before another day passed by, the news that Sita Rama and Lakshmana had taken residence on the Chitrakuta Hill spread among the hermits of the forest and groups of them, bringing their pupils and comrades approached the sacred cottage, and after taking Darshan, left for their hermitages. Rama asked them about their health and progress and also enquired about the difficulties they had to encounter and the troubles they had to overcome. Rama assured them that whenever they required his service, he was ready, with his brother, to go to their rescue.

But, they mentioned no difficulties and referred to no troubles. They said, "Rama! The fact that we have been able to see you is itself enough to remove all our troubles and make our lives happy. We have no difficulties, nor can any difficulty come into our lives. Your Grace is enough protection for us". They sat petrified with wonder at the charming personality of Rama. Rama welcomed the ascetics and treated them with affectionate regard. Seeing him and being in his presence cooled the pining hearts of the ascetics and gave them immense consolation and confidence. A deep calm and peace descended on their consciousness.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

Sai, The Anointed

a birth has come
to change this world.

i have met
the One who is anointed
i have seen
the coming of the King.

the sun rose
a cobra was found,

while He laughed
new Babe that He was
to the dawn
of these new days.

and how do i know
He changed the world? you ask—
but,
how do you know He didn't?

each moment of Love
you've felt since birth
is woven into His robe,
is remembered in His touch.

all experience
that you would call human
finds its source
and its outcome
in His eyes.

Christopher Curtis, New York

Self-Confidence

After my return from the Summer Course on Spirituality and Indian Culture, powerful changes are going on in me. And, I am just watching. Baba always emphasises that His life is His Message. I have found that, regarding Him as a 'human divine' helps, more than anything else, for, I then learn a great deal more to improve our own attitudes and behaviour. If I regard Him as God, millions of light years away, I fail to notice how He acts and behaves with us, and how every moment He is instructing me, by precept and example. And, I always derive infinite pleasure while noticing His obvious superiority over all others; the love, the concern, which Baba has for us and all who draw His attention and sympathy, others would feel shy to show, even if any one had it in that measure.

Ruminating over what Baba was telling us about self-confidence I now think that people who lose their heads, when they get drunk with a little recognition do so, because they have no self-confidence, and they are not, outside, what they are within. When we have no self-confidence, we are not sure of recognition; and any small recognition that comes our way, we just grab, and make the most of; we are not sure whether any more would come!

When we are something inside, and something quite different outside, this hypocrisy, is but another face of that horrible monster lack of self-confidence. We have no faith in what we really are, and we seriously doubt whether people would ever appreciate what we really are; so, we put

on a false face, which we think will bring us credit. So, when we analyse deeper we find that both these things—lack of self-confidence and hypocrisy arise from the basic motive of getting appreciation and recognition from others.

This desire for appreciation is deeply ingrained in human nature. If it is destroyed, self-confidence will come, surging in and hypocrisy will die.

S. Chandawarkar

The Call

Joy and sorrow are the two streams that join to form the river of human life. Overcoming numerous obstructions and causing prosperity and adversity alternately to many, the river flows along, until it merges in the Sea. The aim of the torrential river is to attain the calm of the Sea; even so, the goal of man is to attain supreme bliss and peace, by losing himself in the bliss and peace of Paramatma God

My life has flowed through joy and sorrows of good fortune come rarely to man, and have to be treasured very gladly and with gratitude. The experience I am about to relate is surely the greatest, the most beatific and the happiest event, in my life, beyond my widest dream.

On 5th October, 1972, about 10 in the morning, Niloo-da showed me the telegram and told me that Sri Sri Sathya Sai Baba had asked me to reach Prasanthi Nilayam and sing Bhajans.

My first reaction was negative. Although I had heard of Baba, I knew next to nothing about Him. So, I had no enthusiasm to accept the engagement. I pleaded long to be excused. But, Niloo-da was not a person to take a refusal from me. He entreated saying, "You do not realise what a fortune this is for you. Baba has Himself caused this telegram to be sent! No. We cannot let you off!" I had ultimately to give in.

The Answers

12th October was the day named for departure. When that date was settled, Sri Sukumar Mitra and his wife, Pansy, family friends for long, wanted me to see them. Pansy-di was ill for a long time. They requested me to carry a letter to Baba. Putting the letter in my hand, she said, "Juthika-di, you are going to Baba, but, do you know anything about Him, have you read any book about Him? Have you seen any picture of His?" Sukumar Babu asked, "Do you want to see a picture of Baba?" I said, "Yes. I am not happy, that I am going to Him without knowing anything or seeing anything. It would be well, if you can show me a picture."

Sukumar Babu handed me a picture of Baba. I looked at it; and I was filled with rapture of delight! I saw 'living' Krishna, smiling and blessing. I forgot how long I was in that state. Later, I turned to Pansy-di and said, "It was a great chance, that I saw it". The Yearning from that moment, I began yearning, with joy and fervour for a darshan of Sai Baba. My mind was longing for the moment when I can see Him and sing Bhajans to Him with all my heart.

Myself and my brother Kalipada arrived at Bangalore, in the afternoon, at 4.30; at 5, we left the airport. Two gentlemen from the Nilayam met us with a car. The long drive was filled with the exquisite experience of natural beauty. The range of hills in the distance, the green fields below, the row of green trees, the lakes filled to the brim by rivulets, captivated my heart. We passed through tiny hamlets, off and on. We were importuned to take a cup of tea, when we had travelled a few miles; we realised later that the devotee who pressed us to drink it, was conferring a great benefit on us. It grew dark and our car kept up its high speed, for, I believe, it sensed that the rest of the road was not so good. After the tarmac ended, the road was riddled with pits; we were engulfed in darkness.

Darshan

It was nearly 8, when we drove into the Prasanthi Nilayam. Volunteers rushed towards me, and said, "Baba has already announced your name. Come and have Darshan, right now! They refused to understand that I was tired after the long travel, and that I had not had any session with the supporting musicians!

I and my brother got down from the car and followed the volunteers for Darshan, Baba was poised on the stair, at the back of the vast auditorium, which was jam-packed with devotees. In a burst of joy, Baba called out, "Juthika Roy!" "Juthika Roy!" I bowed at His Feet. He said, "Go in." My brother bowed. He touched him on the head and back, and asked him too to go in.

A strange feeling possessed me. The fatigue and the lassitude had completely vanished! I felt I could sing without any difficulty. Sm. Pratima Banerjee and Sm. Supriti Ghose were there. Pratima took her seat for her song; my turn was next. I was waiting, but, within minutes, a devotee informed me that I did not have to sing that evening; I would sing on Navaratri.

Blessings

When we were watching the morning festivities on the 16th, Baba smiled to me and said, "You sing today." During the noon hours, when I allowed myself a little rest, Sri A. K. Dutt brought me, two saris which Baba sent to me with His Blessings. "Wear them, at the Bhajan," Sri Dutt said. I said, "these have borders; I do not wear such; I can only wrap one round, like chaddar, when I sing." Sri Dutt insisted that I wear the sari, since Baba had sent them.

I was struck by a bolt, as it were. I did not know a way out of the difficulty. My mind was confused; I became anxious whether I can never sing my best, with a mind that was upset. Just then, Sri Dutt came running in, "See, Baba who dwells in our hearts has sent you these white silks, borderless!" I breathed normally, and was very happy.

Bhajans

I proceeded to the Auditorium at 8 P.M. As I tuned the instruments, Baba came towards me and I bowed before Him. He told me, "Let the tempo be quick; sing high, sing with fervour. "I began the Bhajan. There were thousands in the auditorium but there was not a sound, not a stir. Music filled the air I could not imagine how my songs were received so well. It was all due to Baba's Grace, I am sure.

It filled me with great joy and I continued to sing uninterruptedly for a long time. Then, I thought

I should end and I began the well known Mira Bhajan, 'Yogi mat ja'. When the last notes slowly faded out, I turned to Baba as much as to say, "It's done."

Baba pointed a finger at me and said, "No, no, you must sing another Bhajan." I began the Bhajan, "To this servant, my Lord has said, 'Bhagavan is my name, some call me Ram, Some Shyam." Baba sat next to the tabla player, swaying with supreme joy. As the song ended, I again ventured to suggest, "May I end here?" Again, He pointed the finger at me and asked me to sing another Bhajan. I was concerned about the song I should select. At last, I decided on, "Come! Give me your Vision, O, Lord! I cannot live without you." As I launched into this Mira Bhajan, Baba appeared lost in delight. I too was then singing in a transport of joy I never knew before. I had never witnessed such a blissful scene. The last notes of the song floated away into the distance.

Grace

I heard Baba's tinkling voice, "Juthika Roy." I drew near Him, and stood in silence. Addressing me in Hindi, He said, "Today is Navaratri. I was happy to hear your Bhajan." While saying this, He turned His palm downward and made rapid circular motion. I was astounded; I thought He was blessing me in that manner! But, when He stopped and turned the palm upward, it held a gold locket, with precious gems, and an enamelled picture of Baba reclining on Anantasayya. Baba said, "I am very happy to hear your Bhajan. I give you this navaratna—nine gemmed—necklace." Placing it in my out-stretched hand, He said, "Wear it, wear it."

With all reverence, I put the chain round my neck and prostrated before Him. He asked me, "When are you leaving?" I replied, "Please tell me when I should leave." He said, "Don't go tomorrow. Go on the twelfth day, Dwadasi" I was happy, I could stay for two more days and witness the festivities. Abhishek was performed for Shirdi Baba on Dashami; Jhulan was observed on Ekadasi. It was a wonderful scene; it seemed to me that Krishna was swinging in Gokula.

As soon as the Jhulan was over, Baba sent word that I and my brother could see Him and have the coveted 'interview'. As we stood in the interview room, Baba came down the steps. He noticed at once that the fan had not been switched on. He switched it Himself. I bowed at His Feet. He inquired if I was put to hardship; I assured Him that, on the contrary, I was leaving with a great deal of Bliss. Uttering the word, "Ananda" again and again, He stopped right in front of me and said, "You have everything within you—Ananda, Love of Service, Renunciation, Devotion. But, you have the habit of worrying, why do you worry so much?" I replied, "Perhaps it is because I am in worldly life". Baba at once said, "No, no. Do not let yourself worry so much. I am always with you. I will appear before you, often. You have nothing to fear, nothing to worry. I am with you."

Ananda

Tears streamed down my cheeks; I felt my life blessed, as I stood before the Lord, receiving benediction, consolation and assurance of protection from Him. With another wave of His hand, He created a little silver image of Krishna on one side and Narayana on the other, and placed it in my hand saying, "Worship this."

Holding the little image in my hand, I made bold to say, "When I first saw Your picture, I saw

Living Krishna in it." Without losing a moment, Baba said, "Yes. Correct. I visited you then." He created Vibhuti for my health and my voice, and gave it to me. He gave 'created' Vibhuti to my brother too. And, in a moment, He disappeared up the stairs.

I bowed before the vanishing figure. I said within myself repeatedly, "O, my Lord! How much you have given me today! I can never forget it in my life. I return today with supreme Ananda and Peace. I have no worry, no fear, no sorrow, no misery. All I have is Ananda, Ananda.

Baba everywhere

We left the Prasanthi Nilayam at 6 A.M., on the 19th October. All the way, my mind recalled the varied pictures of Baba. I saw Him on hilltops, in the water of the streams, in the green fields, in the sky and air. He appeared sometimes with hands raised, sometimes smiling, sometimes swinging in the Jhula, sometimes discoursing force-fully, sometimes singing Bhajan sweetly. I was lost in a transport of joy. I hardly realised that, we had reached Bangalore O, it is impossible to describe Him, unless one sees Him and experiences Him, oneself!

Juthika Roy, Calcutta

The True Sadhaka should be a good farmer. The farmer removes the thorny bushes and weeds. The Sadhaka removes wasteful and wicked thoughts from his heart. The farmer plants, ploughs, waters, sows, manures and then fills his granary with rich harvest. The Sadhaka ploughs the heart with good deeds, waters it with love, manures it with faith, plants the saplings of name, fences his Self with discipline and Satsang and then reaps the harvest of Jnana.

Baba

The Lotus Feet

Worship of the Lotus Feet of the Lord is a unique feature of Bharatiya culture from time immemorial. The devotee values the feet of the Lord most.

Padasevanam is fourth of the nine steps in the "pilgrimage of man towards God along the path of dedication and surrender" as Baba stresses, viz. "Enter upon the worship of the Lord, by concentrating upon the feet, or foot-prints." Srimantha Sankara Deva, the great Vaishnava Saint of Assam, a contemporary of Lord Chaitanya, prays to the Lord, "I don't want even your feet, but give me the dust of the feet of your devotees," the Padadhuli is considered very sacred indeed.

The Lord's feet are full of splendour and power. In the Vamanavatara, the Lord measured the earth and sky with His feet and the third step, he could keep only on the head of the king, who learnt a lesson of humility. In the Krishnavatara, the Lord's feet danced on the Kalia serpent; this brought out all the poison and saved the cows and human beings from destruction. In Ramavatara the mere touch of the Lord's feet brought back to life Ahalya who had been petrified by a curse.

One of the unique aspects of the message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is that He brings out the inner meaning and significance of our ancient culture. In one of His discourses He explained, "Krishna is hiding in the recesses of your heart; you have to trace Him there and hold fast. He runs away, but leaves footprints marked by the spilt milk on which, He has trodden, in His hurry to be beyond your reach. Yes; the lesson is: recognize His footprints in everything of beauty, every act of goodness, every tear of gratitude, every sign of compassion, and discover Him in the bower of your own heart, filled with the fragrance of Love and the light of virtue."

On another occasion He said, "Think of the sublimely sweet Love that Krishna was evoking in the hearts of those who had the good fortune to be His contemporaries! Every one of them, from the unlettered Cowherd to the most profound scholar and sage was drawn to Him as a magnet and held by Him in unshakable devotion. Whatever the hardships and troubles that came upon them, they did not give up the Lord's Feet to which they clung ever fast and firm. As you walk along the road, your shadow follows you, through dirt and dust, bush and bramble, mound and midden, brook and boulder. But, note how the shadow has constant contact with the Feet; so long as the shadow (man) has fast and firm contact with the Feet of the Substance (the Lord), no hardship can affect him. Hold onto the Lord; that is the way to peace and joy."

On another occasion Baba said, "Krishna is the Visualisation of the Arms, that the repetition of the name by the tongue grants the Vision that was gained by Yasoda. You must foster that Krishna on your tongue; when He dances on it, the Poison of the tongue will be ejected completely without harming any one, as happened when as a child He danced on the hoods of the serpent Kalinga.

"Yasoda traces Krishna to the place He hides, by the Foot-prints He leaves, when He has broken the curds-pot which she was churning. This is a symbolic story to illustrate how the Lord breaks our identification with the body and leads us on to Himself, by signs and signals that He provides all round us. These signs are ever present in the sun, the ecstasy of the rainbow, the melody of the birds, the lotus-spangled surface of lakes, the silence of snow-crowned peaks—in fact since God is Rasa, Sweetness, Ecstasy. Nature, which is but Himself in action is sweet and ecstatic."

The feet are the support for the human frame; in fact for all beings that move; without the feet no being can move! The feet are the adhaara, the support, the base, the, sustenance for the body. The Lord's Feet form the adhaara for all beings, the sustenance of all nature.

The foot is also a measure, both in English and in our languages; we use the term foot-rule; distance is measured in terms of feet! Our progress on the spiritual journey is also measured by the number of steps we take towards the Lord. Baba says, "If you take one step towards Me, I shall take ten steps towards you." Although western peoples do not worship the feet of the Lord, they value the 'footprints' left on the sands of time by elders, leaders, by men of character. It is used in the metaphorical sense of following the example.

In this sense also, footprints have a deep meaning. Baba's footprints are examples of His Message; "My Life is a commentary on My Message," He declares. 'I eat as you do, move about as you do, talk in your language, and behave as you can recognize and understand, for your sake—not for my sake! I turn you towards the Divine, winning your confidence, your love, your

sub-mission, by being among you, as one of yourselves, one whom you can see, listen to, touch and treat with reverence and devotion. My plan is to transmute you into seekers of Truth (Sathya-anveshaks). I am present everywhere at all times, my will must prevail over every obstacle. I am aware of the past, present, and future, of your innermost thoughts and carefully guarded secrets. I am sarvantaryami, sarva sakta and sarvajna. Nevertheless I do not manifest these powers for display. For, I am an example and an inspiration, whatever I do or omit to do. My life is a commentary on my message."

Now about the sweet epithet, the Lotus for thee Lord's feet: The word *lotus* signifies apart from beauty and tenderness, detachment. Although it grows in water, water does not wet the lotus. This is how the Lord's Feet are. Although everything is His Footprint, although there is nothing without Him, yet He Himself is beyond this, above this and not involved in this! Baba is exactly the Lord. His feet are everywhere, Sarvathapanipada; He is fully involved in all activities, yet He is completely detached. He enters the very fabric of our lives; He "gives us what we want until we begin to want what He has come to give." In the interview room, He speaks to us as if (and that is the truth) he has known us through and through, our past, present and future. He pours out Love which no earthly father or mother can. Yet, as soon as we come out, there is no sign even of recognition, and we suffer because we think He has forgotten us! But we forget that He wants that we should learn a lesson from this. We must learn detachment; he expects us to wean ourselves from attachment even to His Physical Frame! He wants us to get strongly attached to the very core of His substance, that is the Sat-Chit-Ananda-swarupa that He is. He declares: "When your wishes fail, you deny God; when wishes fructify, you you adore Him with greater pomp, and have a few more pictures in your shrine, and you spend more money on flowers and incense. God has no preferences and prejudices. God is not involved in either rewards or punishments. He only reflects, resounds and reacts! He is the Eternal Unaffected Witness! You decide your own fate. Do good, be good, you get good in return; be bad do bad deeds, you reap bad results. Do not thank or blame God. Thank yourself, blame yourself. He does not even will that creation, protection and destruction shall take place. They follow the same law, the innate law of maya-ridden universe.

"He comes to confer Ananda, to foster Ananda, to teach ways of acquiring and activating Ananda. He takes upon Himself the pain and sorrow of the world, in order to prepare the hearts of men for Love!"

In His very first Message to the world, the day when He came out as Sai Baba, He taught the devotees the first song,

*"Maanasa bhajare guru charanam
Dusthara bhavasagarathanam"*

He called upon "all those suffering in this endless round of birth and death to worship the Feet of the Guru, the Guru, that was announcing Himself, who had come again for taking upon Himself the burden of those who took refuge in Him." Blessed was that Day; and blessed are we today!

Narayana Murthy

In the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna asks Arjuna, "Offer Me," "Surrender to me," "Leave everything to me," "Rely on Me." This "Me" is no other than the "I", the God within every being, the "I" which makes every one declare. "I shall do thus," "I own this," "I am intelligent, happy, active." It is the "I" that prompts both the amoeba and the Avatar.

~Baba

Man should become human first, and that is his first task. Religion follows next, but in this, heart cleaning is a condition precedent.

Oh Child of God, fill thy worm with love and longing, with selfless service. So be thou a source of blessing to many.

~Baba

The Rainbowman

The phone rang.

“Hello, Joel, this is Gould. What is this, I hear, about your going to India?”

“Yes, Gould, it is true. I'm going to visit God.”

“What do you mean, you're going to visit God?”

My thoughts flashed: Go easy; you have a real heathen on the phone; in 20 minutes, all your friends will hear about this and donate a strait-jacket to you.

“O, nothing, Gould. How are things going for you?”

His reply was no surprise.

“Terrible Joel, everything is going wrong! Speaking of God, I was brought up as a Catholic, and it is strange, but, when I used to go to church and pray, things went much better for me!”

This really shocked me. The playboy of Los Angeles talking about God! I never expected to hear these words from his mouth. As his voice wandered off into the distance, I was thinking, 'may be I should tell him about this book and see what he thinks about it'. His voice penetrated my eardrums once again.

“Why are you going to India, Joel?”

“Well, Gould, I just read a book about a man who claims he is God. He materialises things.”

Quickly I thought, I better give him some more examples, knowing how materialistic Americans

are. So, I gave some examples. There was silence on the phone, as I waited for his reply.'

"Well, Joel. You have been everywhere else in the world, and met almost any one of any importance; why not God?"

I felt he was trying to be polite, to avoid the, subject.

"Joel! If he can do all these things, what are you going to ask for, when you get there?"

"Gould, there is nothing I need, materially. May be, I'll ask him for a rainbow over India! At least, it will give some people something beautiful to look at.... Gould. I want you to understand one thing—I'm not a great believer in God. I certainly don't believe in these Voodoo type of Indian Characters."

That morning, I called a friend of mine S. J. who has been like a father to me. I felt he has a sound and stable approach to most things and may be he could clarify my conflict. We met for lunch at a restaurant. After the usual banter, I told him about the books (Schulman's and Murphet's) and my impending visit to India.

I was astonished, when he said, "Why not go? It should be quite an experience."

As we were saying good-bye to each other, and started going our separate ways, S. J. smiled and said, "Write to me; I'll be interested in what you find; and, if he is what he claims to be, may be he can solve my problems".

"I will, S. J! I'll write to you. Take good care of yourself, till I return".

As I started to walk towards my car, his voice interrupted my direction.

"What are you going to ask for?"

I turned and shrugged my shoulders.

"I don't know, S. J.! I think I'll ask for a Rain bow."

I could hear his voice laugh, over the noise of city traffic, as he replied.

"If you are going to ask for some thing as big as that, you might as well ask for a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

We waved at each other, as I climbed my car and drove off.

I asked Diana about taking inoculations and about the baby's shots. To my amazement, she replied, "I am not giving any shots to that baby. If you think I am going to throw all those germs into her body, you are mistaken. Besides, Baba will watch over her, right through."

I looked at her, and couldn't believe what I was hearing. I glared at her and could hardly restrain myself. I stumped around the room; I thought I was going out of mind! India is full of diseases and a big cholera epidemic is prevalent! I picked up the phone and called my doctor to confirm my sanity. After my conversation with him, I felt fully assured and convinced that I was married to a mad woman.

Bombay was a very disappointment city for me—flies, insects, dirt. I thought: 'Here I am, with a fifteen month old baby (no shots) exposing to all this, and every time, inoculation is mentioned, she tells me about this Sai Baba Character, watching over all of us!' We decided not to spend time in Bombay, but, continue our trip on to Bangalore and rest there, for a while.

The trip to Puttaparthi was enjoyable. The countryside, with its reddish brown clay, sprinkled with trees had a peaceful effect. Not much was said in the car, as I was absorbed in the beauty and stillness; even the engine of the car hummed to a musical key of peacefulness. But, the village outside the Ashram gave me a shock! How can I get my child out of here, that was the problem for me...As we climbed the steps to our room, Diana's mother, who was there already, gave us a greeting that would make an usher at a funeral look positively joyful! We unpacked our things and Diana suggested we go upon the top of the Hill to have cigarettes, as you are not allowed to smoke on the Ashram grounds.

As we climbed up, my mind kept pound, the thought, "What am I doing here? What has Diana talked me into?" Pamella, the girl we had met at Bangalore, was there on the top of the hill, having a cigarette. I sat myself on a rock that made me the pinnacle triangle; as we talked. Pamella was confirming my thinking about this Place, Diana forged on like a Christian warrior trying to convince me that the battle in the mind was worse, and had to be won first.

"How can you speak for other people?" "What is crazy for you, may"

My heart stopped. For, Lo! Behold! Over Diana's right shoulder, a RAINBOW started to appear!

Both the girls were staring at me, waiting for the completion of my sentence; I couldn't believe what I was seeing. "Diana!" I said, "Look over your right shoulder.

She turned slowly and said, "My God."

Pamella was bewildered.

"What was wrong?"

Diana turned quickly and said. "Joel was going to ask Baba, if he is God, give him a rainbow. And, look!"

The three of us stared; my eyes began to fill with tears.

"Look," I said, "the sun is shining. How can that be?"

We watched a rainbow go straight up, never curving, and in a matter of seconds, it had reached its peak, and as quickly as it grew, it dissolved itself from the bottom up.

I could not say, "I got goose bumps all over my body."

"Me, too!"

We all sat in silence! Only the distant voices of the children could be heard. The warmth of the sun could be felt on the stillness of the breeze. How long we sat there, I can't recollect, as I believe I was in a state of shock.

But, eventually, some one broke the spell and we decided to return, down the mountain.

That evening, we went to the temple, to see Sai Baba. As we reached the temple, Diana's mother told me to go to the right, and to the front of the temple. "For God's sake, take off your shoes," she shouted, in a loud whisper. I proceeded to take off my shoes and walk towards the front of the temple. To my amazement, before me sitting in yogi style, was a large group of men. Fifty feet away, were the women, similar size, group and posture.

I smuggled myself down, amidst a group of men. I felt conspicuous, as it was evident that I was a westerner by my skin colour and clothes. My eyes began to wander, and I felt terribly out of place, like a man in the theatre about to witness a play that he would not understand. The quietness was unbelievable; one could hear the cooing of the pigeons and a bell ringing in the distance, which I finally pin-pointed to be around the neck of an elephant, as it rang at the peak of its pendulum swing.

As the curtain began to rise with the moon, there, before me, at a distance, appeared the glow of an orange robe, filled with a strong body, the head hallowed with electric hair! Slowly the figure approached the men's section; there must have been 20 or 30 men seated before me. Before I knew what was going on, he was standing before me; as he bent down and put his hand upon my shoulder, I heard his gentle voice say, 'How are you? CHARACTER!'

I was stunned. I was completely bewildered. Character? The very word, I had used so often, in derision, about him?

That night, I couldn't stop thinking of the rainbow. Why didn't it curve like a rainbow usually does? A gentleman came to the room, and informed us that Sai Baba would be seeing us, the entire family, along with some other westerners, at 9 in the morning.

Time flew by, very fast, that morning. It was 9o' clock, before I knew where I was. We entered a room inside the temple; it was nearly ten feet square. One corner had a huge piece of furniture, a large wardrobe closet, covered in cardboard and tied with a string; next to it was a silver, painted chair with velvet cushion and a handkerchief draped over each arm. Along one wall was a sofa covered with white dust doth. Next to that, bags were stacked to the ceiling.

I was told to sit by the chair, near the archway, that had a circular cement staircase that would

allow one person to ascend or descend at one time. As 8 or 10 of us crowded into this little room, all sitting in Yogi style, I glanced about and seeing the bags gave me the feeling of Christ's Manger.

The silence in the room was broken only by some one clearing the throat. I glanced to my right, and, there, coming down the steps was the Inimitable Figure. I stood up with the rest of the gentlemen; I was first by the archway, as he entered.

He stopped, and looked at me. The gentleness of his eyes and the warmth of his smile drew out the well-trained and controlled emotions in me. "Well, CHARACTER! How did you like the RAINBOW?"

The expression on my face, of stunnedness must have made him laugh, for, he chuckled, as he walked over to the chair. As he glanced at the group, he said, "He wanted a rainbow," pointing towards me. The tone indicated that he wanted to add, "Why didn't you ask for something difficult?" He motioned us to sit down. I noticed that the movements of his hands had the gentleness and manners of politeness which are beyond description. No verbal etiquette or diplomacy could do as well. As he leaned back in his chair, he turned his head and glanced at me with a smile. "Rainbow," he chuckled. He then turned and faced the group.

For the next one hour, my mind was in confusion.

There were many questions asked, too many to mention. He turned towards a woman and asked, "How are your knees? Is it hurting?" She said, "Yes". Like a child pouring sand from the palm of its hand, he poured ashes into her palm. The woman placed the ashes into her mouth. He looked over to my daughter and said, "What is your name?" Diana replied "Christiana." "Oh," he said, a very pretty name, and father likes it very much. Come, Christiana, come to me." Christiana to one look at him and screamed. Sai Baba laughed. "This hair scares most children." Diana, in her embarrassment, pushed Christiana on, but, Sai Baba motioned with his index finger upright, to Diana, a definite NO, not to push the child. Sai Baba pulled his sleeve up again, and repeating the rotary motion, (I leaned forward to watch beneath the palm; there was nothing there), fingers closed and opened in a split second, and dangling from his fingers was a gold chain, with a locket on it. He gave it "That is for Christiana," he said.

I wasn't impressed, as much as I was with the rainbow. After all, there have been some persons who could materialise watches, rings etc. But, the Rainbow did disturb me as only God can make a Tree or a Rainbow, or a Fruit or

Sai Baba interrupted my thoughts as he turned towards a woman and said, "You had a bad fight with your husband last night; he wanted to take you home to America, because you are not feeling well. "He slowly placed his hands on the husband's shoulder and chuckled. "Why go home? Am I not your mother, father and doctor?" As he spoke, the movement of the hand started its silent musical flow; as he flipped his hand upward, a FIG appeared!

He tore the fig apart and gave one half to Christiana who was ill then and another half to the woman. Now, he turned and directly looked at me and smiled. Later, I came to know that figs

were out of season at that time, in India.

I have been here for many weeks now, and in all this time, I have never seen him stop. He is constantly seeing people and constantly giving of himself. I have only this to say to Baba now: "Thank you for the seed. It is now up to me, to prove worthy: The seed requires the water of faith. I must cherish the Seed (God) with love and nurture it, with faith."

Joe

Religion is a personal encounter of the individual with the Supreme. Do not unsettle anyone's faith. God is one. Each one comes from God, is of God, is Himself. Each individual is a lovely flower in the Garden of Allah. It is only in this world that spiritual progress can be made; annihilation of ego and dissolution of desires can be here and now, else going and returning back to this transient world is sure.

~Baba

Cows and the Cowherd

Baba, the Embodiment of Love, has declared often that He can be gained or understood only through Love. This Love has to be not just for God, but, for all Jivas as well for everything is the reflection of God. In return for His boundless gifts of Grace and Ananda, Baba requires only Love. The easiest path, therefore for us to cross the mire of sorrow, hatred and envy is, Love towards God and Humanity.

Baba says, "The only Prema (Love) that will not allow pride and envy to interfere with its even unblemished flow is Prema towards God." This Love cannot be learnt or taught. It is the very nature of man, for, he has been made in the image of God, as the very image of God. Baba has come as Avatar in order to remind us that we have long forgotten our innermost nature (Love) and our dearest home (God). Sai, the very symbol of Love is in every one. We have to surrender mind, heart, reason, everything at His Lotus Feet, and then, we will see Him everywhere at all times.

Sai Ram, like Sri Krishna the previous Avatar, does not stay in any one definite place; He is Sarva-vyapi, He dwells everywhere. We must see Him wherever there is harmony, melody, beauty, peace, joy. We should also try to see Him wherever there is distress, and calamity. That is what is meant by surrender; whatever He might offer, joy grief, is to be accepted as His Will.

Baba says, "There should be no artificiality in your Love, in your attachment to the Lord; no with-holding, no hesitation; no affectation, no pride, no egoism left to soil the freshness of the flower you offer." Baba always speaks of the Gopis as having this admirable form of pure Love. Sri Rama, Krishna lapsed into Samadhi, ecstatic self-forgetfulness, whenever they heard or recalled the Love of the Gopis. Lord Krishna says, in the Bhagavatapurana, "They have given me their heart and soul. They consider me their very life and breath, for my sake they have abandoned all." They were unaware of their physical bodies and its need; they knew only their Lord, the young Cowherd Boy with the enchanting Flute. Their agony at the slightest interval of separation from Krishna was a great step, a profound experience, during their sadhana of Devotion and Dedication. Their devotion is the grandest example of Love for God and Surrender to Him that the world has chronicled so far. Baba often gives us their example, while teaching us the ways of teaching Him.

Swami Vivekananda says, "Bhakti-yoga is a real genuine search after the Lord, a search, beginning, continuing, and ending in Love. One single moment of the madness of extreme Love to God brings us towards eternal freedom. "Sage Narada has said in the Bhakti Sutras that the essential characteristics of Bhakti are the consecration of all activities by complete surrender to Him, and extreme anguish if He were to be forgotten" "Examples do exist," Narada says, "of such perfect Bhakti" and, he quotes the Gopis of Vraja, as the supreme exemplars.

Most of us do not know the very alphabet of devotion. We struggle in the sea of Samsara, without holding fast to the life-boat that is within reach. Baba, the greatest of the Avatars in human history, encourages us to shun disappointment and dejection, and to try whole heartedly to attach ourselves to His Lotus Feet of the Lord, without pursuing the will o' the wisp of worldly success or fame.

—Smt. Sheela Mukerji

Feel it; Feel it

You, as body, mind or soul, are a Dream. What you really are is: "Existence-Knowledge-Bliss."

You are God of the Universe. You are creating the Universe and after playing with It for some time, you draw It in, and are the same again.

To gain the Infinite, Universal Individuality, this miserable little prison-individuality must go.

It is the heart that reached the Goal. Follow the heart, for, a pure heart reaches beyond the intellect; it thrills, gets inspired; it sees visions and places faith.

Whatever we do reacts upon us; if we do good, we shall have happiness. If we do evil, we shall auger unhappiness. Within you is real lasting unsullied happiness. Within you is the vast limitless ocean of Nectar Divine. Seek within you; feel it; feel it.

It is here, the Self. It is not to be confused with the body, the mind, the intellect, the brain, and the senses. It is not the desire of the desiring. It is not the object of desire. It is not the person that desires.

Above all these you ARE. In all these, you ARE. All these you ARE.

You ARE the smiling flower. You ARE the twinkling star. What is there on earth and sky that you are not? Then, what can you desire for?

—Baba's Message to some American Devotees

Form and No-form

Devotee: Our experience is that objects exist independent of our consciousness of them.

Sri Sathya Sai: For us the world exists only if we are there to see it. If we are blind, we do not see it. If we are in a faint it does not exist for us. For us, the world is as we see it. It takes shapes for us according to our viewpoint. If our viewpoint is that all is God, then everything we see is God. Suppose we take a picture with a camera. Do the trees enter the lens and impress themselves on the film or does the camera reach out and grasp the trees?

Devotee: The trees impress themselves on the camera film.

Sri Sathya Sai: Wrong! I take a picture of a person who does not want his picture to be taken. Will the refusal prevent the picture? Or, put it in the other way. The person wants his picture to be taken. Will that result in the picture? The heart is like a film that can capture the image of Swami. If the film is latent and clean it can capture Swami, even if He does not want. But if the camera is without such a film, if the heart is impure and clouded, then Swami's image cannot be there, even if He wants. The body is the camera, the mind is the lens, the intelligence is the switch, and love is the film.

Devotee: But, Swami's image in the heart is His Form. Krishna says, "The Sadhaka need only picture the Paramatma as unpicturable, that is enough." What does that mean? How does it apply to the image of Swami in the heart?

Sri Sathya Sai: The image need not be that of Swami. It may be Love, which is Swami. First, God is realised in Form. Then, He is seen everywhere in that Form. Then, God may be realised without Form, since all form is impermanent. A child, learning, sees this elephant statue. On the statue is written the word-elephant. The child cannot read the word, but, he learns about elephant from its form and its name as he hears it. Once he has learned to read, then, just the word remains and from that, he understands "elephant". The statue, the form, is impermanent, but, the word remains as long as the language endures. The word "elephant" represents the elephant in its formless state. Likewise, once the devotee learns the language of Divinity, then God need not be pictured; the word is enough. But, one learns about God through Form and Name.

Devotee: We see here the Form of God as Swami. How are we to understand that Form? Does God appear only as that one Form? If the question is improper, Swami may please disregard it.

Sri Sathya Sai: The question is all right. Wires in the room are everywhere. But only one bulb is connected to the wires. Only the one light is seen in full power. The same current is in all the wires. The Avatar is ONE only; and only this One Body is taken by the Avatar. Of course, a brilliant light spreads outward into rays, but, the rays are not different from the Light.

—From Dialogues with an American Devotee

Love and Devotion

Sai Baba is Truth, Goodness, Beauty—Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram. Man, in reality, is also a spark of the same Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram, Pure Consciousness, or God. When this Divine Spark is encased in the human body, it acquires three Gunas or characteristics, animal instincts, human reason, and divine intuition. God's intention when He willed man to be on earth is to draw him again to Him and make him divine, again. So, He incarnates among men to guide him towards Himself. Unfortunately, man has fallen today into the deep pit of animal instincts, turning himself almost into a devil, thus denying God and decrying the godly.

Baba wants every man on earth to acquire the Divine nature, to be an embodiment of Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram, and thus, merge in Him. First, He insists on man being truthful in thought, word and deed. He says it is quite simple to be truthful, for it does not need a great amount of

intelligence, it comes naturally to man. Falsehood on the other hand requires cleverness, shrewdness and cunning. So, truth is the first gateway to God.

To be truthful is to be righteous, to live according to the Cosmic Law, or Dharma. Man should learn and remember that Dharma is always victorious, though some stepping-stones might strike us as failures. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as the World Wars waged recently prove this. When man adheres to Dharma, he is led to goodness or Sivam. That is the inevitable law of progress in nature. When he attains goodness, he is ever content and in bliss.

Bliss and beauty are inseparable. A thing of beauty, says Keats is a Joy forever. He acquires as Baba says, Prakanti or the glory of the halo of heaven, or Sundaram. "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty, that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know," as Keats said. Sathyam is Sundaram, Sundaram is Sathyam. Sivam is Sathyam, Sivam is Sundaram.

But, Baba speaks of a switch or pushbutton, which can start this vehicle to this Goal. That is a pure and loving heart. Switch on pure and unselfish love for Creation and the Creator, you can surely reach the goal, without great effort or hardship. For, Baba has said, in the Gita, "I shall bear the burden of his welfare in this world and the next, if he surrenders to me completely with unalloyed love and devotion."

As for Baba's devotees, (to put it in His own words) "Why fear when I am here?"

—Jaya Paransothy; Sri Lanka

Onam in Prasanthi Nilayam

Onam, the day of the star Shravanam in the month Shrivana, is the National Festival of Kerala, when all members gather in the family house and celebrate the Re-appearance on earth of the ancient Kerala Monarch, Maha-bali. Dance and song, worship and feasting mark the Celebrations; new clothes are worn, and there is joy and laughter throughout the land.

This year, Onam fell on 9th September. That Day, hundreds of miles away from Kerala, a few thousand Keralites had assembled in their 'Family house' Prasanthi Nilayam to be in the presence, of their 'family head', Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. For, that was the place where they could imbibe the Onam spirit of Peace and Joy.

The day dawned bright and brilliant; a fast gathering of neatly clad Keralites sat in their festival garments in the courtyard of the Nilayam, for the morning Darshan. They were inaugurating their own Onam with a new tradition. When Baba appeared at the semi-circular balcony, time stood still. Cosmic compassion fell on them all, rejuvenating the hearts and enlivening all souls. The Lord in a sweeping vision saw them all, knew them all and blessed them all.

About 8 in the morning, the Keralites—men, women and children—assembled at Bhagavan's behest, in a gaily decorated Hall; where the Divine Discourse awaited them. Within minutes, the

Kerala devotees laid a pathway of floral petals and festoons of coconut leaves, reminiscent of Onam in Kerala. Bhagavan moved into the Hall, accompanied by the District Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in Kerala, as well as the State President, Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi.

Baba moved along the central passage between the devotees, blessing them on this, their most important Festival Day. Thousands were gratified to see Him so close; many touched the Lotus Feet; all drank the sweetness of the Divine Light of those Eyes. It was indeed a memorable feast.

Justice Eradi, in a short speech conveyed to Bhagavan the homage of the gathering, and prayed that He may bless them to deserve the Love He bestowed on them. Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair, D.Sc, described the elation and joy of the Keralites at having been given this great chance of celebrating Onam, at Prasanthi Nilayam, in the presence of Him who incarnated as Vamana in the past.

Bhagavan said that, though many festivals were celebrated in His Presence at Prasanthi Nilayam this was the only festival where people from one culture Unit or State were alone called together, and blessed. "This is your special good fortune," said Baba.

Baba said that Onam is to be remembered for two events: the Avatar of Vamana, and the Liberation of Maha-bali. The Vamana-avatar was for the specific purpose of rewarding Maha-bali, the Emperor, who is supposed to visit his realm every year today. He is Maha-bali, the Great Renouncer. Bali means sacrifice, something given up. Bali was, in one of his previous births, a Brahmin, known for his charity and devotion. In recognition of his charitable nature, the Lord enabled him to occupy the throne of the Lord of Gods for a few hours. When he came to know that he owed this elevation to the charities he had given away, Bali started giving away the unique articles and gems of the Heavenly Court, including the very throne on which he sat. When his term was over, the permanent occupant recovered the things given away by the erratic intruder; but Bali was assured that, when he was born again, Bhagavan Himself will receive from him, as charity, all the wealth that he would have accumulated, and all the territories he would be ruling over.

It was in fulfillment of this promise that God assumed human form, as a juvenile mendicant, and asked him for the gift of 'three foot-measures' of space, Bali granted them; Vamana, grew into the Cosmic Person, and with one foot, he measured and became master of the entire earth; with the second foot, he measured and appropriated the sky; and when he asked for the third foot of 'place', Bali Invited Him to place His foot on his head. Bhagavan pushed him down into the nether regions; but, it was really an act to rid him of ego, and raise him to the heights of heaven. It was a negative act, with a positive result.

Baba also wanted that every one should understand the real message of Onam, namely, the attitude of 'not I, but Thou; not mine; but, Thine'. If only one succeeds in doing this, as Bali, the grandson of Prahlada (another epic hero, who never wavered from his devotion and attitude of surrender to God), succeeded in doing, God would present Himself before him, and please him, by accepting all that he has to offer.

Bhagavan referred to the futile controversy, by people who have not delved into themselves and discovered their own potentialities, about the existence of God.

Most of such people deny only the personalised God; they believe in the formless timeless Universal Absolute, which is behind and beyond the Universe.

Many when they are asked to define God do give a string of attributes and thus confess that if those attributes are found anywhere, there must be Divinity there. Those who deny God have some picture of the thing or concept that they deny; so, even they, have to posit God before denying Him. God exists for those who believe He exists; why worry about those who argue He does not exist? Each must put faith in his own eyes, in his own ears, in his own heart. To see through another's eyes and to deny what one has actually seen through one's own eyes is the height of foolishness. No one has the right to say that what one has felt in his heart is wrong. Let each follow his own convictions said conclusions," Baba declared.

Bhagavan crowned the Discourse with mellifluous Bhajan songs for the Keralites to sing after him, line by line. This was the culmination of the ecstasy of the day; with one voice and one heart, every one responded to the rhythm and the adoration the lines conveyed.

Bhagavan then surprised every one, by another act of Grace. Two vessels of 'sweet laddus' were brought beside Him; He created Vibhuti and sprinkled it on the little heaps. And, He Himself started giving them away, a laddu each to every one inside the Hall; the head of the family gives to every member, on Onam Day, in Kerala; here, these fortunate thousands got the sweets served by Bhagavan Himself! The two little heaps provided enough quantity for the lavish hand of Baba which was active in giving the sacred, laddus to every one gathered there!

In the evening, Bhagavan conferred on the Keralites another, unique mark of His affection, in another surprise move. He called them to sit in lines in the vast open courtyard in front of the Nilayam. He moved along the lines, giving each of them another chance to touch His Feet, and He gave each of them, a few packets of the precious Vibhuti, which they will cherish as a curative gift.

Many young men who had assembled for the Onam from Kerala volunteered to share in the various tasks of 'clearing' 'concreting' and 'levelling' that were going on at the Nilayam; Baba took gracious note of this, and He called them to His Presence, specially, and gave them the coveted chance of touching His Feet and receiving Vibhuti from Him.

When the cars and the omnibuses filled with happy Keralites left the Nilayam for home, they were ringing with Bhajan songs, sung with a note of sadness at the separation. Many stayed on for a few days more, while quite a few stayed on for the Dasara Festival.

—Prof. G. BalaKrishna Pillai

Faith must go deep through the waters of doubt and strike roots in the soul of conviction, underneath. It must be like the lotus. The lotus will not allow even a drop of doubt to soil its leaf

or flower. Faith for most persons, however, is like the thin filament of oil over the waters of doubt; it does not purify or grow; it only tarnishes and pollutes.

—Baba

One, Alone

Is He alone? Is He One,
His own Father, Mother, Child?
Alone, is He Sublime?
Is Wisdom His surname?
Yes.
He is the One, Alone;
the Writer; the Actor,
The Director of this Cosmic Play. O, Lord!
There is no audience; that too is You.
No beginning, no end, in this eternal Now.
Every one a friend, come to redeem
The Love, the Life, the Joy.
Every one a leading Lady,
every one a leading man.
With no supporting actors.
We must each support the other,
in the leading roles
We play, or, will mortalise
the masks we wear.,
The mask that's made of clay.
So, while upon the sage of life,
Act only from the heart
Aspire to reach the highest goal;
By acting out the perfect role;
Win the Darshan of His Face;
Attain His Blessing and His Grace.

—Jessica de Vaughn

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Sylvan Delight

Rama is predominantly Love. He made every one of the forest-dwellers happy. He discoursed with them with sweet persuasion, and slaked the thirst for Love that was hurting them. Those

who came to him, whether ascetics or hunters received from him instruction that was appropriate to their aspirations; and elevated their occupations into a higher level.

Those who went to him and returned from his presence talked among themselves of his virtues and compassion; they reached their several homes extolling him and congratulating themselves.

The forest where they had resolved to reside, shone with a spew glory and thrilled with a new joy, right from the day they entered their cottage. It was charming to the eye and saturated with the coolness that delighted the mind. The ascetic communities that lived in the forest had all fear and anxiety removed from their lives; in their place, Ananda grew and flourished in their hearts. Even the hard-hearted hunter clans started observing the rules of morality; they became ornaments of the human race. The Vindhyan Range was sad that the Chitrakuta Mountain had won this good fortune; why? It was not the Vindhyan Range alone, all mountain ranges continued to be sad, that they could not attract Rama enough, to select *them* for his residence.

Lakshmana had the unique chance of looking upon the Lotus Feet of Sita and Rama and imbibing the affection they bestowed on Him; so, he forgot everything else, and immersed himself in the supremest spiritual ecstasy. Sat-chit-ananda. His mother, Sumitra Devi, or his wife, Urmila or his other kinsmen did not appear before his vision, even in dreams. So, austere was his refusal to remember them. Sita too never recalled, even for a fraction of a second, her relatives or parents, or the Cities of Mithila and Ayodhya. She was fixing her eyes and attention on the Lotus Feet of Sri Ramchandra. That was a veritable festival for her eyes; she watched the stream of sages and their consorts who came to Rama for instruction and guidance and who left happily homewards. Time flowed by her without her noticing the passage, or even noticing the coming of night and the departure of day. The chakora bird delights to the point of self-forgetfulness when the moon shines in the sky; so too, Sita reaped delight, fixing her eyes intently on the Face of Rama.

For Sita, the lovely little grass-thatched bamboo cottage was so attractive that she forgot the palace of Mithila where she grew up into maidenhood and the palace of Ayodhya where she spent years as the Princely Daughter-in-law. That cottage was to her more pleasing and palatial than all the mansions she knew.

Off and on, Rama used to relate stories of ancient heroes famed in Puranic lore and describe the grand picturesque achievements of persons who had mastered the mysteries of austerity. These were heard by Sita and Lakshmana, eagerly and with enthusiasm. In the midst of these narrations, Rama used to remember his parents, and remind them of their grief at being separated from them; on these occasions, Sita had her eyes filled with tears at the thought of her father-in-law and mother-in-law. Drops rolled down her cheeks when she pictured the plight of Queen Kausalya. Suddenly, she pulled herself up, with the thought that she was with Rama, the Lion among Men, that it was not proper to give in to sadness or anxiety in the forest where she was in his presence and that whatever happens must be welcomed as the Leela (cosmic play) of her Lord. Thus, Sita spent her days in undiluted happiness, in that cottage, with Rama and Lakshmana. They too were guarding her like lids for the eye against the slightest disturbance or noise, that might affect her equanimity, and raise fears in her mind. No worry affected them; no grief or pain or shade of sadness marred their happiness at Chitrakuta.

Guha and Sumantha

Many days passed. Meanwhile, the Ruler of the Nishadas who was returning to his kingdom after accompanying Rama for some distance into the forest, saw the Minister Sumantha, sitting in his chariot on the bank of the Ganga, the horses having been tied by their reins to a shady tree. Guha found Sumantha weeping and wailing, inconsolably, alone. Guha himself could not control any longer the anguish he had restrained so long. He cried out, Rama, and ran towards Sumantha. He embraced the old man and both the afflicted persons sobbed aloud in agony, unable to put their grief in words. They stood under the tree together, but, fell on the ground as if they were themselves trees felled by an axe. They lamented the fate of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, and poured abuse on Kaikeyi, the cause of all the calamities. The horses stopped grazing, and desisted from drinking water.

Tears rolled from their eyes; whenever they heard Sumantha and Guha utter the names of Sita or Rama or Lakshmana, they raised their heads aloft, and peered into the distance, anxious to catch a glimpse of those whom they adored and loved with as much zeal as the two men in the agony of separation. Sumantha noted the grief which was tormenting the animals and his anguish became even greater.

Some hours must have passed by during this heartrending wail. At last, Guha managed to recover a little; he mustered some courage, as needs some one must; he addressed Sumantha thus: "Ah Minister! You are profoundly intelligent, steadfast in morality and a person who has identified the Reality behind all this passing show. Fate plays strange tricks, and so, one has to learn to put up with them. Rise. Return to Ayodhya. Convey the news to Kausalya and Sumitra, who are yearning to see you and to listen to your account." He raised Sumantha forcibly from where he had fallen. He seated him in the chariot. He brought the horses and yoked them to the central pole.

Dialogue with Himself

Sumantha realised that what Guha was insisting on was the correct step. Moved by a spurt of blind courage, the old man signed to the horses to move forward; his body lost strength as a result of the anguish of separation from Rama. Therefore, however much he tried he could not drive the chariot as of old. He rolled down inside the chariot and rose in his seat many times in a few minutes. And the horses? They too would not move. They were set on turning back and straining their necks to see the road behind.

Sumantha cursed himself and his fate. "Fie on me," he said. "May this horrid life of mine be blasted. This body has to be burnt into ashes some day. Far better it were if, instead of dying through some disease or some worldly calamity, it died as a result of unbearable agony at separation from Rama. That would have made my life worthwhile. That would have made my fame ever-lasting; earning that fame is enough compensation for all the ills of life." "No, Sumantha," he said to himself. "Had you good luck, you would have stuck to Rama; when had luck haunts you, what else can you do, than come away and be alive? Of what use is it now to pine and blame yourself?" Sumantha chided himself most mercilessly, in this strain:

He started again the dialogue with himself. "With what face am I to present myself in Ayodhya? When the citizens ask me; where Rama is, what can I answer? When they ask me, 'how could you come away leaving Rama in the jungle', what can I tell them? Will I not be overwhelmed by shame and sorrow? O, my heart has become stone. Else, why has it not split into fragments at all that I have gone through?" Sumantha was disgusted at his own meanness; he wrung his hands in despair. He decided that he should not enter the City during the hours of sunlight, when people would be moving about. It would be less humiliating, he felt, to enter the City at night, after every one has gone to bed and started to sleep.

But, soon, his inner voice told him; "What? Can the people of Ayodhya ever sleep?, No, no. They cannot. It is just my foolishness and ignorance that make me imagine they do. They would be awake, awaiting news of the return of Rama or at least any news about him. I cannot escape the humiliation and the shame, whether I enter the City at night or during day. Well. For me, who did not deserve the grace of Rama, this ill-fate is the proper mead. It is best I go through it and bear the burden of that blame." Thus, Sumantha wended his way slowly and haltingly, spending time in framing questions to himself and presenting answers to them.

At last, he reached the bank of the Tamasa River. So, he decided to spend a few hours there, allowing the horses to graze a bit and himself preparing for the entry into the City after nightfall, when the people would not be about the streets, but, would be safe in bed. Finally, the chariot rolled into the gate of the City and began to move through the thoroughfares.

The Mute Minister

Sumantha took extra care to ensure silence from wheel and hoof; the chariot moved at the pace of a snail. But, who could silence the agony of the horses? They recognised the streets through which they had once taken Rama; they groaned aloud at their present fate, when their dear Rama was far, far away.

The populace of the City heard this pathetic neigh; their ears were set to hear just this piteous cry; they told each other that Sumantha had returned with an empty chariot; they ran into the streets and stood pathetically on both sides to witness the sad spectacle.

Sumantha bent his head low, when he saw the crowds. Seeing him in this pitiable posture, they guessed that Rama had not returned, and swooned on the spot, falling wherever they stood. Many wept aloud. The residents of the zenanas of the Queens, when they heard the sighs of the grief stricken steeds, sent maids in haste to inquire why; they hurried in groups towards Sumantha and showered questions on him. He sat dejected and crestfallen, like a mute person, unable to find words to tell them the answers. He sat unmoved like a broken pillar, as if he was stone deaf and could not hear what they were so earnestly asking him.

From his behaviour, the maids inferred that Rama had rejected all importunities to return. They lamented. "O Minister! Have you left Sita in the terror striking forest, and come back, yourself, alone?" and broke into a sudden sharp wail.

One maid was more courageous than the rest. She told Sumantha that Kausalya had ordered that he should come straight to the palace where she was.

The Emperor's Despair

There Sumantha found the emperor prostrate on the floor, exhausted without sleep or food, in disheveled clothes. Sumantha mastered the surge of sorrow within him, and uttering the words "Jai! Jai," which are traditionally to be pronounced first in the imperial presence, he stood by, shivering from head to foot. Recognising that voice, Dasaratha sat up quick, and plaintively asked him, "Samantha! Where is my Rama?"

Sumantha clasped the emperor in his arms; the emperor clung to him as a drowning man clings to a blade of grass. Seeing both of them weeping on account of immeasurable sorrow, Kausalya was submerged in grief; she could scarce breathe; she gasped and was pitifully suffocating with agony. The maids noticed this and, themselves loudly lamenting the misfortune that had overtaken all, they struggled to console the queen and restore her.

Meanwhile, Dasaratha pulled himself up a little; he made Samantha sit right in front of him; he asked him "Sumantha! Tell me about my Sita and Rama. Tell me all about them. How is Lakshmana? Alas, that tender Sita, my daughter-in-law must indeed be very much tired. Where are they now? Tell me." Noting that Sumantha was not eager to reply, he shook him by the shoulders and pleaded most piteously.

Samantha was too full of shame to look the emperor in the face; he bent his looks towards the floor, and with eyes streaming tears, he scarce could speak. Dasaratha continued his sobs. He said, "O Rama! My breath is still lingering on in this frame, even though a son like you has left me. The world has no sinner equal to me in heinousness. Sumantha! Where exactly are my Sita, Rama and Lakshmana, at present? Take me without delay to the place where they are. Do me this one good turn. Fulfill this one desire of mine. Without seeing them, I cannot live a second longer."

And, like a person infatuated and desperate, he shouted in pain, "Rama! O Rama! Let me see you at least once. Won't you give me the chance to see you?"

The task of softening the Blow

The maids standing outside the hall where he was lying could not sleep or take food, since they were sunk in sorrow at the emperor's plight. Samantha replied, "Imperial Monarch! Rajadhiraja! You are extremely wise; you are made in heroic mould; your abilities are profound. Your lineage is divine. You have always served ascetics and saints. You know that as night follows day and day follows night wealth and wants happiness and misery, nearness and separation come 'one after the other, with a certain inevitability. Only fools are carried off their feet in joy when happiness comes and are dispirited and down-hearted when misery comes. Learned men like you would not be affected by either; they would be full of equanimity, whatever might happen, isn't it? I have no credentials to advise you to face this situation courageously for you know the need for courage very much more. O benefactor of the world! Heed my prayers. Give up this grief. I shall describe the details of my journey with them now. Please listen calmly." At this, Kausalya struggled to raise herself up, with the help of the maids; she leant on them and made herself ready to listen to, what Samantha had to say.

Sumantha began, "O Master! The first day we journeyed up to the bank of the Tamasa. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana bathed in the river and after drinking water, they rested under a spreading tree. The next day, we reached the Ganga River. Darkness was invading from all sides. I stopped the chariot according to the command of Rama. All three bathed and rested on a stretch of sand. When dawn broke, Rama asked Lakshmana to bring him the juice of the banyan tree, and when he did so, Rama, applied it on his hair and matted it, so that he could wear it on the crown of his head. Meanwhile, the ruler of the Nishada tribe, a friend of Rama, brought a boat; Sita was made to get into the boat first; after her, Rama sat in it; later, honouring the order of Rama, Lakshmana entered the boat, carrying the bow and arrows. Ere he sat in the boat, Lakshmana came to me and asked me to convey prostrations and homage to the parents, and pray to them to bless us. He also directed me to request the parents to put up with things boldly and wisely."

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness
(To be continued)

So long as you cling to the narrow I, the prison Walls will close in on you. Cross out the I; you are free. How to crucify the I? Place it at the Feet of the Lord, and say, "You, not I" The I was the burden that was crushing you. That is now off your-shoulders.

The face of a stone idol is stone; its nose, ankle, wrist, hair, crown, smile are all stone. The cloth the idol wears is stone. So too, the entire Universe is Brahman, one substance, one energy, one mind, one matter. Sarvam Brahman, All is Brahman. There is nothing that is not Brahman.

—**Baba**

Sai Family News

The spirit of Seva Spreads:

The Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh has arranged a programme of Bhajans and Discourses on Spiritual Disciplines, at the Central Jail, Meerut. The Chairman writes, "All members of the Jail Staff and the detainees joined the Bhajan with real enthusiasm, and earnest sincerity. The Samiti distributed a thousand packets of Vibhuti and a few hundred small photographs of Bhagavan and also some booklets on the Teaching of Bhagavan. By Bhagavan's Grace, the entire function was very, much appreciated by all those present." The Chairman adds, "The Samiti got this idea after reading in the Sanathana Sarathi of a similar function having been organised in the Jail, at Dum Dum, by the Seva Samiti of Dum Dum"

Tanzania Letter:

The Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Study Circle, Arusha, Tanzania is now four years old; it has grown into a popular and useful spiritual centre. The President of the Sri Hindu Union, Arusha allowed the Samiti the use of the Hindu Union Hall for its activities in the early years. Later, the Study Circle secured a Hall, with a beautiful Mandap, named by the devotees as Sai Nilayam, right in the centre of the City. Bhajan Readings from Bhagavan's Discourses, and Satsang have become regular features of the study Circle's activities. Besides, the Circle holds Bhajans and Satsangs in other towns in Tanzania, notably, Moshi and Tunga, and also in the neighbouring State of

Kenya, at Nairobi, Nakuru, Karicho and Mombasa. Discourses by scholars and teachers are arranged on the various faiths and religions, so that tolerance and the feeling of brotherhood can flourish in the atmosphere of real understanding. A Book Containing 130 gems from the Discourses and Teachings of Bhagavan culled by a devotee was prepared and it is being widely distributed, in response to insistent demands from the people.

Presidency General Hospital:

The special Bhajan to mark the First Anniversary of the Weekly Bhajan being performed in the Cardiac (Heart Diseases) Section of the Presidency General (Karmani) Hospital, Calcutta, by the members of the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, was held on the first day of July 1973. The students who have attended the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality held at Brindavan, Whitefield, in the inspiring Presence anal under the Divine Guidance of Bhagavan in 1972 and 1973, have been taking great interest in this service activity. This section has a big portrait of Bhagavan, overlooking the beds of the ailing patients, which was formally installed on the first day of July 1972. The Samiti has established in this section a well-stocked Library of spiritual books by Bhagavan and books containing His Discourses; this is used by the in-patients. The Students and members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal read out from the Books, sitting by the beds of those unable to move. The patients confess they are considerably, relieved by listening to the vitalising and heartening episodes and lessons.

Blood Donation Festival:

Independence Day, at the office of the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, was celebrated as "The Blood Donation Festival." A large number of the members of the Seva Dal gathered in response to the Call and donated blood. A team of doctors from the Central Blood Bank was invited to the Office for the purpose. Every one was delighted at the chance to serve our fellowmen, in their most critical moments when an immediate transfusion of blood can save the precious life. The Doctors were happy at this "rare occasion" when large-scale donation by an earnest group of young persons was made possible in an atmosphere of Divine Love.

Janmashtami:

Janmashtami is generally celebrated by all units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation at Children's Day, especially since the Bal Vikas movement has become a regular feature of its activities. At Mettupalayam, on the foot-hills of the Blue Mountains children are feted, with sports and other competitions, and given sweets and fine new dresses. In a hundred other towns, the Samiti designs a varied programmes to celebrate the birth of Krishna. Some name the day, Sai Krishna Jayanti, and celebrate it with Bhajan processions and even fire-works. In Calcutta, this year, the Samiti celebrated the Day in an exemplary manner. They visited the Chittaranjan Children's Hospitals and distributed sweets, toys, bedcovers, pillow-covers, rugs and rubber-sheets, to the delighted youngsters. Children's Books and Game-boards pleased them a great deal.

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Research:

Under the auspices of the Mahila Vibhag (Women's Wing) of the All-India Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, over 300 Bal Vikas Centres with more than 15,000 children are being conducted all over India. The instruction covers meditation, story telling, tales from the lives of the saints and sages of the world, simple lessons on morality and the practice of mutual aid and

cooperation, reverence for elders and parents, social behaviour at home and in Society etc. 1700 pupils, boys and girls, of the age groups, 6-10 and 11-14, are receiving Bal Vikas instruction in 45 centres in the City of Bombay.

The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Research is entering upon a Programme of Research on the efficacy and validity of the methods and content of the Bal Vikas classes. And the ways and means of making them instruments in the appreciation and expansion of the basic traits, of the spiritual message of Bhagavan. Progress records of the children, their I.Q., Personality, adjustment, social behaviour, developmental traits, both prior to their joining the Classes and later, at different periods of the course will be maintained and studied. These will be compared with the records of a matching group of children of the same, age-groups. When equipment and other facilities are available, it is proposed to introduce a few Yogis and other variables and obtain interesting records of personality factors and psychological trends.

This programme fulfils the aspirations of the Kothari Commission, appointed by the Government of India, which depicted the absence of moral instruction for the young as a serious defect of our educational efforts.

The team of workers at the Institute of Research will be guided in this assignment by Dr. T. R. Kulkarni, M.A., Ph.D, of the Department of Psychology, University of Bombay. Dr. Kulkarni has already met the team of 45 teachers of the Bal Vikas Units, and explained to them the objectives of the scheme, and how the records have to be maintained by them to ensure both accuracy and usefulness for the Scheme.

Fazilka Samiti, Punjab:

The Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Fazilka, Punjab, arranged a Free the Camp, for the examination, and cure by operation and medical treatment of eye diseases, for hundreds of sufferers, with the hearty co-operation of a team of doctors led by Dr. Om Prakash, M.S., D.O.M.S. The Camp lasted for three days. Every morning during the three days, Bhajan was performed at the Camp for one hour in the morning and Arati was held every evening. The spiritual atmosphere promoted the health and happiness of the patients.

Letter from Bradford, Yorkshire, Great Britain:

There are about a 1000 families of Hindus in Bradford, and most of their homes have shrines where Sri Sathya Sai Baba is adored and revered. Many of them have come from East Africa, where they had Darshan of Bhagavan, and the good fortune of imbibing His message of Love and Peace. The Sathya Sai Bhajan Centers at Bradford hold Bhajans every Thursday; the attendance is over 100 and on Festival Occasions, more than 500 gather. A Library of English, Gujarati and Hindi Books about Baba is maintained. Bhagavan has blessed the Centre with signs of His Divine Presence, showering Vibhuti, Kumkum and Nectar from the pictures that are worshipped. On Mahasivaratri Night, Ganga flowed from the Earthen Linga that was consecrated for the occasion. Similar manifestations of Grace that are witnessed in neighbouring Cities are creating tremendous interest in the teachings of Bhagavan, as well as in Bhajan, Dhyana and Namasmara activities. Bradford Bhaktas visit these Cities for Bhajan in motor coaches, to and groups of Bhaktas from other cities move into Bradford in such Coaches to join in the Group Bhajans at the Centre. Bhajan Centres have been organised at Leicester, Coventry, Nuneaton,

Bolton and Woverhampton. The need for a Weekly Bulletin in Gujarati to keep the units informed of what is being done elsewhere and what Bhagavan is directing the Bhaktas to do is very keenly felt.

Jakarta, Indonesia:

It is now more than six years since a Bhajan Centre was started at Jakarta. The Bhajan Sessions which are hold every Thursday attract more than 150 eager participants. Many persons feel the warmth of Bhagavan's Love and the curative effect of His Grace, by just seeing His Picture or listening to the Bhajans. Children love to sing the Bhajans and seldom miss any chance to join. Films of the festivals at Prasanthi Nilayam, wherein Bhagavan's glory and majesty are depicted, are very popular and attract huge gatherings. The Centre has a Library which is used very liberally. One significant feature of the centre is that Nagarsankirtan is conducted with great enthusiasm every Sunday morning. Every one feels Baba's Presence while partaking in these spiritual activities. Festivals like Dasara, Sivaratri, Gurupoornima and Bhagavan's Birthday are celebrated by the devotees and genuine Ananda derived therefrom.

It is said to the scriptures that Kailasa can be reached by an aspirant, if he rides a fleet horse (!) straight North for three hundred days, without a moment's intermission. The real meaning of this statement, what this promise really ask us to do, is: "A Sadhaka can attain the Highest Spiritual Consciousness, if he rides his Manas, which is the fleetest of horses, keeping it strictly under control with the reins of Japa and the bit of Dhyana, for 300 days, without break, without allowing the mind to run where it listeth this guarantee is authentic. The stage attained by the Sadhaka at the end of this course is called in Yogic Vocabulary; Kailasa."

—Baba

Among all the workshops in the World, the body of man is the most wonderful! It is the tabernacle of the Lord, and it is operated subtly by His Divine Will. As a result, impulses are sublimated into spiritual urges, impurities are weeded out, beneficent desires are shaped and sharpened good thoughts are multiplied and poured out into society, evil imaginings are kept apart for being defused. Give the Lord a free hand to run the workshop—and you will be able to derive the highest and the supremest profit.

—Baba

Sai Mata

Years ago, when some one suggested the title; "Sathya Sai Mata", for a picture in which He is seen fondling a little child, Baba said. "Name it Sathya Mata; for this is the Real (Sathya) Mother, the rest are all Mithya (un-real) mothers!"

During the Dasara Festival, Baba reveals Himself every moment as the Mother. We pray to Him then, "O Sathya Mata! As Durga, keep us safe; as Saraswati, teach us how to teach; as Lakshmi, feed us with sustaining food, for body mind and spirit."

It is hard to adore Him as Father; though millions adopt that attitude of devotion, saying, "Our Father who art in Heaven." He isn't stern and strict upon the erring and the wayward. Just consider this: Baba knows every act, every thought, and every word of ours. Yet, like the Mother who bestows her love more on the wicked and the vicious child than on the virtuous and the upright, Baba comes towards us, calls us to Him and pours His Grace on us, in order to correct us and lead us into the virtuous and the upright path. He is the Mother; all mothers are only His images.

—*Tharaka*

Suffering and Salvation

One has to go through suffering, and mental torture; one has to reach the stage when there seems to be no way out of the agony or anguish to which one is condemned, in order to realise what it means when a ray of hope sheds its light from somewhere. Only then can one understand what Sai Baba means to those who are in physical or mental pain. With what hopes they come to Him! Like persons engulfed in the waves of the rolling waves; like a person about to be drowned, who has no hope of being saved; they suddenly see a helping hand, a haven of refuge. Here is the Lord Himself to help them out! What relief they draw from His assurances, His soothing strengthening words, His wonder-working touch, is something to be seen to be believed.

Suffering is rampant all around, due to the ignorance of man; he does not know the potentiality of his spirit and the possibilities of contact with the source of all Power, knowledge and Love. Wrong values are pursued at all tithes with the inevitable consequences of distress and dis-ease. But, what a wonderful land is this Bharat! We have here some One, always to help relieve the suffering and to cure the ignorance.

When one is in pain, whether physical or mental, he cannot do any Sadhana, or repeat the Name of God or sit in meditation. It is only when one is in normal health when the body does not draw attention on to itself that any one can practise the spiritual disciplines needed to advance towards self-realisation. Naturally these who are not in normal health, ask for this first requisite and receive the boon. Later, they are attached to Him by the Love He evokes and sustains and they listen with attention and faith to the sweet and simple discourses and conversations of Baba.

And, what does Baba say? His aim is to re-orient the present society in India in the first instance to the traditional well-tested valid culture of India. This culture is laid down in the Vedas and the Epics and elaborated in the Puranas. Baba lays emphasis on the essentials only of the Sanathana Dharma, but, He is an uncompromising teacher so far as these essentials are concerned. He says they have to be cherished for the benefit of all mankind, and that His Advent is for the liberation of all mankind from the bondage to low, sensual desire which leads 'birth and death'. Baba quotes and interprets the lives of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna and even reveals new facets of their Personalities in a manner that makes us believe in the continuity of the Avatars.

The modern trend is to live on the surface, from day to day, which is quite contrary to the real Indian way of life. Man has to revere the past and rebuild the present and re-shape the future, consciously, according to eternal values, not, the whims and fancies of the moment. Baba teaches Love, unselfish Love, Love that is spontaneous, Love that is generous and which does not calculate or judge, Love that flows in a pure stream towards all. It is the Love of the saint who knows that every-one is a temple, in which the God whom he worships is installed.

Man needs this lesson now very much, all over the world. Fear and suspicion stalk the land and poison the relationship of man with brother, man. National boundaries, language barriers, colour differences, ideological differences, economic disparities—all are breeding grounds for hatred and cruelty. Every one is on the defensive against every other person. Many preach and practise offensiveness as the best form of defence; bitterness and not brotherhood is found everywhere.

Baba instills in us the conviction that all are kin, all are but repositories of the same divine principle, and so, when one hates another or injures another, he is only hating and injuring himself. He advises us to speak soft and sweet; to divest ourselves of anger, envy and greed; to develop the attitude of detachment towards worldly riches and fame, and to get rid of involvement. He says that expansion is Love, and that contraction is Death. Take in all into the fold of love, understand, sympathise, serve, and realise the unity, this is His teaching.

—Amar K. Varma

The Boon

I am leaving the Presence of Baba (physically, of course), after two years. I thought to myself this morning, what problems has Baba solved for me. The mind went blank. Baba has solved all of mine, long long ago. He works at the speed of lightning, in dissolving new ones. Even the recurring desire for the coveted 'interview' is inwardly satisfied. On the Darshan Line, He spoke to a fellow-pilgrim from the States about to return home, "Be great! Be great! You are great, in reality. Interview? Interview is small!"

Perhaps, He meant that the desire for meeting Him and talking to Him and being talked to by Him is a sign of one's being separate from the Vastness that He is. He has been teaching us, isn't He, that he is in us, that He is Us?

Well. When you consider it, what a gift and blessing is it, to hear about Bhagavan and to know of Him! Often I think of how the great King and Queen, Munu and Satarupa, renounced their kingdom for Bhagavan. Tulsidas tells us how they lived on vegetables; fruits and roots and meditated, on Brahma, who is Truth, Bliss and Consciousness combined. Again, they did penance for Sri Hari giving up roots and fruits and living on water alone. Their, hearts ever clamoured, "Let us see with our eyes that supreme Lord who is without, attributes, without parts, without beginning or end, who is contemplated upon by the exponents of the highest Reality, whom the Vedas describe only in negative terms such as 'not this', 'not this' who is Bliss itself, unconditioned, without comparison, from a particle of whose being emanated Siva, Vishnu and Brahma.

Even such a Lord is moved by the will of the devotee; He assumed Form after many thousand years of austerity and present appeared before the two ascetics.

What a boon for us—this daily Darshan, this Smile of Recognition, this gesture of Grace. Truly we are blessed. And, watch how He works so hard, for the uplift of the fallen, from daybreak to daybreak; He never tires, never holds back. He is the embodiment of Love, Grace and Compassion.

—*Jerry Bass*

The Fertilising Stream of Seva

The Task

Bhagavan has directed members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal to take up intensive Seva programmes in the villages, so that the unhealthy and unsocial atmosphere now prevalent there could be cured by the application, of Love and peace and joy could be restored. The Bombay Unit of the, Seva Dal appointed a Sub-Committee for preparing a draft of a plan of, work that could be implemented, within the resources of the Seva Dal. The suggestion that each unit of Seva Dal could ADOPT a village and concentrate all its Seva activities on the rural folk there gained support.

The Dal can carry on Seva in the same village for at least a few years, continuously until the villagers become self-reliant and develop the confidence to carry on the works undertaken by the Dal. Both the server and the served will benefit by such a continuous and consistent programme, carried out by an enthusiastic band of young men and women. Besides Seva Dal members, it was proposed to associate in this work some students from College as well as the students who return after the Summer Course at Brindavan, during the Summer Holidays every year.

The Sub-Committee laid down certain fields of activity and also the methods of operating the Seva Functions; they are detailed below, so that members of the Samitis and Seva Dals could peruse them. It will give readers an idea of the usefulness of the Seva Dal Organisation now fast spreading in the various States of India.

Contacts

The advice, guidance and co-operation of the surpanch of the selected village, as well as of the other village officials have to be sought and welcomed; there are various Officers entrusted with Village Improvement, belonging to many Development departments of Government; their help too can be sought. By means of sincerity, open-heartedness, reverence and humility, as well as by means of earnestness and spirit of service, members-can win their co-operation and friendship. The willing and enthusiastic co-operation of the village school will be invaluable assets.

Survey

Data regarding, the inhabitants of the village, the livestock they have, and of the land, the crops, the marketing facilities for sale of the things grown and purchase of in puts and

necessities—these have to be collected. Sanitary and drainage systems have to be studied. Sources of drinking water have to be known and examined. Hospitals, dispensaries and health centres in the village and vicinity have to be noted. Also, opportunities for the gaining of literacy by the adults and for joining schools for boys and girls.

Sanitation and Hygiene

First, a Medical check-up Camp must be organised, to find out the diseases that affect the villagers and act as handicaps in the effective utilisation of their skills. Also, study the health of the cattle. While carrying out the medical check-up of the inhabitants, place due emphasis on dental examination and on X-ray screening. The medical checkup has to be followed up, with treatment either locally or in better-equipped hospitals in near by towns. Clean the wells, and other sources of water. Teach chlorination and other methods of removing pollution to the villagers. Also encourage the production of compost manure. Teach the rudiments of First Aid to a few enthusiastic young villagers. Introduce out-door games, like Kabaddi, volleyball and football.

Education

A room where toys are collected and kept for children to play will be useful. Also, a library of books and illustrated journals. Start adult education classes. Show health and other educational films. College students in the Seva Group can give tuition to the students of the local school, in subjects in which they need extra attention. Be in touch with teachers and parents and watch out for chances for this type of service. Bal Vikas classes can be started by the lady member. Films with moral and spiritual content can be exhibited.

Spiritual

Nagarsankirtan can be started, once a week. Local Bhajan groups can be vitalised and encouraged. The local Mandir or temple or centre for spiritual gatherings can be used and made more worth while; it has to, be kept extra clean and the atmosphere retained as calm and holy. Nagarsankirtan can be held on holy days. Bhajans at the village temple can be organised every evening or once a week, with the help of village youth. Bhajan songs can be taught. Talks on Sadhana, Saints and Sages can be arranged in the temple premises. Punyatithis and Jayantis can be celebrated, in a simple but appealing manner. Dramas on the lives of the saints and on incidents from the epics can be acted by the children of the villagers. The Bal Vikas children from nearby towns can be invited to put up plays, in order to stimulate interest in the parents and children in such activities. Story telling is a good medium to inculcate, spiritual ideals in juvenile hearts. Boards on which short sayings of Bhagavan are painted can be hung in schools and other desirable places. Village artists can be entrusted with the painting and other similar items of work in connection with village uplift. They must have a constant feeling of participation, and involvement.

Socio-Economic

The importance of thrift has to be impressed by precept and example; saving and the banking habit have to be encouraged, so that villagers can have prosperity for themselves and help others who are in need. Labour intensive cottage industries can be developed, to give supplemental income and occupation. Women members visiting the village can teach new dishes and add variety and taste as well as better nutrition to the villagers. Smokeless choola (ovens) will

become popular in the villages and will be welcomed when they are demonstrated and promoted. More hygienic lavatories and bath-rooms can be popularised. Gas plants can also be established.

Assistance can be provided in times of epidemics among men or cattle or of pests for the crops. Also in times of floods, drought or fire, prompt help at such critical times will be highly appreciated by the rural folk.

Conclusion

Slow and sure win success, here as everywhere else. Avoidance of newspaper publicity and pompous display will ensure willing co-operation. The villager must be able to regard us as co-workers and collaborators, there should be no cynicism, sneers or derision. No one should put on an air of superiority, or an attitude of bossism. As Bhagavan tells us, when we serve another, we are serving our own best interests. Seva is to be done, in order to discover the unity of all life, and in order to destroy the ego, which pits us against others. All are manifestation of the ONE and so, no one can be happy, when any one is in misery. No one can be miserable, when the other one is happy. Envy, greed, ambition, hatred, egotism—these have no place in the field of Seva, according to Bhagavan. The knowledge that Seva is the Sadhana that is most pleasing to Bhagavan must inspire all members of the Sai Family. He knows, He sees, He urges, He delights, He blesses. All are but instruments of His Will.

*I am the Repairer of Broken Hearts, damaged Minds,
diseased Feelings, twisted Fancies. I am
the Smith who welds, mends,
and moulds.*

—Baba

The Temples we Live in

Every one of us is a part and parcel of the Almighty. In a sense, every one of us is God. But, in reality, do we recognise it? We recognise ourselves as individuals in physical bodies! You call me Nana; but, I know that it is just a name for this body; there is in me something indestructible and permanent. Mere knowledge is not enough; I have to experience the unity with the Almighty, and live the experience in practice. Water whether in a pitcher, a cistern or a river is the same, in characteristics and components. But, if the pitcher has a mind, and if it considers itself as a pitcher, it can never experience the unity with the water in the cistern and the river: Baba operates on this universal unseen Force underlying and unifying all creation, the force of the Almighty. He brings home to every one that there are higher laws and rules that govern the Universe, and that these could be operated by individuals who have become, one with the Almighty.

Baba confers the blessings of cure and consolation, illumination and courage on innumerable individuals every day, because He has Infinite Love and Infinite Compassion. He confers benediction on those who approach Him, and come in contact with Him; but, He has equal love and compassion for all mankind, and for all living beings.

Baba has come, not merely for conferring a few benefits on some individuals, however large in number, but, He has come to establish the, spiritual law of living, called Dharma. Some of us may be Hindus, others Christians or Muslims or Jews—but, all are intertwined with the spiritual laws of Universal Dharma. So, Baba is set upon the revitalisation of this law, through you and me, irrespective of the creeds we have chosen as our favourites or which has come to us from our parents. So, mere Puja or Archana (worship or adoration) will not suffice at all. The objective can be achieved only when every individual is an example of the validity and practicability of Dharma. The boons that He confers are only inducements and inspirations for us to follow His, teachings with steadfast faith and sincere loyalty.

Baba gives every one according to his capacity. He observes the inner life, his causal body as well as his Maha-Karna deha, the supra-causal body. We have therefore to, introspect every moment, how far we are sticking to spiritual ideals. Have we made any progress, and if so, how far? One cannot lie to oneself.

Let us look inside and see how far we have discarded greed, falsehood, desire, etc. If everyone behaves according to Dharma and steadies himself by means of Dharma, peace and love will reign over the world. Are we to be His devotees merely to secure worldly advantages, prosperity and promotions? These are all trinkets transitory, and poisonous. No; He will be most pleased only when we take up in our own lives the cleansing and the purification that He has come among us to teach.

Baba is re-vitalising, as you know, the great temples and places of worship, all over the land, for, these have inspired large masses of people for generations to lead a life of moral earnestness. We have to revitalise the temples which we are carrying about with us—our own 'bodies' where He is installed, whether we are aware of Him or not.

—*Shri Nana Saheb; Ratnagiri*

The Vedapurusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna

The Vedapurusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna, being celebrated every Dasara at Prasanthi Nilayam, is a rite that promotes the welfare and prosperity of the whole of mankind. But, it is difficult to convince doubters and disbelievers that this is the truth. Many ask that such Vedic ceremonies can be performed in orthodox style, with all the mantras uttered in correct style, only in India; so, their efficacy if any, is confined to this land only. And, how can this be beneficial in regions where people have no faith in such rituals and hymns?

Such doubters restrict the meaning of the word, Yajna. Yajna means, 'any activity dedicated to the glory of God', not merely, this activity prescribed, in the ancient scriptures. Activity dedicated to the glory of God is being done, and can be done in all climes, in all realms by all races. The 'dedication' ensures success. Without it, there will inevitably arise anxiety, fear and faction. Every activity in the world is God directed, God-ward moving, whether you know or do not know. Only one has to be aware of it and share in the thrill of that knowledge. If God is not, the inspirer and motivator, how can the Universe be moving in harmony, wheeling so smoothly? Else, there will be chaos, anarchy and an inferno of gamble.

Do not think that the Yajna is only this Ceremony, performed in this enclosure, marked out as specially holy, attended by readings and recitals from sacred texts and the chanting of Vedic hymns, and nothing other than this. No. Yajna is a continuous process; every one who lives in the constant presence of God, and does all acts as dedicated to God is engaged in Yajna.

Three processes go together in Spiritual Discipline, as laid down by the sages: Yajna, Dana and Tapas—Renunciation, Charity and Self-control. They cannot be partitioned and particularised thus. Charity and Self-control are integral parts of Yajna. That is why Yajna is translated as Sacrifice, for, the process of Charity or Dana is essential in Yajna. Also, Tapas: that is to say, strict regulation of emotions and thought-processes, to ensure peace and faith.

There are various Yajnas prescribed by the Vedas. This is the Vedapurusha Yajna, a sacrificial ceremony dedicated to the Purusha extolled in the Vedas, the Purusha; mentioned in the Purusha Sukta as constituting the Universe and subsuming it as the limbs of His Cosmic Body.

Every house-holder has the duty of performing for his, own welfare and the welfare of the society in which he lives; like Pitr-yajna (Yajna by which the forefathers are worshipped), Rishi-yajna (Yajna by which the sages are honoured, that is to say; by the study and practice of their teachings), Bhutha-yajna (Yajna by which the animals and lower beings are revered, that is to say, by provision of shelters, fodder etc).

The Vedapurusha is the Purushotama, the supremest Purusha, for by His Will he manifested Himself as the Cosmos and its components, out of Himself. There is nothing that is not He; so, how can you be different? In these matters, faith comes first; it has to. Believe that you are Divine; conduct yourselves in accordance with that sovereign status; then, you will be blessed with the Anubhuti, the experience, the Vision, the Realisation, the Awareness, the Bliss. And, as a result; you are merged in that everlasting Ananda.

Remember, you cannot have the Anubhava and the Ananda, first. And, you cannot postpone faith, until you get them. You cannot bargain: "Give me the Ananda and then, I shall place faith!" See the Purushotama in all Purushas. Purusha means, he who lives in the Pura, or port, city, or town. Each one of us is the resident and the sole resident of a distinct house of God. But, the Purushotama, the Supreme Resident in all the cities is God. You can recognise this. Purushotama, if you educate yourselves properly. Take this Yajna, performed here. In this One Fire, offerings are made concurrently with the recitation of the names of God, enclosed in elaborate hymns. More than 3560 offerings are made each day for seven days. Each name describes God as having a special form. But, this one Fire consumes all the offerings; and

through its intermission, every one of the offerings reach the One God, the One that really IS. Or, consider this: You perform worship with 1008 Names, a rite called Sahasranam-archana. You keep an idol or picture before you and offer one flower at a time at the Feet of that symbol of God, repeating the names, one at a time. The one symbol of the One God accepts all the 1008, since God is only One, though He can be reached by a thousand routes.

Though you are acknowledging only One in all these rites, proclaiming the One Advaitic Divine, your senses and your intellect and your mind with its pack of desires, insist on running after the Many! This is the Maya that casts its enchantment on weak and ignorant men. It urges man towards the wild prolific greeds of the many faced senses.

To realise the One, the Universal Absolute, which personalises itself into God and Creation, there is no discipline more valuable and more effective than SEVA. All the 1008 Names of the Sahasranam-archana reach the One. All the 1000 names of a thousand-faced society connote only the One God that plays in those 1000 roles! The One appears as if it is enshrined in the 1000 bodies. This is the truth you have to realise and cherish as the most precious gift of life.

You have observed that the Vedic Pundits are pouring ghee into the Fire, every time the recitation of a hymn is over. Every day, when you take food, you are offering eatables to the Fire that God has lit in you: You have, to eat, in a prayerful mood, in profound gratitude. The Gita says that the fire which cooked the meal is God, the meal is God, the eater is God, the purpose of eating is to carry on the work entrusted by God or pleasing to God, and that the fruit of that work is progress towards God.

You must perform another Yajna too, every day. Pour the egoistic desires and emotions, passions, impulses and acts into the flames of dedication and devotion. In fact, that is the real Yajna, of which these are reflections and prompters, guides and proto-types. This Yajna is only the concrete symbolic representation of the abstract underlying Truth. Just as a child is taught to pronounce the words, head, net, wave, garland by making it associate the sounds and the letter-forms with pictures of the objects so named, through this kshara symbol (Temporary) the Akshara Tattwa (The eternal Principle) is brought before the consciousness.

This Puja, this Yajna, this Homa, are arranged here every Dasara, in order to help you to learn that other, everlasting, abstract Yajna, which every one of you has to do, to save yourselves from fear, grief and anxiety.

You must have noticed that the Pundits close each day's Yajna with a prayer that calls for World Peace, Peace for all mankind, Peace and happiness, for there can be no Peace without happiness, no happiness without peace. Lokassamasthaa Sukhino Bhavanthu, they pray. May all the worlds have happiness, and peace. Peace of mind cannot be gained by wealth or fame or scholarship or skill. For that, you have to cleanse the mind, purify the heart, and yearn for service of the divine forms that move around you. Do every deed as an act of worship; make every thought a longing for him; change every word that comes from your tongue into a hymn in His praise.

This is the lesson that you have to learn from Prasanthi Nilayam, every Dasara, during the week the Yajna is celebrated.

Bhagavan's Discourse: Dasara: 1972

For the bird in mid-ocean flying over the deep dark blue waters, the only resting place is the mast of a ship that sails across it, from one shore to another. In the same way, the Lord is the only refuge for man, who is swept by storms over a restless sea of troubles.

—Baba

Thursday Bhajans

Some people say that they can't be alone, for a minute, an hour or a day, and if they are, they are bored with it. If they had a sense of history, they would realise that many people are happy, in their aloneness, they are then having at-one-ment!

If they are at peace with themselves, and self-sufficient, and have come to know that the Lord is with them, then, it is good they are missing their contemporaries; they have a mission in life, they will discover in the silence—the mission to help some one before their life is ended. In order to reach the level of joy and peace, they must dig deeper through all the strata of adversity, and past the shallows of sand; and the last trickles of water, running between the sand and rocks to get at the Gold of Self, lying untapped therein.

For a consecrated and dedicate life we must meditate, read or, be a hermit, who sits before candles flickering in the winds of Time, or before waterfalls hissing beside a green river-bank. Lights and blue flames flicker above the flotsam and jetsam of twigs and dead leaves, and bones whitening in the sun lie in the river-bed. Meditate on, these and know Thyself. And, listen to what I found out, while doing so: "If Thou thinkest that It can be seen by me, then, O, Lord, O Prince of Mystic power, reveal Thy Self to me!" (Gita. Chapter XI)

So, the days passed. I wished to have the Eye that Arjuna was blessed with, and see my Lord. I really longed for the sight of my Lord, in all His Glory, day after day, night after night. For, "He it is the Inner-most One, who wakens my being, with His deep, hidden, touch; He it is who weaves His Web of Maya, in evanescent hues of silver and gold." Finally, He lets, peep through the folds of His silken Gown and gives me a vision of His Feet, and when I touched them I forgot myself.

Days come and go; and ages pass; and, it is ever He who moves by heart in longing, in many a guise, in many a rapture of joy and sorrow. He stands in the shadow silent; I wait and weep, and wear out my heart in longing for Thee: These words of Tagore echo within me.

September 8-1973. I saw the movie of Sai Baba, and watched the stupendous act of bringing the Lingams from within Himself. I suffered with Him (?) in this act. Ah! This is the very Lord that comes to me in my dreams. Yes, the very Form. I must go to Him; for, He has come to me!

I asked Indra Devi, when she was leaving for India, so that I also can go with her. I got a little picture of Him, from her and I prepared myself an enlarged painting of that portrait. Baba blessed me, with sacred ashes on the plate below the picture I painted, showering from that portrait of His.

Here, it is 1973. Although He still comes to me in dreams and leaves the holy ashes near me or on the picture, I haven't still gone to where He is. But, as He says, He is in my heart so, I am with Him, ever since that day, long back in 1969.

That was the spring of the year I dedicated myself to the One who came to me. I sang the Bhajans, the night of the movie in September 1969. Now, I sing them every Thursday night. People say to me why is it necessary; I say that it is because I am worshipping the Lotus Feet of my Sweet Lord.

—*Genevieve Savoroff, Santa Barbara*

Baba—Bhagavan

I

I have not met any one who had seen Sai Baba of Shirdi. But I heard of miraculous cares effected through devotion to his Samadhi at Shirdi. I did not pay much heed to the stories. They were not so-called faith cares, because most of the beneficiaries were not believers to start with. The pattern was always the same. Some severe complaint in which usual medical aid failed; advice from a friend or more often a stranger or sometimes in a dream, to pray to Baba; a sceptical and tentative trial followed by astounding results; and then lifelong devotion to Baba and a constant sense of his protecting presence. I knew at least three remarkable instances in my own circle of friends and I saw no reason whatever to doubt their authenticity. All three were men in high position. One case was that of sudden loss of speech, another of a highly successful career interrupted in the prime of life by supervening depression and melancholia. In both cases the cure was sudden as well as permanent. The third was slightly different: My friend had recourse to Baba for aid in the petty troubles and difficulties which beset life and invariably received help and courage. All these accounts struck me as extraordinary, but I did not apply my mind to them any further.

There the matter rested until my first encounter with Sri Sathya Sai Baba exactly year ago. I have described this most extraordinary incident in detail in SANATHANA SARATHI of August-September 1972. This was followed by a second encounter about six months later when a disability in writing which I had been suffering from for 35 years was suddenly cured as a result of Bhagavan's passing touch. I had never mentioned it to him. This happening finds a place in the issue of SANATHANA SARATHI for June 1973, under the caption "*Hand in Hand.*" These experiences revived my dormant interest and curiosity in the life and doings of Sai Baba of Shirdi. In what follows I refer to Sai Baba of Shirdi as *Baba*, and our own Sathya Sai Baba as *Bhagavan*. Had not Bhagavan himself declared that he was an incarnation of Baba who had announced before his passing away in 1918 that he would be born again in eight years? Bhagavan's date of birth, as you all know, is 23rd November 1916.

II

As a result of this new interest, I went to Shirdi in last January. Shirdi is a small village six miles from Kopergaon Station on the Central Railway; and about 50 m. by road from Nasik, which was the route I took. Baba came there as a young man and stayed for about sixty years, rendering miraculous help to devotees, both physically and spiritually. His reputation and following increased as the years passed. When he passed away, a gorgeous *Samadhi* was built for him at Shirdi. It is now a great centre of pilgrimage for old and new devotees. His live presence is felt there as innumerable devotees have testified, but his presence and influence are not confined to that place.

As I was approaching Shirdi, the first distant glimpse of the spire of the *Samadhi* crowned by a golden finial moved me greatly. But in the village itself the jostling crowds, the noise of bazaars and hawkers and what not detracted somewhat from the first taste of sanctity. The institution is under the management of an Official Receiver, and all Sevas (Services) have to be arranged by payment across a counter and obtaining tickets. This also acted unfavourably on my mind. Not

withstanding these handicaps, my net impression was that here was an extraordinary spiritual atmosphere which one could breathe, if only one possessed the proper background (SAMSKARA). For me it was not distinguishable from what I have felt in Bhagavan's proximity, and even in the recollection of Bhagavan during his absence. But all the same I was staving for some sign to convince me of the identity of Baba and Bhagavan. Such a sign was vouchsafed to me by the time I reached Nasik that evening. I am not detailing it here as, in itself, it was trifling, but coming on the top of a mass of similar experiences, the result was cumulative. It was, as it were, 'the last straw that broke the back of the camel' of doubt. That clinched the matter, and I felt that I had done well to visit Shirdi even before I saw Puttaparthi.

III

Little authentic information is available about Baba's early days. He is believed to have been born of Brahmin parents in Patri village in old Hyderabad State. While yet a child, he was taken away by a Muslim Fakir. After the death of the Fakir he came under the care of Gopal Rao, Zamindar of Selu, who was a second Guru to him. But when questioned in later life, Baba, however, used to name his Guru as Venkusa. At the time of his death, Gopal Rao pointed his finger as a sign to young Baba to go West; and Baba did go West until he stopped at Shirdi where for a time he lived under a Neem tree which is still there. In later years, when they dug under the tree at Baba's behest the remains of an ancient tomb came in sight, and Baba said it was the *Samadhi* of his Guru in a former life. The spot is now marked by a little shrine. Perhaps this was the decisive factor in Baba's choice of Shirdi for settling down.

About 100 years ago Baba, then a lad of 16 came and stayed at Shirdi unnoticed except by a few. He was there for three years leading a solitary life, roaming in jungles and eating what some old women offered or not at all. Then he left Shirdi for about a year and returned with a marriage party in a bullock cart. The cart was parked in a field belonging to one Mhalsapati. It is said that when Baba was alighting from, the cart Mhalsapati greeted him with the words "Welcome, O Sai!" and the name Sai stuck to him. Sai is said to be a Persian Word for 'Saint'; but it may also be a modification of the Indian word 'Swami' meaning Lord or Master. Baba left the place after a time and returned four years later to settle down there permanently.

Another story current about Baba's first advent at Shirdi is also linked with the name of, Mhalsapati, but differently. Mhalsapati was the priest at a local temple. Baba wanted to take up his residence in the precincts of the temple; but Mhalsapati who took him for a Muslim Fakir would not allow him inside a Hindu temple. He directed him to a small Mosque not far off; and it was there that Baba lived for the rest of his life. Later on, Mhalsapati became one of the foremost devotees of Baba.

This mosque now known as DWARAKA MAYI has a unique place in the Baba story. When Baba occupied the abandoned mosque it was in a most dilapidated condition. Yet whenever the topic of its renovation was mooted, he would not listen. When finally the repairs could no longer be put off, the work had to be carried out surreptitiously on alternate nights when Baba slept in the village *Chavadi*. Today the sanctity which invested the place is smothered in the magnificence of marble, and it demands some effort to recapture it; but it is still there. So is the rude block of granite on which Baba loved to sit in the pose familiar from photographs and statuettes. So is the

ever-burning *Dhuni* which Baba would leisurely, feed with faggots. This *Dhuni* is still alive, figuratively as well as literally, supplying *Udi* (VIBHUTI) the sacred ashes so cherished by devotees. There is also a life-size oil painting of Baba done by Mr. Jayakar of Bombay. He is not recognized as an artist of note, but this portrait, whatever its academic rank, is certainly a masterpiece. In it, whatever flaws critics might point out, the subject has come alive. It is said that when the artist first brought the portrait, Baba hugged it in joy and, said, "This will live after me!"

This mosque was dubbed the Brahmin Mosque. And well it might be; for right at the front stood a *Brindavan* containing the holy Tulsi plant (*Ocymum Sanctum*) which visitors, usually circumambulate before entering. Baba sat in the mosque all the time, except when he went out to beg his food, a practice which was kept up, even in the days affluence, to the very end. Here Baba would sit grinding corn or he would listen to the woes and difficulties of the people who flocked to him. His solicitude for them exceeded that of a doting mother and they invariably got succour. But occasionally Baba would tease or, scold his devotees; and now and then indulge in fits of temper and even drive away persons, throw stones at them, if he thought they were undesirables. Baba often demanded money (*Dakshina*) from devotees—generally small specified amounts. But it was found in every case that the act had a symbolic significance and was used to drive home some point of teaching. Whatever money came into Baba's hands, he would give away in largesse.

Baba who incarnated in his person the ideal of Divine Motherhood would attribute It all to DWARAKA MAYI. He used to say: "This is not just a MOSQUE It is. Dwaraka (*Mercy*). Those who seek refuge here will never be harmed." As soon as one climbs the steps of this mosque, sufferings due to KARMA are at an end and joy begins." "When one enters the DWARAKA MAYI, his goal is achieved."

In his own person Baba incarnated the conception of Divine Motherhood, like Bhagavan himself. It is because of this ideal that Baba called the MASJID by the name of DWARAKA MAYI. "Highly merciful is this DWARAKA MAYI," he would say. "She is the mother of those who place their entire faith in her."

In the words of Smt. Mani Sahukar "Perhaps it is the light of the Spirit that glimmers in Its precincts waiting for its hour to reveal itself fully to those who can, assimilate it that gives to this DURBAR an atmosphere of intense sanctity. This sanctity is not only acquired but somehow innate in the place itself. Baba often emphasised the importance of the DWARAKA MAYI and spoke of its purity as if the hall were something apart from his own spiritual kingship... No wonder that the atmosphere has absorbed all the Glory of those sixty years of peerless GURUSHIP when he inspired thousands to rise up, in their own strength and freedom, to conquer and to create."

To me the comparative solitude of DWARAKA MAYI associated with the life and activity of Baba had a greater appeal than the SAMADHI itself which holds his mortal remains with endless streams of devotees and the routinized ceremonials conducted by professional priests. It was in DWARAKA MAYI that I sensed the true "feel" of Shirdi. That is why I have dwelt at considerable length on this topic.

V

Baba's teaching was mostly indirect and Illustrated through homely parables. Notwithstanding Baba's appearing to all intents and purposes as devoid of book-learning, casual incidents revealed that he had an exact and profound knowledge of sacred texts like the Gita, and also of the Muslim scriptures.

Baba took no credit to himself for his actions or words. Sometimes he would say it was all God's will (*Allah malik hai*). Again he would refer to God as the *Fakir*. But it is also on record that he also said on occasion "I am God. I am MAHA-LAXMI. I speak the truth sitting as I do in the mosque I am VITHOBA. I am GANAPATI. All offerings made to Ganapati have reached me. I am DATTATREYA. I am LAXMINARAYANA. Why go for GANGA elsewhere. Hold your palm at my feet-here flows Ganga."

Baba's assurances to his devotees are a veritable tower of strength for the faithful. Here are a few: "My eye is ever on those who love me... Whatever you do, wherever you may be, ever bear this in mind that I am always aware of everything you do... If one meditates on me, repeats my name and sings about my deeds he is transformed and his KARMA is destroyed. I stay by his side always... If one perpetually thinks of me, and makes me his sole refuge, I become his debtor and will give my head to save him... I am the bond slave of my devotee. I love devotion. He who withdraws his heart from the world and, loves me is my true lover and he merges in ME like a river in the sea... If you make me the sole object of your thoughts and aims you will gain PARAMATMA... Look to me and I will look to you... Trust in the Guru fully. This is the only SADHANA, Guru is all the Gods... Repeat my name. Seek refuge in me. But to know who I am, practise SHRAVANA and MANANA... I shall be active and vigorous even from my tomb. Even after my MAHASAMADHI, I shall be with you the moment you think of me."

VI

Except for the three cases mentioned when I began I have not referred to miracles worked by Baba. There is no lack of information about these, forming as they do, the bulk of the content of books about Baba of which there are many. I may mention the four well-known English volumes by Narasimhaswami, a lawyer of Madras who gave up a lucrative practice in mid-career and devoted the rest of his life to collecting material about Baba's life, activities and utterances. He had not seen Baba as person; but he was inspired by the invisible presence. It was he that founded the All India Samaj to bring devotees together. Gunaji's English-book may be mentioned as well as the smaller ones by Arthur Osborne and Mani Sahukar. In Marathi, the language of the region, there are several. Perhaps the best is *Sai Saccharita* by Dabolkar written in the traditional Ovi metra and modeled on the famous *Guru Charitra* which narrates the life of Narasimha Saraswati who lived about five centuries ago and is believed to be an Avatar of Dattatreya, as indeed Baba himself is.

Apart from the miracles listed in the books, innumerable instances from the experience of devotees themselves are in active circulation. There is ample testimony that they are occurring even today. At the close of his book, Osborne narrates the remarkable experience of an elderly

Angle-Indian lady Miss Dutton who had a vision of Baba (of whom she had never heard before) and who gave her support at a critical juncture in her life.

I may take this occasion to say a few words about the *rationale* of miracles, if indeed such a phrase is permissible. Most educated people in India are ready enough to admit belief in the possibility of miracles, and even in specific instances, if only they were not scared by the name and prestige of science. But it has to be realized that the scientific account of the universe is limited to certain mechanical measurable regularities; ignoring all other, dimensions of experience which give it human, fullness. Shakespeare gave expression to this when he wrote:

There are more things in Heaven and Earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

In his time, science was still a branch of philosophy and was called Natural philosophy.

In our own day, psychologists are attaching special importance to the subconscious and unconscious layers of the mind, which is like an iceberg of which only a tenth is visible above the surface of water, the rest being submerged. Depth psychology tells us that the unconscious is a reservoir of impulses, dynamic, powerful and irrational, fully capable of over-powering rational trends, in the event of conflict between them. Then the rational succumbs; but saves its face by a devious process called 'rationalization', which afterwards poses as Reason.

This is what actually happens in all problematic conduct and behaviour, the origins of which lie in the emotions and impulses rather than in the rational intellect. Now the emotions and impulses demand their due place and function in the human makeup, and cannot be ignored or argued away. The only way to deal with them is to counter the irrational, with the irrational, like "diamond, cut diamond," when the irrational element is, as it were, turned back on itself. It is a kind of shock treatment, which shakes up a man and awakens him from the deadly insensitiveness bred by routine. Journalists tell us that one picture is worth a thousand words. If that is so, a single miracle witnessed or experienced personally is worth a million words. That is, the logic of miracles. I hasten to add that like Bhagavan himself, Baba did not attach any particular importance to miracles except as a short-cut to conviction. When Baba gave miraculous aid, in response to the supplications of affected devotees, he used to say: "I first give them what they want, so that in time they may come and ask for what I want to give."

It is time to close. The lesson to be drawn from Baba's life is not limited to his utterances. Our great teachers have after all taught the same truths, but with inevitable differences of style, emphasis and individuality. Sri Ramakrishna as well as Sri Aurobindo, Baba as well as Ramana Maharshi. There is a wordless teaching which they communicate by their bare presence, visible or invisible. In it we simultaneously contact their power and love—the union of *Sivam* and *Shakti*. The experience of such contact is Bliss. (*Ananda*). Baba bestowed his Grace freely on his devotees, actual and potential. But today Bhagavan showers it in its utter plenitude: he is indeed the *Poorna Avatar*: the fulfillment, of which Baba was the promise. We are truly blessed to be able to bask in the bright sunshine of Bhagavan's Grace, of which Baba was the colourful dawn. As that true devotee, Charles Penn said the other day, "When God incarnate walks and talks in our midst, what more do we need?"

—*K. Guru Dutt*

His Gown on High

Clouds, Clouds; Clouds, In the Blue.
A beauteous sight are those.
Colours soft and mountain high.
You break the monotony of tire sky.

Some people say, clouds are blind,
But they never shade the light of mind;
They add to Infinite on its way,
Giving spice and spirit to the substance, Day.

All are lit by the one Sun, Globe,
Painted aid touched with a silver robe,
Others menace dark and grey;
Billowing, swelling, through the sky.

So, float on by, float on by,
A silent living joy,
Float on by, Float on by,
Baba's loving fold.

—*Anthony*

Watch the brightness, witch the spleadour,
Invite it into the drab and darkened cave
That you fondle and feed as "heart".
Watch the lesson of love that calls
through the symbols on the doors
Imbibe it, and let it fertilise
The veins, the nerves and sells
Of thy self, to seek the Source of Love.
Watch on, and, next moment, perchance,
The Silver Doors shall part... and.
O! Your heart is lit! your self is saved!
Baba stands before you, to shower Bliss!

—*Taraka*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

46

Signs of Distress

That very moment, Bharata entered the inner apartments, and took leave of his maternal uncle; along with his brother, Shatrughna got into the waiting chariot, and hurried it to move forward faster and faster. Like an arrow from an intrepid bow, the chariot flew over mountain paths, hill tracks and jungle road. Grief was surging from Bharata's heart, as fast as the chariot itself. He could not explain why or wherefore. Some inexplicable agony afflicted him. Bharata did not wish to delay on the road for food or even for a gulp of water to assuage their thirst.

Shatrughna noticed the sense of alarm and anxiety that had overcome his brother; he suggested a few times that a halt could be made, for food and drink; but, Bharata did not heed, and he had to stay silent. Moreover, they observed a series of bad omens encountering them as they drove along. Crows cawed raucously from positions and directions foreboding evil. Dogs howled piteously, in an eerie tone. These signs of calamity ruffled the calmness which Shatrughna heroically maintained until then.

When they arrived at the, main gate of the City of Ayodhya, and looked up, the fear was confirmed; for, the festoons of mango leaves had not been renewed for days. Only dried leaves were hanging across the moaning gateway. They were grating against the wind, as if smashing in anger and sorrow. Why were green leaves not hung across? What had happened to the City? Why this neglect, this sign of distress? The brothers guessed that some terrible bolt of sorrow had fallen on the Capital.

Animals in Tears

They entered the City and drove on. The Royal Stables for horses and elephants were at the very entrance; when Bharata's eyes fell on them, his heart broke; he lost control over himself. For, he found the animals standing without moving a muscle, heads bent and eyes streaming tears. The mahouts and grooms stood with a heavy load of grief, unable to lift their heads. When they drove further into the City, they found the doors of all the mansions on both sides of the road closed, as if the people inside declined to welcome any one in. The roads themselves were dusty and unswept. The few citizens who were up and moving, suddenly turned their gaze away, when they saw the chariot that was coming in. When they recognised Bharata, they shed tears.

The diamond bazaar was closed; so were all shops, all over Bharata could not find the tongue to inquire from any one the reason for this pall of gloom that hung over the City. He was petrified at the unforeseen signs of distress: The chariot entered the Royal Palace. The guards received them silently, with no acclamation of joy, like the traditional shouts of Jai, Jai; they stood mute and bent; they could not raise their eyes, for there were overflowing tears. The brothers were now convinced that some unspeakable calamity had overtaken the City; they alighted from the chariot and proceeded into the palace.

Mother and Son

Kaikeyi had noted that her son had come, she went forward with great joy to receive him. The bevy of maids who rose with her and walked behind her were groaning in sorrow. Bharata looked at their faces and stood stunned where he stood, unable to speak even a single word. But, Kaikeyi started to speak. She said, "Son! Is your uncle well?" Bharata gave some indistinct reply to that question and pressed forward with his own query, "How is father? How is my oldest brother? How is my other brother? How are my aunts, the queens?" At this, Kaikeyi was rendered mute. Tears gathered in the eyes of the maids who stood around. He realised that some terrible news was being hidden from him; he asked, "Mother! Where is father?" at this, the maids burst into sobs and tears. Seeing them, Kaikeyi too sensed that she should not delay any longer; she too shed tears and acted the role of a grief-stricken woman. Bharata could not unravel the mystery unaided; he prayed to his mother to explain to him what had happened to whom, and why every one was so overcome with sorrow.

At this, Kaikeyi replied, "Son! What shall I say? I was very happy that with the help of Manthara, I was able to achieve all that I desired; but, with the very first step, my success has broken into bits; the gods cast an unpropitious eye on it. The Emperor, your dearly beloved father has left for Heaven." Kaikeyi started sobbing aloud.

Where is Rama?

No sooner did these words fall on his ear, than Bharata, rolled on the ground like a she-elephant at the roar of a lion. He cried out, "Alas, Father!" as he fell. Like a plantain tree cut asunder, Shatrughna too fell flat on the floor. Their agony was indescribable, immeasurable. Bharata sat up pressing his head with both hands, and wept aloud. He cried out, "Father! We could not be present round your bed when you drew your last breath. O! What great sinners are we? Of the four sons, all the four could not reap the same merit. And, this Bharata, and this Shatrughna are the worst, the most unfortunate. During the last moments, you would have talked so lovingly to us. You would have given us invaluable blessings and directions for life. Well, we must be grateful that Rama was there with you. You would certainly have told him what you liked to convey to us. Brother! Rise. Come with me. We shall go to Rama and find out what father has left as message for us. Mother! Tell us where Rama is now." Bharata stood up, ready to go. He was waiting only for his mother's reply.

Kaikeyi said, "Son! If Rama were here, your father would not have breathed his last, don't you realise that? Rama is not in the City, don't you know?" This was like pouring poison into a wound; Bharata was shocked by a new blow. Bharata asked, "Mother! Rama is my very breath. Where has Rama gone?" Bharata was on the brink of collapse. Kaikeyi replied quick, and fast: "Whereto? Do you ask where he has gone? Well. To the forests." "Maybe," Bharata intervened, "But, why has Rama who has gone to the forests not returned yet?"

Why was he exiled?

Kaikeyi's answer was delivered calmly and with deliberation. She said, "Son! We have no time to relate and listen to that long story. First, busy yourself in arranging for the last obsequies of your father."

From this, Bharata learnt that his mother was trying to hide some unpleasant secret from him. So, he asked the whereabouts of Sita and Lakshmana, one after the other. The mother replied, "They both have followed Rama into the forests. They will not be returning to this City until after fourteen years. Thus did your father command." Kaikeyi delivered this statement, with a firm hard, voice.

Kaikeyi saw that Bharata was rendered increasingly desperate and distressed by her statements; so, she drew her son near, and, stroking his head, she started consoling him, saying, "Son! There is no need to lament over your father. He was while alive engaging himself continuously in a series of meritorious activities and so, his soul would have attained heaven. Your, duty now is to follow the ideal he has set before you, to earn similar fame by meritorious deeds and rule over the empire happily. Continue his fame and renown by your own wise and merciful rule and maintain the great name of the dynasty as mighty rulers. Kaikeyi endeavoured to pacify the lacerated emotions of her son by these and similar words.

But, they stuck in his heart like a dagger thrust. Each word bit his head like a hammer-stroke. Shatrughna developed a burning sensation all over his body, as he listened to her. But, he kept quiet; he did not protest. Bharata, however, rose suddenly, deciding to discover the truth, for, he felt that his mother was deceiving him by her words, keeping some facts away from him and talking in riddles. He drew Shatrughna along and rushed out of the room towards the apartments of Kausalya, the eldest queen and the mother of Rama.

The Mother of Rama

And what did he see there! Kausalya was rolling on the floor, in her dust-ridden clothes, lamenting aloud, "O Lord! Lord. Rama, Rama!" Her maids, themselves sunk in sorrow, were nursing her into some sort of courage. Bharata could not restrain himself. Crying out "Mother! Mother!" he collapsed on the floor at her feet. Queen Sumitra too was there, with Kausalya. Both of them recognised Bharata and Shatrughna, and, they suddenly fainted away. Recovering, they clasped each other in a fit of agony and wept aloud; it was a scene that would have melted the hardest stone. The brothers could not bear, the weight of sorrow; they fell on the door.

"Mother! Take me to father; tell me the reason why he passed away. Why did my dear brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, proceed to the forest, with Sita? It is all a mystery to me; save me, from this agony; tell me why?" Bharata pleaded pitifully, clasping the feet of Kausalya. Kausalya embraced him tenderly and replied, "With your return, my son, I am consoled a little. Seeing you, I can forget the path of separation from my dear Rama. You are as much as Rama to me; I make no distinction." Even while saying so, she interrupted her words, with sobs and groans, and the cry; "Ah! Rama! Can I keep alive for fourteen long years, while you spend them in the forest? Have you resolved that I should be reduced to ashes by the sorrow of separation, just as your father was? Alas, how unfortunate am I?" Bharata suffered even more pain at these out-bursts. His imagination pictured all kinds of tragedies, and miseries, for, he was not yet aware of the truth: He prayed, "Mother! Do not keep things away from me. Trust me. Tell me why my dear Rama went away into the forest, and why father breathed his last; tell me and save me from this tangle of confusion."

Kausalya was ever simple and straightforward and very compassionate by nature. She took Bharata to be Rama himself, returned. She drew Bharata near her, and wiping her tears off, she said, "Son! Bharata is bold. Do not grieve over the past; such grief is useless. Strange things do happen when times are propitious and circumstances so conspire. Of what benefit is it to lay the blame on some one? No one should be found fault with. It is my destiny to live on with this load of sorrow. This cannot be avoided; it must be endured by me. But, you are young. You are like the sun at the hour of early dawn. Remember that.

The Queen's Lament

My dearly loved darling, Rama, in obedience to father's order, wore apparels of fibre, tied his matted hair into a top-knot, and is now moving about in the jungle. Sita, who cannot live away from him even for a moment, is with him, clothed in a bark-garment. Lakshmana attempted to prevent Rama from going into the forest, but, his efforts were of no avail. He declared that Ayodhya without Rama was a jungle for him; he followed Rama. All this happened before my very eyes. O! What a sinful soul should I be, that I still continue to live!

I could not go with them; nor would my life depart, when they left; how shall I describe my miserable plight? My heart is really carved out of adamant stone. O tender hearted Rama! you suffer so much now, since you were born of me. Or else, why should you? Alas! Rama! How much suffering you have to endure, living on fruits and roots, and wandering about to the terror-striking recesses of the jungles!" She groaned aloud once and fell in a faint on the floor.

Bharata saw all this and listened to what was told him; but, the puzzle still remained unsolved. He, was struggling in fear and anxiety, unable to delve into the mystery.

Meanwhile, a message was brought by Minister Samantha that the royal preceptor, Sage Vasishta, had asked that Bharata should go to him. Sumantha too burst into tears, when his eyes fell on, the brothers. He clasped Bharata to his breast; the brothers too could not control their grief. Bharata hoped that Sumantha at least would throw light on the mystery hanging over the tragic events in the Capital; he tried various means to draw Samantha into an account of the happenings; but, Samantha did not like to speak on them, for, he thought Bharata and Shatrughna had already been told what had happened by those whom they had met before his arrival.

They went to the Preceptor together. Bharata and Shatrughna fell at the feet of Vasishta and wept aloud. He raised them up, with profound affection and sympathy, and taught them many a moral and philosophical lesson, in the process of consoling them. "Already, there has been much delay; it is not advisable to delay any further," he said, and directed Bharata to prepare himself for performing the funeral rites of his father.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Egoism can be destroyed if you constantly tell yourself, "Not I, but He, He is the Force; I am the instrument." Keep His Name always on the tongue. Contemplate on His Glory, whenever you see

or hear or contact something beautiful, sublime, sweet, or soft. See in every one, however low or high, the Lord, sporting in that Form.

—Baba

Ten Days of Divine Bliss

The Flag

Dasara 1973 was in every way, a Festival of Bliss and for the thousands (more than fifty) who gathered at the Prasanthi Mandir, it was a source of sublime delight, to the eye, the heart, the head and the soul.

The Prasanthi Flag was hoisted by Bhagavan at 7-30 A.M. on the first Day, the 27th September. Bhagavan said that men everywhere are today caught in the coils of fear and anxiety, hate and greed, and they are spending their days in terror and anger. What exactly is the duty of man, wherein lies the dignity of man—these questions are not asked or answered. This is at the root of the present unrest and confusion, He said. Urges that are dormant in man since ages past raise their ugly heads when favourable circumstances appear; they have not been fully destroyed or sublimated. They tempt men and dally before them transitory joys and trivial victories. So, men are deceived and disgraced, Baba said.

"There are three types of men—the godly, who know that there is a limit within which alone man can exercise his skill and intelligence and that; beyond that limit, strength and skill have to be drawn from God; the ungodly, who assert that human effort is all; and the godly-ungodly who ascribe their success to themselves and failures to some unseen force, which they refuse to name," said Baba.

"The state in which we find ourselves is the consequence of our own acts in the past; so, we are shaping our future by what we do now man must encourage himself by this line of argument, which is also the fact. According to the culture-training that Sai directs, one has to practise what he affirms; there can be no hiatus between what one practices," said Baba.

Baba said that the hoisting of the Flag over the Mandir was only a symbol, a reminder, for every, one hoisting it and its ideals over his own heart. Baba said that the hearts would then become Homes of Prasanthi (the Higher Peace); He, pointed out that Homes for Rest (Visranthi) are multiplying, but, Homes for Shanti (Peace) or Prasanthi (the Higher Equanimity) are becoming fewer and fewer.

Baba declared, "This Prasanthi Mandir is your home, your residence. It is yours. My home, my residence, is your heart." He told the vast audience how He appreciated their untiring activity during the days preceding the Festival, directed to the cleaning of the vast camps, the removal of immense quantities of lumber, and the leveling, of the ground over a vast area; He used them to pay equal, if not more attention to the more important and the more urgent task of cleaning up their inner realms, removing, from thence the polluting lumber of passion and prejudice, and leveling the likes and dislikes into a smooth pattern of Love.

Food and Clothing

The same day, from about eleven in the morning until late in the evening, thousands of indigents who had gathered from far and near were fed sumptuously, Baba Himself serving each one the coveted sweets. The old and disabled among them were given new clothes; as directed by Bhagavan, Mrs. Bhagavantam distributed the saris to the women and Sri R. R. Chatterji and Sri A. K. Dutt distributed Dhotis to the men: New Clothes were given to the poor and the defectives, throughout the Festival, as had when they were noticed.

The Sathya Sai Hospital

On the 28th, at 3 P.M., Bhagavan called together the members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal (Men and Women) who had come from all parts of India to serve during the Festival—there were more than 800 present and spoke to them on their responsibilities and on the Love and Reverence that they must cultivate.

The 17th Annual Day of the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam was celebrated on the 28th, at the Prasanthi Mandir, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan with Dr. K. Balakrishnan of Madurai City as the Chief Guest. Dr. Balakrishnan spoke of the many miraculous cures effected by prayer to Bhagavan, and said that He was the Physician of Physicians. Bhagavan in His Discourse spoke of the importance of physical health. The precious machine that has been given to man to realise his life's mission—namely, the awareness of the Truth of Unity—will be rendered ineffective, even if a small nut or bolt becomes weak or useless. He referred to fear, anxiety, grief and doubt as mental traits that affect physical health, and warned that Faith and Dedication have to be cultivated even by atheists in order to ensure health and harmony.

Pure air, pure water and pure thoughts are essential for good health. But, now, the air is polluted by dust and dirt, and by vibrations of hate and violence; water is also polluted equally; the thoughts of man are also polluted by greed and discontent. Life has become a chain of crises, He declared.

"Nasti kamasamo vyadhi"—"there is no illness so deadly as desire." Contentment is the best drug; it is the panacea, for all ills. Why place yourselves at the disposal of doctors? Surrender to God and His Will. This is the most fruitful prescription.

Nowadays, every one from the man behind the plough to the man in the swivel chair of the post office room has in his pocket some tablet or other, to cure his ache or ailment! No one places reliance on the subtle curative effect of wholesome thoughts, of loving deeds and the recitation of the Name of God. When one is aware that the body is but the dwelling place of the I, and that the I is but a spark of the Universal I, one cannot feel ill at all, Baba said.

This does not mean that you should condemn those who take medicine, as unbelievers or those who refrain from medicine as believers. Belief in God is seen more in the attitude towards life, in the spirit of service and dedication, Baba advised.

The Yajna

On 30th September, at 10 A.M., Bhagavan proceeded in procession to the beautifully decorated Poornachandra Auditorium to inaugurate the Veda Purusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna. The gaily caparisoned elephant, Sai Geetha led the way; Vedic scholars and ritualistic experts who had come to officiate at the Yajna followed; they recited Vedic hymns; the young students of the Sathya Sai Veda Sastra Patasala declaimed the famous Namaka and Chamaka hymns from the Taithiriya Section of the Veda; the Hon'ble Minister for Heavy Industries in the Government of India, Sri. T. A. Pai accompanied Bhagavan, with a large number of Sai devotees; Swami Karunyanandaji, the octogenarian monk, Founder and President of the Jeeva Karunya Sangha, doing remarkable social service at Rajahmundry for 40 years, held the silken umbrella over Bhagavan; music from the Nadaswaram Pack from Muthupet, Tamil Nadu, filled the air with cheers of Jai Jai from the thousands of devotees who were pressing to gain a glimpse of Bhagavan rent the air, while Bhagavan walked forward, showering His Smile on that vast multitude, along the flowery path thick with rose petals.

Reaching the Dais, which was to be the altar for the Yajna, the gathering of about fifty thousand was welcomed by Dr. V. K. Gokak, who spoke also about the significance of the Yajna and of Dasara. Sri T. A. Pai declared that Bhagavan was the Avatar of the Age, and His counsel and comforting presence were available to every one in distress. He spoke of the Prema that Bhagavan showered on every one and said that he had learnt from Him that the happiness of each lies in the promotion of the happiness of all.

In his inauguration Discourse, Bhagavan described the meaning of Yajna and said that it meant the offering of Love to all beings on earth in a spirit of utter dedication. God does not live in temples; He lives in the hearts of man. See Him there, adore Him there, serve Him there, He directed. If only each one does his duty to the maximum limit of his skill and faith, the country will not have any poverty or misery. With such a vast area of arable land, a large population of intelligent ryots, and facilities for plentiful cultivation, if India suffers from lack of food, the reason lies in want of faith and earnestness, want of Love towards fellowmen, want of self-confidence, Baba said. There is also an enormous waste of the precious grain that is produced, on account of faulty food habits, He pointed out.

People must become aware of the proper ways of doing Karma, and of the true ways of observing Dharma. The basic fact is that man does not live for food alone; he lives to realise his one-ness with the Universe and its Prime Cause. When man is advised in the Gita to detach himself from too fruits of his activity and not get attached to them, the reason for this advice lies in the fact that the consequence is temporary, transitory. All effects are liable to change; only the cause is true, unchanging. The Karana is the truth; the karya is unreal."

At 4 P.M., when the All India Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha held its Annual Sessions, in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan, Sri Nakul Sen, I.C.S., former Governor of Goa, elaborated the statement made by Bhagavan earlier, "My dwelling place is your heart," quoting extensively from the Bhagavad-Gita to illustrate the Omnipresence of the Lord. Br. Sri Mudigonda Venkataramasastri, a renowned Pundit from Andhra Pradesh then spoke on the "Prasthanas Thraya, the Three Authoritative Texts of Hindu Religion—the Brahmasutras, the Upanishads and the Gita."

Bhagavan said, "There is no branch, without the trunk; there is no child, without the mother; there is no man without, God." He added, "Even those who deny God are branches; only, they do not know that the branches depend on the trunk, from which they have sprung."

"Goods cannot follow you beyond death; only good deeds can," He said. Man is at present consuming the harvest collected in past lives, and planting the seeds for the harvest that he has to consume in the next life, He declared. So, it can be said that he is the master of his destiny; if he forgets his destination, his destiny will be mere wandering in the wilds, He warned.

Quoting the Telugu word for man, mani-si, Bhagavan said that if man lays waste his days in the pursuit of trivial ends, he is but si-ni-ma, that is to say, a cinematic shadow, not a reality! Man is not mrnmaya (of the earth, earthy), but, chinmaya (of the spirit, awake, conscious, vigilant, full of splendour), He asserted.

Even prayer is deteriorating these days into petitions for promoting material vanities, He said. Worship is being degraded into a commercial deal. If only man surrenders himself to the Will of God and submits his individuality to the Universal, willing and happy to be an instrument in the execution of that Will, everything will be added unto him, He said.

The Universe is the Body of God; He lives in it, expresses Himself in and through it. Adoration of the Universe reaches Him who dwells in it, He declared.

Discourses by Scholars

The Jnana Yajna part of the Saptaha (the Yajna Week) was devoted to discourses by Pundits versed in Vedic lore. Br. Sri Sishtla Chandramouli Sastry spoke on the Mantras and their variety and validity. Another evening, Br. Sri Pidaparathi Krishnamurthy Sastry spoke on Bhakti or the Sadhana of Dedication, with special reference to the classical interpretations of Narada and Sandilya. Br. Sri. Doopati Thiromalacharya elaborated on the three aspects of Spiritual life—Dedication, Transfer of Responsibility and Total Surrender. Br. Sri Sribhashyam Appalacharya took as his theme, the Ramayana, and the means by which that epic endeavours to foster Bhakti in the hearts of aspirants. Another evening, Br. Sri Pisipati Visweswara Sash spoke on the Shakti Principle that is adored and worshipped in the three aspects at Prosperity, Power and Knowledge during Dasara. Br. Sri Rajamahendravaram Kanappacharya further analysed the Sadhana of Surrender and shed light on some intricate problems connected with it. Br. Sri Jammalamadaka Madhavarama Sarma spoke on Lila Bhakti, where the aspirant derives joy and inspiration through listening to the glories of the Lord. Swami Karunyanandaji discoursed one evening on the Advent of Bhagavan, and the duties of Sadhakas today, when the Avatar has entered upon the mission to revive righteousness and restore man to his pristine dignity.

Dr. Vyas, of the Post-Graduate Dept. of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, spoke on the "Transcendental Nature of God." Dr. Gokak gave a very illuminating discourse on the inner symbolic significance of the Vedic Yajna and on the identification of Vedic gods with the aspects of Divine Consciousness latent in man, and Its manifestations in finer and more subtle forms.

From the mouth of Children

Children from the Bal Vikas classes of Bombay—Sandeep, Vinod, Radha, and Sanjaya—addressed the mammoth gathering in Telugu, Hindi and English on the various aspects of Bhagavan's Message, and also on what the Bal Vikas had revealed to them. They, also recited slokas from the Gita and spoke on their, meanings too. A few Pre-Seva Dal boys demonstrated how a Gita Classes ought to be held. All the items provided great hope and encouragement for the ushering in of the Sai Era. Two students of the Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, and Science, Kadugodi, Bangalore Dt, Kamal Sahani and Anup Jalani spoke in English in a fluent, sincere and eminently sweet style, on Bhagavan and His Message of Love; they demonstrated that the heart of Indian youth is in the right place and that it beats to the tune of India's invaluable heritage.

Guidance from the Divine

Bhagavan, in His discourses, condemned atheism which has now become an intellectual fashion, aped by the ignorant and the indolent. Attention is paid only to what can be seen, though, it is evident that the eye as well as the other senses and even the reasoning faculty of man are subject to disease and distortion, through prejudice and preferences learnt from others. He directed as to look upon Nature as also Divine, for, God who is Truth can never be the Author of the False.

Another day, Bhagavan spoke on the two great groups of sacred texts—the Shruti and the Smriti. He clarified the difference between the two, saying that Shruti deals with eternal values and Smriti deals with the mores and modes of righteous conduct, that are best suited to each age, profession, status and authority.

Speaking on the act of surrender to the Divine Will, Bhagavan said that the word, Atmarpana, in current use is mis-leading, for, the Atma has to be cognised, and not offered as an article. It is just a wave of the Ocean of Being-Awareness-Bliss; it cannot be taken out of the Ocean and poured back into it. The word Manasarpana is more true to facts, He said, for the mind has to be consecrated to the Divine.

Addressing the huge gathering of eager earnest listeners another day, Bhagavan spoke of the three types of knowledge: Instinctive, Intellectual and Intuitive. He said that man has to pass through these three; they are like the flower, the fruit and the ripe sweetness-filled fruit, He declared. In another discourse, Bhagavan dwelt on the three bases of validity, accepted by Vedic scholars—ocular proof, inference, and the authority of the scriptures and saints. He deplored that modern seekers of knowledge, confine themselves only to what can be learnt through the senses, and do not dive into the realms available to bolder spirits, who voyage into the deeper levels of consciousness through Sadhana and Yoga, and the experiences of the intrepid explorers of the past.

During His Discourse another, evening, Bhagavan spoke of the worship of idols and symbolic representations. He said that man cannot conceive of God in any form other than human; he can derive maximum joy and benefit, inspiration and instruction, only through meditation on the human form, of God. Hence, God too assumes the human form, sports in that habiliment and speaks the language that man can understand. Painters and poets can draw on their imagination and imagine God in the form that appeals to them. Man is not bound to what they have standardised as the Form of God! The testimony of one's own heart is the final guarantee of

genuineness, not the Kavi (poet) or Ravi (Ravi Varma, the prolific painter of Divine Forms described in Hindu Mythology).

Each characteristic of the image, idol or picture has a deep meaning which has to be cognised during meditation, He emphasised. The Conch is the Primal Sound, the cosmic Melody, the word that was the Beginning. The Chakra is the wheel of Time rolling along from the past into the present and on to tomorrow. The Gada or Mace is the symbol of Power, Authority, Energy, Might, Majesty. The Padma or the Lotus is the Heart, where He resides, which He helps to blossom. Thus, iconography reveals new and newer facets of the Divine.

Bhagavan warned devotees against bedecking pictures and idols in pageantry and purposeless pomp. There are some who claim they are Divine and who indulge in dressing themselves up in crowns and with the trisul and other appurtenances attributed to God by poets and artists. This is sheer trickery, Baba said. God is simplicity itself; He does not need the aid of jewellery to reveal His Splendour, He remarked. This craving for personal decoration bordering on the histrionic might mislead many aspirants; they may fall into the mistake of guessing the nature of the water in the clouds from their experience of the water stagnant in the roadside pool. The Divine has only to reveal the Truth, and to live Righteousness. It does not stride to impress or infect, in any other manner.

One evening, before commencing to sing Bhajans as usual at the end of His Discourse, Bhagavan spoke about Himself. "I feel and I am happy to feel that all bodies are My body." "I am in every one, everywhere, at all times," He declared, and thrilled the thousands who heard Him. "I live to that experience, I desire to share that experience with all, I awaken all to that bliss, I teach every one to reach that State."

The Valedictory Rite

On 6th October, the Vijayadashami Day (the Day when Good won Victory over Evil), Bhagavan again proceeded to the Auditorium in Procession, and standing before the Sacred Fire that had been worshipped and propitiated for seven days with a million recitals and offerings, He created in a trice in His Palm the nine gems of auspiciousness for the Valedictory Offering. He also blessed the ritual scholars and the priests who officiated at the Vedic rite. Then, He ceremonially washed the silver idol of His 'previous body', the Sai Baba of Shirdi, and from an empty pot held over the Image He created an inexhaustible shower of Sacred Ash and—what was unique this year—kumkum, and haldi, significant reminders that the occasion was the conclusion of the Nine Day Festival in honour of the Mother-principle. Later, a gemset crown was placed on the silver idol by a devotee.

The Remedy

That evening, the gathering had swelled to well nigh a hundred thousand and Bhagavan in His Discourse dwelt on the problem uppermost in every one's mind—the nationwide distress caused by the rise in prices and the fall in moral conduct. Bhagavan said that remedies are being recommended without discovering the real cause of the situation. The fault lies in the proliferation of desire, the senseless pursuit by all Classes of people of pleasures and possessions that can well be by-passed. These give only tawdry joy; they cause discontent and disappointment soon.

A good cook knows that the dish must have only proportionate salt; if salt is more than the dish salted the entire stuff is wasted. It has to be discarded; it would ruin the health of the consumer. So too, desire which is the salt of life has to be limited to healthy proportions. When riches grow, charity too must grow in proportion; or else, social health will suffer.

"Do not aspire to become Duryodhanas, the type which knew no contentment; become Karnas, the type which delights when riches are shared, and possessions are given away. This is the message that Mother India instils in the hearts of her children," Baba said.

For any one to wield authority, in whatever field—spiritual, moral, economic; political, academic—he must have three qualifications: learning, intelligence, and good character. Each one can judge for himself whether he has these three. We find at the present time many in authority who are deficient in all these. You could yourselves see, from the speech delivered now by a College student, that the youth of the land are a fine lot, inspired by high ideals and eager to engage themselves in the service of the country and its people and sincerely engaged in equipping themselves for this role. But, the examples that parents, elders, and leaders hold before them are lamentably unsatisfactory. Lack of proper leadership is the reason for the present crisis of character.

What is required for social peace and individual advance is—a combination of three conditions—fortitude to bear all the blows and bouquets of fate as the consequence of one's own past actions, faith in a supra-human Divine Power that watches and warns and wards off calamities, and, an attitude of prayer to that Power to guide and guard.

On the 7th October, during the evening Discourse, Bhagavan explained how the great epic, the Ramayana, had the sacred mantra, Gayatri, incorporated in it, its 24 letters being found, in the same order, as the first letter of the first verse of each thousand verses, in that epic of 24,000 verses! He also explained that the Sundara Kanda (Section V) of the Ramayana is called so, because the bizarre and disgusting countenances of the Rakshasas (the demonic residents of Lanka), so twisted into ugliness by their vicious natures were punished into correction and charm by the subtle influence of Sita, the embodiment of physical and morale beauty. Sundara means, beautiful, charming, and no vicious individual can be pronounced as having beauty.

Speaking on the advent of Rama on the Divine Mission of comforting the good and correcting the evil-door, Bhagavan said that disparaging the good; denouncing the virtuous, and decrying the Divine are the evils that the Avatar hastens to destroy.

Referring to some people deploring that He was keeping them at a distance while others are allowed, to be in the Presence, Bhagavan said that He had no intention to push away or to draw, near. When people approach Bangalore by train from Penukonda, they say, Bangalore is coming near; when they leave Bangalore for Penukonda, they, say, Bangalore has gone far; but, Bangalore is neither near or far; it stays where it is. You approach it or move away. So too "I am where I am; it is you who come or go; I am above and beyond all attributes or gunas," Baba said. "When you move along the lines, laid down by Me, you are near; when you stay away from those lines, you are far," He said. "When you calculate plus and minus, you gain a little or lose a

little. 2 plus 1 makes 3; 2 minus 1 makes 1; but, place 2 and 1 side by side, with no consideration of profit or loss, it makes 21! Note what a great gain it is!" Baba said.

Spiritual Uplift

Every evening, after His Discourse, Bhagavan Himself sang a few Bhajan songs inspiring the thousands into ecstasy. The songs were repeated with enthusiasm by every man woman and child. It was a thrilling experience for all.

Members of the Sanathana Bhagavata Samajam, rendered musical recitals from the Ramayana Story and gave a Tarangs performance of songs on Lord Krishna.

Musicians who have won international appreciation like Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao, K. Raghuramiah, Bhimsen Joshi, Srimati P. Susheela, Dr. Govinda Gopala Mukherjee, Pandit Shivakumar Sharma and A. K. C. Natarajan (of Clarionet Fame) offered their performances as homage in the Presence of Bhagavan. Padmabhushana Vedantham Sathyanarayana Sarma and his party enacted the famous Koochipudi Dance Play, Bhama Kalapam, wherein Sri Sarma plays the role of Sathyabhama, the jealous Consort of Lord Krishna; they also gave another Recital on Siva Thabdava, Dasavatara, and the Dance of the Gopis. Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal, Hyderabad, enacted a Folk Dance Recital, based on the Life of Bhagavan; they rendered it with such fervour and sincerity that the vast gathering was visibly moved into a flood of faith. Pre-Seva Dal boys from Bombay recited the Gita and elaborated the meaning of the verses. Another evening, boys of the Bal Vikas Classes from Bombay gave a charming little playlet on the Teachings of the Gita. Bal Vikas children from Calicut, (Kerala) put on boards a tableau on the "Promoters of Dharma and the Incarnations of God." Children belonging to the Bal Vikas classes at Ernakulam acted in Telugu (which has now become for devotees the language of God) a charming little play on the Devotion of the Gopis to Lord Krishna.

Dasara was a very profitable Seminar of Spirituality and Indian Culture for thousands of people from all over India. Every morning, thousands shared in the thrill of Nagarsankirtan. Discourses in languages other than English were translated on the spot by Dr. S. Bhagavantam, D.Sc. Bhagavan blessed the vast gathering on the last day of the Festival and assured them that He was with each one of them, wherever they might be. Bhagavan also called together the volunteers, men and women, who had, by their untiring and devoted service, helped the vast multitudes; especially, the old, the weak, and the sick among them, to derive the maximum benefit from the Festival. He spoke to them on the ideal of service as the highest that man can adopt for his Liberation from the bonds of ego; He emphasised that virtue, simplicity and sincerity are the three cardinal principles of the good life. He showered His Blessings on them all, and urged them to cherish the spirit of service in their hearts forever.

‘The Advent’

*"Avojananti Mam mudha manushim tanum asritam
Param bhavam ajananto mama bhuta maheswaram"
—Gita IX II*

SRI Krishna Bhagavan, through the above declaration, sounds a caution to all men and women against the blabberings of fools. "Fools belittle Me as one taken the human form, not aware of My higher nature as the great Lord of beings." The Paramatman is the common basis of the entire creation and He occasionally assumes a human form and seems to be enshrined in It. Unaware of the Divine Leela the ordinary human folk treat the Avatar as earth bound and slight Him. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa mentioned that the "Incarnations like Sri Krishna have the human and the Divine combined in them. While appearing as human they are the transcendental Divine, unaffected by Karma and things mundane." What is said about Sri Krishna Avatar is equally true of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar. Out of billions of human beings only a blessed few have been able to pierce through this veil of delusion and cognize the Descent of the Lord to human form.

Among the obstacles which cloud the thinking of even some of the religious type of persons, the misconception about the Advaita philosophy is the most prominent. To an ordinary Advaitin, Avatarhood and Advaita philosophy cannot co-exist. This mistake occurs if one does not differentiate what is potential and what is real. Everyone is potentially divine. No body can deny this. However, engulfed in Maya, each one of us tends to identify the self with the body and in this process, we are not able to realise our potential Divinity. As Baba often says "You are all God and My efforts are to lift you up to Divinity"; Manava has to become Madhava and often Madhava has to take the human form to lead Manava to Madhavahood. There lies the relevance of advent of Avatars.

In this context, the sayings of Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest exponents of Advaita philosophy, are worth repeating. He says, "There is a special class of world teachers, over and above the ordinary spiritual masters, Avatars. If they command, even the lowliest of the low becomes a mahatma. They are the teachers of teachers. They are the highest divine manifestations in human form. We can achieve God-realisation only through them. We cannot but worship them; in fact we are bound to worship only such Avatars." Emphasising further the need to worship God in human form, the Swami continues, "There are two types of persons, who do not worship God in human form viz. (1) a human cow who has no religious consciousness, and (2) a Paramahansa who has reached, the highest spiritual plane identifying his own self with all manifestations of Divinity and nature." Everyone in between these two extremes has to worship God in human form. "If anybody refuses to recognise and worship these Avatars (God in human form), he deserves one's sympathy and is to be treated as such," says Vivekananda.

Having studied the case for worshipping God in human form (Avatars), let us refresh ourselves with some of the revelations of Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba made by Himself to declare His Divine identity. To those familiar with "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram" (Parts I, II and III) no further proof is necessary to recognise Baba as God in human form. The history of mankind shows that every Avatar himself had to declare His Divine Identity. Sri Krishna declared His

identity through Gita, Govardhana Giri episode and all His Bala Leelas Including killing of demons. Sri Rama had declared His identity through His Lakshmana-Upadesh, the killing of a lakh and odd demons under Khara-Dooshana in 1½ hours single handed, His encounter with Parasurama etc. etc. Jesus Christ had to declare that He was Son of God and there was no difference between Father and Son. Prophet Mohamed had to declare that He was a Messenger of God. Baba's Declaration at the World conference of Sathya Sai Organisations in Bombay that He was the "Sarva Devata Swaroopa" may be recalled. Even Ramakrishna Paramahansa had to convince the doubting Swami Vivekananda during His last moments that it was the same divine spirit which took the form of Rama and Krishna that had taken the form of Ramakrishna. Thus every Avatar had to declare His identity. Except a few Rishis, nobody could fathom the advent of Avatars.

During the Avatarhood, Baba has revealed His omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience to all His devotees either individually or collectively to confirm their conviction of His Divinity so that they may be led to His Lotus Feet ultimately. Appearances of `Vibhuti', Kumkum, Holy Water, Honey, Turmeric powder, lockets etc. from His photos worshipped by devotees throughout the world are some of the indications of His omnipresence. This humble devotee had the good fortune of experiencing the above divine manifestations at his shrine. Just before the bhajan starts on Thursdays, `Vibhuti' used to appear on the cloth spread for Him to walk on; even His footprints used to appear clear on this 'Vibhuti'. Vibhuti appears from the Chair and foot-rest reserved for him. All these manifestations are declarations of His Divinity and His Presence. Readers may recall Baba's conversation in Swahili language with an African during His East African visit. He is Sarvantaryamin—no doubt. Nobody can hide any thought from Him, leave alone actions.

This humble devotee will like to share one of his spiritual experiences with his readers to reiterate Baba's Divinity. Some years back this humble devotee was on an official visit to Kanyakumari. He repeated Sai Ram Mantra almost throughout the night. Early morning he went to see the sunrise. Wonder of wonders From the Rising Sun, the shape of Baba with His flowing robe appeared and spread and spread out to the entire sky. This vision was seen even before this humble devotee had seen Baba in His physical form. After this incident, he visited Prasanthi Nilayam and saw in the Prayer Hall a replica of the vision seen at 'Kanyakumari'. The title of that picture was "Prabhatam".

The Bhagavatam reflects only a fraction of the Might and Glory of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. The "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram" also reflects only a microscopic portion of Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba's Might, majesty, Glory and Leelas. Many of His Divine Leelas are not reported. The few lines submitted above are motivated by a keen desire to share the Sai Leela with fellow devotees. They are dedicated to His Lotus Feet in that spirit only.

—*K. M. Balasabramanian, M.A., I.E.S.*

The Prasanthi Bud Blossoms!

IT was in 1950 that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba constructed the Prasanthi Nilayam which during the past 23 years has become not only a sacred Kshetra, a holy Dham, but has become the Spiritual nerve center of the World. Over the years millions of seekers have unburdened their sorrows at His Lotus Feet and have become new beings through the Power of Baba's Alchemy of Love.

During the past 23 years, along with the unfolding of Baba's Message, Prasanthi Nilayam has also witnessed many changes, deflecting this change. Last year while unfurling the Prasanthi Flag during, the Dasara celebrations, Baba announced that the Prasanthi Nilayam will be hereafter known as Prasanthi Mandiram. This year the temple has almost neared completion and the devotees have been fortunate to witness the old Prasanthi Nilayam transformed into a beautiful Mandiram. The three towers have been completed; the facade has several unique features of Indian Temple Architecture. And the most beautiful of all is the Silver Door, through which Bhagavan emerges to give the devotees; the much coveted Vishwarupa Darshan in the early hours of every day.

Bhagavan has repeatedly declared that there is nothing, which He does without significance; every act of His is full of spiritual import and it is in this perspective that we should view the evolution of Prasanthi Nilayam! Baba built the Nilayam as a prayer hall, and also as His Residence. The Mandir into which it has been transformed remains the same; in fact nothing has changed except the facade. The blossoming of the Prasanthi bud from the Nilayam of 1950 to the Mandiram, of 1973 reflects the purpose of the Advent of the Avatar! Let us see how:

Devotees who have seen the Nilayam in 1950 would recall that at that time the roughly dressed stone blocks with which it is built were still visible. The structure itself was rectangular, and had sharp corners. In fact this is how we all start on our spiritual journey, when we first come to Him seeking solace. We have hearts, hard as stone, roughly hewn, and almost impenetrable. Later Baba removed the harshness of the stones by whitewashing the stones. Once we seek Baba's Feet, the Divine Sculptor starts shaping us; the very first act is to erase the harshness of our behaviour.

Baba later added an image of His which, He placed above the name-board Prasanthi Nilayam written in Telugu. Many wonder why, when He is here why have a figure announcing Himself. Once we sip the nectar of His Divine Love, we wish to remember Him; we buy a picture, a locket or a ring and wear it so that we may remember Him always. This symbolises the beginning of faith, Faith in Baba. We are not afraid of wearing the ring and also answering questions about who He is, what He does and what He stands for. It is in explaining about Him that the unspoken word emerges from within and finds expression. This also poses an additional responsibility; we have to behave as per the norm expected of as Baba's devotees. The hand that wears the ring cannot accept bribes, write harsh words or indulge in vice.

Then during the past year we have seen the great transformation of Prasanthi Nilayam Into Prasanthi Mandiram. The simple single-dom which topped four pillars (built to cover the figure

of Baba) has given place to three; beautiful domes; which combine North Indian and South Indian elements in their structure; they are topped by kalashas which are like blossoming buds of Lotus. The rectangular facade has been replaced by beautiful curves. The pillars have been transformed into exquisite temple pillars. The top parapet wall is now a string of temple domes.

The most beautiful part of the Mandiram is the central portion immediately below the central dome. There are several figures here which are seen in most Indian temples. The most beautiful is the central silver door with the symbols of the different religions and in addition the conch. On either side of this door is the figures of Muralidhar Krishna and Muruga with the Vel in His hand.

Baba has repeatedly declared that every act of His has inner significance. Although He Himself has not explained elaborately the significance of the various elements of the new Prasanthi Mandiram, we may enquire into their inner meaning.

During the Navaratri Celebrations of 1972, Professor V. K. Gokak declared that the transformation of the temple is the Declaration of His Divinity; the Nilayam is the temple for the Living God, the Avatar of the Age. During the Dasara celebrations of this year Baba Himself declared: "This Prasanthi Mandiram is not my residence; it is yours. My residence is your heart"

The transformation of the Nilayam into the Mandiram is thus symbolic of the, transformation of our hearts into a place worthy of being the residence of the Lord. And how, has Baba brought about the transformation of the Mandiram? He has brought it about around the basic structure of the Nilayam. He brings about our transformation also in the same fashion; Baba starts from where we are; He does not demolish; He adds, He subtracts, He replaces old outmoded ideas by new ones. By the Magic touch of the, Divine Architect, the inner core of the Divine which was not finding expression is now, reflected in our thought word and deed. We radiate gracefulness, the real sign of His Grace.

The three domes symbolise the three pinnacles of the Sai teaching, Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram; the central dome is the highest, Sathyam, with the two complements of Sivam and Sundaram. Only when these three get translated into our every daily life, each of us can radiate beauty of character, the final expression of the transformation.

Now let us see the spiritual significance of the figures in the central portion of the facade. The legendary Yali a dragon, (common in South Indian temples a combination of a lion, and overpowering an elephant and lifting it up by the trunk represents how imaginary fears the imaginary dragon) born out of catering to the, senses overpower us; the only way to regain our spiritual strength is to recognise the Truth. When we realise the truth, we become angels with wings (two figures of angels with wings sit on top of the Yali; then we can hold and lift up not only the lion but the entire temple, including the dome!

The structures, and figures around the Silver Door are also of great spiritual import. The four pillars on either side represent. Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema—the four pillars of the Sai Mansion. These can stand only on the strength of determination and valour, represented by the lions on which stand the pillars. But the lions, like the man above the pillar are under the illusion

that, the entire weight of the temple is lifted by them! The figure of Lord Krishna playing the flute is Baba Himself, attracting one and all by the music of His nectarine voice. The figure of Lord Muruga is also Baba who destroys the demons of desire and infatuation.

The beautiful silver door also is of deep spiritual import. The door, white, shining, resplendent represents purity. The more we purify our minds, the better the light of the Divine will get reflected. There are also six symbols of the different religions on the door, viz. Omkar (Hinduism), the Wheel (Buddhism), the Cross (Christianity), the Fire (Zoroastrianism), the Star and the Crescent Moon (Islam) and Conch representing the primeval Sound, beyond name and form, the Eternal Call from the depths. The door symbolises Baba's declaration that all religions are pathways, to the same reality.

The silver door is the beautiful gate through which. Baba emerges every morning to bless the devotees every morning. Baba is the Reality in Human frame, who comes to each one of us irrespective of the caste or creed or religion we might have been born into; all of us must be re-born into the religion of Love, Love which is beyond all caste or creed, fulfilling ourselves in Him who is the very embodiment of Love.

The silver door has no knob; in fact it is not a door which you can knock and open and enter! This door of the Mansion of Love is opened from within by Baba Himself, without our knocking, without our knowing. Baba has reassured that if we but shed one drop of the tears of love or even pain, He will flood us with an Ocean of Love.

Every morning Baba emerges through, the door and stands Sweet, Smiling and serene on the porch of pink-petalled Lotus; that is to say, Baba emerges into the Lotus of our, heart when it opens out, through the warmth of His love.

The transformation of the old Nilayam into the beautiful Mandiram that it has now become thus symbolises what Baba wants each of us to do, in order to make our hearts, where He resides, a fit place for Him to live. If we purify our hearts, make it beautiful, fill it with love, sustain it with Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, then the Divine in each of us will shine forth in all its majesty!

—*Venkatanarayana Murthy*

"The Sunbeam"

An Attempt at Analysis

Speaking on Baba is like speaking about a sunbeam, analysing its components. I shall refer here, only, to some facets of his personality. His earliest role was that of a divine bhajan composer and singer. When as a boy of 12, he came out of his ancestral home and told his parents, "I am not your son; and you are not my parents, I am Sai Baba. My devotees are waiting for me in the wide world and I am going to them." And he found his way from that little cottage into a neighbouring garden, followed by some 50 to 60 devotees, young and old. He gave them the first one of all

those bhajans that have captivated people all over this country and many parts of the world: "Manasa Bbajare guru Charanam, Dustara bhavasagara Taranam."

It has been said that poetry rises to the status of mantra when there is fusion of sound, sense, and image at their highest. You find it in these two lines. There is a spontaneous outpouring, a mantric state of consciousness. Apart from the sense there is the image: all human beings are like swimmers in the sea, the sea of Samsara, of human life. Swimming across this ocean, they are getting exhausted. They are desperate. At this time there comes a pair of blessed feet, before each one of them; if they contemplate them and worship them, if they just stretch their hands and cling to them, they save the swimmers and enable them to cross the unbridgeable ocean. That is the great image, given by this boy of twelve. This was followed by a number of enchanting bhajans, spontaneous out-pourings before gathering after gathering Lakhs of people have been enchanted, and converted to a new way of life. It is a sight to see 46 to 50 thousand people listening to them and repeating them after him. This is a huge psychological revolution that is happening in all parts of the country. This chanting has brought God into the lives of men, in this part of the world.

Supplementing this, is the fact that he is a world teacher, one who is anxious not merely to sway the hearts of people, but also to satisfy their intellect by an exposition of the philosophy of Renascent India. It is a philosophy that integrates both social and individual awareness. He brings the two again, restoring the balance between Iha and Para, for as he says, one has to walk on two legs, not on just one.

Like Jesus and Buddha, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Baba speaks in fables and parables, which illustrate in a very simple manner, profound philosophical truths. If you go to Prasanthi Nilayam; (that built itself around Baba) you will find some exquisite utterances, inscribed here and there. "Each one of us is really not one parson, but, three: The one we think we are, the one others think we are and the one we really are. Two of these can be discarded, and the one we really are has to be recognised so that we can lead the integrated life." Only the other day, he came out with a beautiful saying: "Duty without Love is deplorable; duty with Love is desirable; Love without Duty is Divine."

Seven Volumes of his speeches have been published. He started delivering discourses in his 32nd year. The first 16 years of his life was given to Bala Leelas, but, Leelas or miracles should not mislead us. As he has said, miracles are but his visiting cards. They just give us an idea of his divinity, what he has come for. What is more important is the miraculous-ness of his personality. In his very first speech before a gathering he announced that the next 16 years were to be years of upadesh. From his 48th year, he would give training mainly in meditation and he will be engaged in the spiritual illumination of mankind.

Baba is a master educator. It is easy to appeal to the heart and the Intellect, but, it is difficult to educate the desire-self in man. The Christians celebrate the first day in Lent as Ash Wednesday. The priest comes to the layman, applies ashes to the forehead, and says; "Remember man, dust thou art and to dust thou returnest." Here in Bhagavan's teaching, every day is Ash Wednesday—Vibhuti comes from his palm demonstrating the transitory nature of life and its glory, and the sovereignty of the spiritual life. It is Bhagavan's way to satisfy his devotees desires. Give him

what he wants, says Bhagavan, so that he begins to want what I want him to want. He says, diseases are not cured by him under all circumstances. "It is my experience that I am one in heart with every human being, every sentient being. I experience my unity with each one and my love flows to all. If this love is reciprocated by the other person then my own love and his love mingle together; then is effected a cure." Baba is a wish-fulfilling tree, Kalpataru. He satisfies legitimate desires only to turn people god-wards. Then, he chases them, shapes them and hammers them into real golden ornaments.

Baba is also a shining example to each one of us, a pattern of human excellence. He has told us that Dharma is his Achaar, Sathya his Prachaar, Shanti his Swabhava, and Prema his Swaroopa. "Whatever I communicate is Truth; whatever I do is Dharma. My habitual disposition is Shanti. Prema is my Swaroopa, my substance, and my essence. I am Love itself. Follow any one of these; try to be like me either in the communication of Truth, in the practise of Right Action, in the cultivation of Peace or in the transforming power of Love." This is his message.

He is a great yogiswara. I am using this word with a full understanding of its implications. In his durbar, you will find all humanity... saints and philosophers, poets and politicians, merchants and officers, clerks and ministers. What holds these diverse groups together as members of the Sai Family is Baba's transforming and divine Love. Even positively wicked people are here. As Baba has said, they have greater need of him than the others. He uses this well-assorted group to fulfill his mission. Sai Study Circles have been formed for the pursuit of Truth; the Sathya Sai Seva Dal has been formed to promote right action—caring for the poor, the helpless and the weak. The Bhajan Mandalis and the itinerant singing groups cultivate Peace of mind, and the Sathya Sai Samitis enable devotees to live a life of serenity and equipoise. As for Love, wherever Bhagavan is, he charges the whole atmosphere with Love.

Baba is the innermost self of all, one with all, in spirit, active in those who have accepted him and are therefore practicing his teachings. In his book, "Baba," Schulman has told us how, after his return to New York from India, there was a letter waiting for him from his publishers, asking urgently for some legal papers. He could not find them anywhere. He searched for quite a few hours. He did not know then what to do. But, when that night he went to bed dejected, Baba appeared to him in a dream, took him to a cabinet in one of his rooms, and opened the very drawer in which those papers were placed. The next morning, Schulman woke up, went to the cabinet in the same room and opened the selfsame drawer and found the papers. There are hundreds of others who could bear out the point of his universal presence and love.

We have in Baba a prophet and the inaugurator of a new social order. In 1968, at the Sathya Sai World Conference held in Bombay, Baba declared, "I am here to restore India to her original, spiritual glory, and through India, to carry this message of the spirit to the rest of the world. I have come down for this purpose, and my labours will not cease and I will not rest until this task is fulfilled." On the flag of Prasanthi Nilayam, we find inscribed the unity of all religions of the world. The Crescent and the Star greet there the AUM and the Wheel of Law (Dharma), the sign of the Cross and the Fire of the Parsees. Each is a path leading to the height of the spirit.

Baba was once asked by a visitor, "How do you say, you are God?" Baba said, "You have not heard me fully, I say I am God; I say also that you are God. The only difference is that I know

that you and I are God and you do not know it.” There are various grades of consciousness (Chitta) represented in humanity from the caveman to the man of genius, like Shakespeare, Ashoka and Alexander. One can similarly have the highest consciousness embodied in a human being. If there is such a thing as the highest consciousness that man is capable of having, you have in Bhagavan an embodiment of the consciousness.

—**Dr. V. K. Gokak, from speech at New Delhi, Vigyan Bhavan, 22 March 1973**

How can a man run fast, and reach the goal, if he has thorns sticking to the soles of his feet? Why? Even a single thorn is a difficult handicap. The man who yearns to reach the spiritual goal has to remove the thorns of sloth, anger, greed, doubt, and hatred from, his heart, so that he too may, journey fast and reach the goal.

—**Baba**

A House of Ego Cards

If I be Thou, and Thou be I
And Thou and I are One,
Wherefore don't I comprehend?
Where art Thou? I wonder.
In inmost recess of heart?
In blood streams in the veins?
In smile, delights, in grief?
In the fulness, which seems void?
 My Lord! Thou art befogging
 Your bond-slave—day and night!
 I grope in gloom, I am lost
 in house of ego cards.

Unto this vanity in a trice
Come with ambrosial conferment.
I consecrate all of mine to Thee;
And, then, the knowledge dawns—

"Thou shineth as My Own."
I will not question now,
My House of Cards has flown,
I am Thine and Thou art Mine!

I am Thou and Thou art I.
O Let this Bliss be Thine and Mine.

—*Muktinath Bardoloi*

Four Aspects of Sai

IT is said that philosophy is a science that disproves everything, and proves that it can prove nothing! This may be true of the intellectual philosophy of the West, solely based on Logic. But, Indian philosophy is based on something more important and developed than intellect, namely, intuition and Experience. Intuition is a far higher faculty than intellect which deals with information only, and cannot confer transformation. The basis of intuition is faith born in a well-trained mind, clear of inhibitions.

The saints and seers of India have seen through the defects and deficiencies of mere intellect and prescribed remedies to cure the maladies of man. Consider the moral depravity of man today! Man studies the behaviour of the Universe, but, he is not conscious of the need to study his own behaviour! The more he is educated, the more self-centred he becomes; the more scientific he becomes, the more sensual he changes. He becomes more and more unconcerned about the

welfare of others, more oblivious of his obligations to others. The highly educated cannot keep awake without intoxicating drinks nor can they sleep, without the aid of sleeping pills.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is clearly showing us the way out of this morass. Man can earn inexhaustible happiness and bliss by means of Sadhana, happiness and bliss, which he cannot get by deliberate endeavour through logic, or wealth. He can acquire them through equanimity of mind. So, let us turn to the teachings of Baba and save ourselves before the fall.

Sadhana is a religious process, spontaneous and genuine. True religion transcends all labels. Religions enable a man to realise that he is *not the body*. Then, man is led on to the next state, realising that he is '*nobody*'. The culmination is reached when man realises that he is '*everybody*'. Bhagavan has inspired mankind to tread along this path and progress along these three stages.

Many Sadhakas are pre-occupied with their own salvation, but, Bhagavan asserts that salvation cannot be gained in isolation. When there is only one Absolute Principle, one Brahman or ultimate reality, we must accept the fact that all beings are Divine. How then can there be such distinction between individual and society? They are but two sides of the same coin. When the Brahma-Bhavam is won, when the concept of Self is so widened that it encompasses all selves and all beings the whole Universe becomes our Self and we become the Universe. Therefore, social consciousness is the very breath of the Sadhaka: it is not *a corollary* of spiritual life, not, a preparation for it. It is inherent in the very process, the very conception, of spiritual life. It is to teach us this lesson that Baba includes *all* in His Love.

See how charmingly the toddlers of the Bal Vikas classes recite the Gita before Him. Baba has so inspired them for they are nearest to God. The child's heart is pure; it knows no distinction of caste or economic status or creed. It becomes *friendly with every other, child*; it is only the grown-ups who hate and envy and keep back. Baba wants that the child should develop into Good citizen of the World State. He desires that they must be aware of the all-pervading Supreme Spirit, which puts on Name and Form and receives adoration from the followers of all the religions of mankind. Baba has added a new dimension to the concept of the developed child.

We all talk Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema; but, individual behaviour never reflects an iota of these. Often, I mention during my Kirtans that we are Pandavas, when visiting temples but, once we leave the precincts, we turn into Kauravas, engrossed in pecuniary and worldly problems of securing power and authority.

Samadhan or restfulness, freedom from fear and anxiety can come only by transforming our habits, attitudes and desires. We have to examine ourselves rigorously, whether our morbid passions, our sordid emotions, our high vaulting ambitions are being restrained by our higher impulses. Bhagavan Baba with His Omnipresence and Omnipotence is our best master to keep us on the right track, ever.

Bhagavan Baba has four captivating aspects: Sakshatkara (he can give us the fruit of sadhana, namely the bliss of self-realisation) Chamatkara (He can draw us to His presence and keep us there through the Miracles that are His very nature), Paropakar (He inspires us to adhere to social

service as the highest and the noblest of all Sadhanas) and Samskara (His Mission is to take away the alloy of animality that has debased our divine lustre and sublimate our human-ness into God-ness).

I am always reminded of Jnaneswar Maharaj when I think of Baba or move with Him or hear Him expound religious truths. Jnaneswar is the one saint who combined Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Raja Yoga. In himself and in his teachings. In Bhagavan Baba also all these Yogas are integrated and manifest, as in no one else.

Some people call our faith in Baba mere *Andha-Sraddha*, blind faith. But, they forget that Andh-Shraddha is of two types: the Andh-Shraddha of the uneducated and the Andh-Shraddha of the educated: Blind faith of the blind and blind faith of those who have eyes but who would not see. The first type can be cured, by the religious exercises enunciated by Baba; the second can be cured by seeing the *chamatkars* or the 'miracles' of Baba, either in His Presence or in distant lands.

The best method of benefiting by the Advent of this Avatar is to seek out Satsangs where we can meet kindred souls and strengthen our faith and, devotion in Him, so that we can dedicate our lives for His Service and for realising Him as our own Self.

—*T. S. Bharde, Former Speaker, Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.*
Speech: 29-9-73: Dasara, Bombay.

Four Steps

Gratitude

Beloved Lord, Sri Sathya Sai and my brothers and sisters in devotion to God! In all parts of the world, great men are honoured by public celebrations of their birthdays, certainly it is our wish to pay honour to Him on Bhagavan's public, birthday, and that is partially the significance of this gathering. But, this is not a public meeting; it is a family gathering of Sai devotees with the common bond between us of love and devotion to Him. Thus, far deeper than the Public Birthday, the birth of Sri Sathya Sai is an event of tremendous personal significance to each of us.

At some time or other, in our life we find in our experience that all tastes turn to ashes, and we are thereupon seized by the craving to penetrate appearance and discover the underlying truth about life and about ourselves; a desperate thirst arises to find God, to drink deeply of that nectar and never let Him go.

Somehow or other, now, in this 20th century, such a craving and such a thirst tend to open the somewhat stiff doors of our dry hearts. Then, something most extraordinary and amazing comes to happen. At that moment, our Divine Father, now taken to himself the name and form of Sri Sathya Sai, enters the open door, into our life and thereby He is born to our consciousness and that for us is His real Birthday.

It is, as though in a barren and arid desert, there issues forth a great spring of pure and sweet water. The desert sands come to life; there is a verdant oasis; and it is heaven itself to the worn and exhausted. In like fashion for this traveller in the barren desert of 20th Century culture, the joy, the delight, the happiness, the gratitude felt upon finding the Divine Lord, Sri Sathya Sai, can only be measured by similar delight and gratitude to Him that lives in the hearts of each of you, His devotees gathered here in this great hall.

Having found the Lord and having briefly tasted the bliss of His Divine Presence, how are, we to capture Him, He who is the eternal spring of Love and hold Him in our hearts for ever and ever?

Swami tells us that He is ever there, wherever we are and is never absent. He tells us that it is His Divine Desire to be seated on His Throne in our heart. He tells us that for each step, that we take towards Him; there are ten steps that He will take towards us.

The First Step

In fact, the total Content of Baba's teaching deals with that first step towards Him and with the steps that follow, until at last we are face to face with Him and are able to realize through His Grace, that we are no separate and individual stops and daughters of God, but, on the contrary, are of His own nature and that in truth there is no separation and no duality.

Sri Sathya Sai is Guru. He only, is Guru; and, only Divine Guru through His Grace is able to clear away the inner darkness of ignorance and reveal the Truth that we crave and thirst for, so desperately. There is no other Guru than Him; all others are but teachers; they are outside our skin and they are limited in their wisdom, power and love.

What fools we be, faced with Divine Guru, the supreme good fortune of countless lifetimes; if we do not turn every ounce of energy, Vitality and intelligence, to the understanding and practice of Guru's teaching! What fools we be; if we do not make the living vital goal of our life, the winning of God's Grace!

Because of His compassion and love, for us His children, Sri Sathya Sai tells us quite clearly how we may win His Grace. The steps that lead to Him are described in His teachings.

The very, first step that we take towards the Divine, it seems to me, is that of Dharma, which is righteous action, one's own proper duty. We may ask how is it that allegiance to Dharma and the practice of Dharma come to be the bases and strength of one's life? Dharma, surely, has its foundation in love for God. If one loves God; it is only natural to try to please Him; and Baba tells us that Dharma, pleases Him. And, if one but calms his mind for the moment how can he help but love God?

God is Divine Mother and Father. He is the constant and ever-faithful friend and companion. He is Guru. To Him we pray. He is the innermost Voice that prompts and encourages. He is the Beloved. And outside the heart, He is manifest as Sri Sathya Sai, Mahadeva, sweet and blissful Deva. Yes, if we can calm the mind for a moment, love for God is surely there.

Thus our life becomes Dharma, and with this Dharma, Swami assures us that, without doubt, His Grace is there with us. It is this Love of God for us that is essential in spiritual lift, for, God is Guru and it is only His Grace that removes the inner darkness that keeps us bound to ignorance.

Dharma

As fully illustrated in the worldly careers of Lord Rama and Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Dharma is Divine Action and it brings divine results. Arising as it does from the love of God, and bringing with it, the Grace of God, Dharma is not only the first step, but, it can also be the final step, because it purifies The heart, and the goal of discipline and every type of spiritual practice is the purification of the heart. Baba tells us again and again, that the pure heart is God's Home, God's Ashram. He says that when the heart is fully purified all truth, will flash upon it in a moment.

The Second Step

Another step towards Him, according to Baba's teaching, is the *Dedication* of every thought, word and deed to God. Baba again and again says that work is worship. By work is meant karma; by karma is meant action. Action is modification, volitional or habitual and each such action brings about a reaction. Action binds us and makes us prisoners instead of free then, because we must experience and be entangled by the reaction. Baba says that in this way there is no escape from Samsara, the reason being, that it is impossible to avoid acting, for, even breathing is action. From the mighty law of nature—action and its binding reaction—there is only one escape.

The escape from Samsara is in the dedication to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. Baba, in His Divine Incarnation as Sri Krishna said: pray to Him only, think of Him only worship Him only, and He will bear the burden of your action. Swami, as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai says: think God, eat God, drink God, see only God, hear only God, dedicate every action to Him for He is the doer, not you.

Baba has thus declared through the ages that if action is offered to the Feet of the Lord as worship of Him, knowing that He is the Doer, that action is His, and the fruit of that action is His, and He graciously liberates us from the binding wheel of Samsara, the universal law of action and reaction, whose beginning cannot be traced but, whose ending is in Him.

Surely this Divine secret—that one can dedicate action to God as worship and be free—is the greatest and most profound of all secrets that man can unlock from the Universe. What fools we be, if we fail to pay attention to this mighty truth emphasised by Baba both now and in the ages past!

The Third Step

A third step towards the Divine that is of immediate importance, it seems to me, is Baba's teaching that we must *strike a great blow at the limiting concepts* we hold about ourselves and about the world. The world which includes our body, appears to hold an almost infinite variety of objects differing greatly from each other in quality and potential. We as persons consider ourselves to be (despite our vanities) essentially weak and subject to fear and the whims of fortune or destiny.

Baba tells us with emphasis again and again that these are false concepts about ourselves and the world, that the world is not what it seems to be, and we are not what we seem to be. He says that just as thread interweaves cloth, and that cloth is only composed of thread, God inter-weaves every atom of body and world, and that really, there is only God. For ourselves, Baba says that we are not just particles of God, but that we are fully God.

To illustrate the difference between the false concept we hold of ourselves and our actual reality, Baba tells a marvellous story that in turn was told to me by another devotee. There was a pregnant lioness. Coming upon a band of sheep she made a great leap so as to land amongst them, and catch one. While she was in mid-air, her birth time arrived and due to the complicated circumstances, she died. But the cub was born and it fell to the ground amongst the sheep, who thereupon adopted the cub as one of their own. Because it did not know any better, the cub felt itself as no different from the sheep and the ways of the sheep became the ways of the lion cub. One day, a mature lion appeared and gave his great roar. The sheep much afraid ran this way and that, and the lion cub ran just like the sheep. The mature lion seeing this was greatly astounded. He charged in the midst of the sheep, and seizing the cub, demanded to know, "You are a lion. Why are you acting like a sheep? Your nature is to roar. Now, roar." The cub thereupon, did roar and he realized that he was indeed a lion and not a sheep.

We are the cub and Baba is the Lion. The sheep is the fear-filled body, which is the world. Whereas the Lion is the Atma, fearless without body, never dying and never born. Within ourselves we should give a great lion's roar and never again believe that we are the sheep (the body) but instead always know that we are the Lion, the Atma.

The Fourth Step

A fourth step towards the Divine, which in Baba's teaching, is of paramount importance is *the repetition, of a name of God*. Baba says that just as a small torch will guide you safely to the other side of a dark forest, the name of God, which may seem so small, will guide the person who uses it safely through life. I have to confess to my fellow devotees that I am only at the beginning of the practice of God's Name and it would not be proper to attempt an elaboration. Pranams to the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Jai Sai Ram

—*Dr. John Smith Hislop*

Gopa - Gopi - Gopala

I was selected and sent as a Group Teacher to accompany the College Students from Kerala, attending the Summer Course, Brindavan, in May-June 73. I had a feeling that I knew something about Bhagavan Baba, since I had read Sathyam-Sivam-Sundaram (3 Vols.) written by Prof. N. Kasturi and other books written on Him by foreigners. But, as a result of my one month's life in the Divine Atmosphere of Brindavan in Bhagavan's Presence, seeing and listening, watching and learning, one thing has become clear to me—what I, know about Baba is nothing, when compared with what I do not know about Him. To be more precise, it has become clear to me

that I know practically nothing about Baba, that I have not so far been able to touch even the fringe of His Majesty.

Baba was, is, and will be a riddle, impossible to be solved by any knowledge acquired through the five organs or mind or intellect of man. He is the Brahman, the Paramatma, who can be defined only by the traditional method of Neti (Not this), Neti (Not this).

We can never unravel His mystery, or explain His, miracles or nature. He is the Avatar of all Avatars, come to rescue humanity. As Bhagavan Himself has said, the first letter in Baba stands for Being (Sat), the second letter A stands for Awareness (Chit) and the third letter stands for Bliss (Ananda). And, the last letter A stands for Atma; thus, he has revealed that He is the Sat-Chit-Ananda Atma, the Formless Absolute, glimpsed vaguely by the Upanishadic Sages:

The Vedas have, in unequivocal terms declared that the whole world is the creation and manifestation of His Will, and, that nothing can happen or does happen anywhere at any time without His Will, His Sankalpa. We cannot study the whole Universe and cognise the truth of this statement.

Bhagavan showed us its validity, at Brindavan, by revealing to us how every activity at Brindavan was regulated and controlled by Him and was in accordance with His Will. The way in which He moved among the participants in the Camp reminded us of the life of the Gopas and Gopis in that other Brindavan. Baba, is the Force that controls all the cows and cowherds (senses and persons led by the senses); he leads them, to the grazing lands, and brings them back to the resting place.

Bhagavan compares every Jivatma (Individual soul) to iron filings and the Paramatma to the magnet. The rust and dust on the filings have to be removed, Baba advises, in order that God might draw the individual near. This attractive force of Paramatma, we can clearly experience in the Presence of Bhagavan. People yearn for getting His Darshan, (Sight) Sparshan (Touching the Lotus Feet) and Sambhashan (talk with Him, at the Interview). Even when they come out of the Interview, where they get all three, if someone says that Bhagavan is on the balcony, they rush towards the balcony, to have Darshan again! This is nothing but Jivatma being drawn to Paramatma, the eternal primal urge, the, pang of cosmic separation, the agony of parting from the vast and the sublime.

—Prof. M. Krishnamurthy Menon

Do not be led, or misled, by others. Do not be persuaded or prejudiced by others. Inquire, discriminate, and, decide yourself. You have inexhaustible resources of strength and steadiness in your own heart; God has put them there. Decide on your path, on your own. Then only can you derive real joy while treading it. If you are forced to take a path by others, or inveigled into it, then, you will be haunted by doubt, when the first little obstacle meets you; and, you are sure to turn aside or back.

—Baba

Namasmarana

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in his previous incarnation, as Lord Krishna, towards the end of Dwapara-yuga, preached the way of Prapati (devotion) and Namasmarana (remembering the name of God) in Bhagavad-Gita to the masses. Again in this incarnation, He is repeatedly preaching about the name paths. For mankind, there is no other path, more easy to lead a happy life. But the human being based on his natural fickle mind, running restlessly, saying that he wants to become a Rajayogi, wants to learn meditation, wants to raise the Kundalini powers (spiritual powers) and uttering some mere technical jargon of the spiritual field.

The nature of the wonderful mind of ours has been described long ago by Sri Sankaracharya as, "it is a monkey. It was drunk. Then a scorpion stung him. To complete his misery a demon entered him." This is the true nature of our MIND. But we see the beggars in the street, making monkeys do many feats that means, by practice the monkey has learnt those feats. In the same way we should also bring our mind to some extent under control, says the Gitacharya in Bhagavad-Gita.

He says that by abhyasa (practice) and Vairagya (dispassion) control of the mind can be achieved. "Fix your mind on ME and establish your Reason in Me alone" said Lord Krishna. In other words, Namasmarana is sufficient. When and where should Namasmarana be done? Baba repeatedly says, "Everywhere and always." This Namasmarana is one of the important modes; ordained in the nine modes of devotion. It is the easier also. If Namasmarana is done along with Roopasmarana, remembering the Form, it is far better. By this Way our mind also can be controlled to a great extent.

Prapati is the practice of Marjalakishora or the Kitten, relationship Sarvn-bhara-samarpita attitude. As the kitten simply continues mewling in one place, placing all its burdens on the mother cat, the devotee puts complete trust on the Lord. The mother-cat holds the kitten in its mouth and removes it to more elevated paces or transport it safely through even very narrow passages. So too, the devotee places all his burden on the Lord and surrenders fully to His will. This does not however, mean lethargy, and absence of effort and failure to discharge the duties.

To win the grace of God, how should a devotee conduct himself has been enumerated in the Bhagavad-Gita. "He who is free from malice towards all beings, who is friendly as well as compassionate, who has no feeling of me and is free from egoism, to whom pleasure and pain are alike, and who is forgiving by nature, who is ever content and mentally united to Me, who has subdued his body, mind and senses and has a firm resolve, who has surrendered his mind and intellect to Me, he who is not a source of annoyance to the world, and who never feels offended with the world, who is free from delight and anger, perturbation and fear; he who craves for nothing, who is both internally and externally pure, is clever and impartial, and has risen above all distractions, who renounces the feelings of doership in all undertakings; he who neither rejoices nor hates, nor grieves, nor desires, who renounces both good and evil, and is full of devotion to Me, he who is alike to friend and foe and like-wise to honour and ignominy, who faces alike both heat and cold, pleasure and pain etc. and is free from attachment; he who takes praise and reproach alike, who is given to contemplation and content with whatever comes

unasked for, without attachment to home, fixed in mind and full of devotion to Me. My devotee never comes to harm."

Namasmarana can be done either by repeating the name of Lord mentally, or by always thinking of Lord's name and his Leelas or by singing devotional songs. Baba had been teaching `Japa, sahita Dhyana (Japa along with Dhyana). Pranayamam and Pratyaharam practises are not necessary. "Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me; and bow to Me." said Baba in Gita. It was also said; "Those who have full faith attains knowledge." Baba said in the Gita, "He who always and constantly thinks of Me, to him I am easily attainable. Devoted to his own duty, man attains the highest perfection. And the Karmayogi, who has taken refuge in Me, though ever performing all actions, attains through My grace the eternal imperishable abode. With your mind thus fixed on Me, you shall get over all difficulties by My grace. And if out of pride you will not listen to Me, you will be utterly destroyed."

Even though Baba had been preaching this, since many thousands of years still, mankind at present, is running after gurus, changing them frequently, restlessly saying that they want to learn Dhyana and earn salvation. For, the present age, nothing more is required than following the Prapati Marga, doing Namasmarana. Those who enjoy the bliss of Namasmarana alone knows the divine efficacy of the same.

—T. Govardhana Rao

Problems of Students

No Reason to Delay

BUILDERS of Future India! Patrons and Well-wishers of Educational institutions! In this holy land of ours, education is straying today into wrong directions, and encouraging wrong notions and patterns of behaviour. You are all aware of this trend, and its consequences. The sooner we set things right, the better for all concerned. For, whether the students master, the curricula or not, whether they understand, appreciate and assimilate the culture of India or not, the years roll by inexorably, time rushes past with no possibility of return; the span of life allotted to each is undergoing subtraction, every minute. Therefore, delay in this matter is unpardonable.

The years spent by these young persons as students in schools and colleges are the most crucial years of their lives. The heart of youth is pure, clean, full of enthusiasm and optimistic, eager to achieve, happy to enter upon adventure, and earnest to serve others. It does not involve much effort to direct it along beneficent channels. Of course, with equal ease, they can be directed along maleficent channels too!

The educational system must decide to, direct them to the achievement of the Divinity latent in each one. Striving towards such a goal is an essential step, for ensuring social, national and world peace and prosperity.

Humanity is like a train-full of passengers, moving in one direction. Some alight at the next halt, some get off at the station after that. Some alight a little further off. But, young persons travel longest. So, intensive care must be accorded to the problem of their education. Their lives must

be made happier more full of activity and contentment, more useful to the human community, and this can happen only when, the Divinity in them is allowed to blossom. The nation is looking forward to these young men and women, to realise its dreams of unity, integrity and prosperity; these bright young people have to confer confidence and courage, joy and enthusiasm. But, judging from the nature of the students today and from the patterns into which they are being shaped, one feels that the hope of the nation might not be realised. The coming years might witness the decline of the fine ideals of Indian culture, cherished through the millennia.

Plant Ideals

Beautiful, fruitful ideals must be planted in the tender hearts of the young. They are lovely creepers which can yield clusters of fragrant flowers, spreading the fragrance of truth and virtues. They have to be fostered with love and care, by parents, teachers and all those interested in the progress of the nation. It is a sacred responsibility, which cannot be by-passed.

The years of student life must be saturated with cooperative activity social service, tolerance, eager search for truth, and readiness to sacrifice one's interests for the good of those who are less fortunate. Moral and spiritual values have to be honoured as much, if not more than, economic and material values. Life must be a harmonious blend of these values with emphasis on moral strength as the very basis.

Students! Embodiments of the Divine Atma! There is a great and urgent need that you should delve into the problem—who exactly you are and realise that you are Divine, so that you can raise yourselves to that level, instead of remaining merely human, or degrading yourselves into the lower levels of animality. What exactly are the degrees which you earn now, after such elaborate and exhausting studies? The degrees are only begging bowls, which you can hold while presenting yourselves in front of the office, seeking jobs! Education does not fill you with self-confidence, self-reliance and self-knowledge. How can even parents, teachers and the elders give you these, when they are themselves suffering from their absence? Since they do not have these qualities, the country is in the throes of poverty, factiousness and sloth.

Saraswati and Lakshmi

Imbibe knowledge in schools and colleges with your mind fully engaged, in the task, with your hearts welcoming the acquisition; and with your soul fully concentrated. Do not try to achieve distinction, through expenditure of money! How can money bring you knowledge? Yet, the temples of the Goddess of Learning, namely the schools and colleges, have become this day temples where the Goddess of Riches is worshipped. Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning is described in the Puranas as the rival of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Riches. They are both as unfriendly as the proverbial mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. How can they be together in the same home? So, Saraswati has been practically driven out of her temple and Lakshmi has installed herself therein. Money is being demanded and paid for admitting a child to the school, for testifying that he has attained the required number of classes, for accepting his application to sit for the examination, for declaring him to have passed it, and to certify that he has secured the desired number of marks! The entire field of education has been thus degraded and disorganised, with incalculable harm to the country's prospects in the coming years.

Do It Now

The emotions that spring from the minds of youth have to be canalised and sublimated, now, while they are yet elementary and in their nascent stage. No attempt is made by educators now; but, this is their primary duty. When they neglect it, youth runs amok and ruins its own destiny. At the present time, youth is exploding and running into extreme actions of arson and other acts of disorder. The blame lies at the door of those who incite them and inflame them, before letting them loose on society. Many lament the injury to life and property that these acts result in. But, the more dangerous results are, not so clearly recognised. The students, for example, are injuring themselves, their careers and their usefulness to the community even more lastingly. They waste a great deal of hard earned money; they waste something that cannot be recovered later namely, Time.

Politicians are to be blamed and avoided, for, they inject hatred and prejudice in the minds of youth, in order to use them as instruments for their own aggrandizement. Students must keep themselves away from them; they should not allow themselves to be led into the trap. Their first duty now, is to spend the time for study; after completing the present task of acquiring knowledge they can take part in political feuds and distinguish themselves as leaders and pleaders. Now, they have to acquire skills insight, balance and the spirit of service. They have to revere, the parents, the teachers, and the elders. They have to understand the ideals of their country's culture and learn to mould their daily lives in accordance with them,

Of course, the system requires drastic overhaul. For, the sons and daughters of this land have to know the standards set by our scriptures and sacred texts, the story of the origins and development of our ancient culture, and the life-giving principles of law and justice that took root on this soil.

Why College?

Another point. Young persons have to join school or college, not merely for getting instruction in the classes, or studying some books with the help of teachers, for, if that were so, they could as well be in their own homes, and the instruction can be imparted to them while they reside there. They have to join the institutions so that they may learn to live and move with persons of their age but from different social and economic backgrounds and with different intellectual equipments and emotional peculiarities, they may learn discipline and reverence, mutual tolerance and, co-operation. Some years at school and, college will train them to react properly to society, and to the outer world.

What happens at the present time is, because of the undue importance attached by parents and society to a pass in the examination, students cram the hardest just a few days prior to the date of the examination; they then start to vomit the whole lot on to the answer papers, and return home, with a vacant head; for, the things learned have not affected their behaviour or opinion or attitude to the least. Education is not to be taken as a process of filling an empty sack and, pouring out its contents, making the sack empty again. It is not the head that has to be filled through education. It is the heart that has to be cleansed, expanded and illumined. Education is for 'life', not, for a 'living'.

The sign of the educated man is humility, humility that he has not been able to know the vast unknown that still remains to be explored. The educated man must realise that he has more obligations than privileges, more duties than rights. He has to serve the society amidst which he is placed and the heritage that has been handed down to him by his forefathers. He should be delighted to serve, and not desire to dominate. For, service is divine; service makes life worthwhile; service is the best way to use one's skills, intelligence, strength and resources.

I must tell you of the paramount importance of Love. Love is God; Live in Love; God is the embodiment of perfect Love; so, He can be known and realised, reached and won only through Love. You can see the Moon only with the help of Moonlight. You can see God only through the rays of Love, Love, the one Quality of Love, expresses itself as attachment to things, affection towards kith and kin, desire for objects, love in human relations, reverence towards the great, and devotion to God. Cultivate Love and all its aspects will be fed and fostered.

Indian Culture

Through education, you have to interpret (in the light of the principles of Indian Culture) the knowledge of Nature and its components, and the knowledge of man and his various victories and failures. Of course, Nature is the best teacher; so, be vigilant to imbibe useful and lasting lessons from her.

This college is the result of the generosity of many donors, specially, the Rajamata of Nawanagar. You must rejoice that a lady of, such magnanimity, purity of mind and devotion is so intimately associated with your College. Be grateful to her; show your gratitude, by bringing into your daily lives, the ideals of spiritual progress, moral elevation and intellectual attainment which she holds before you. Develop the faith and the steadfast persistence needed to rise, to her expectations.

I bless this Institution; so that from its portals may emerge brilliant young persons ready and able to serve the Motherland, and to add lustre to Her Glory. I love students and educational Institutions, very much. I bless that each one of you may reach high attainments in education, and earn good marks (not bad remarks!), give your parents who have toiled long for your upkeep the happiness they are hoping for, and reward the Rajamata and other elders who are watching over your studies and upbringing, with such great affection, presenting them the fame you earn by goodness and, scholarship.

—*Discourse: Rajkot (Gujarat) 1-4-73*

Pure joy

Lord, I am afraid;
Yet, I know Thou art near,
To teach, to protect and to love:
Why then do I deny thee,
Purblind, defy Thee?

Thou hast given me speech,
But bird and beast outbid me
In their praise of Thee.
The lion's roar, the peacock's dance
Reflect the glory of Thy Stance.
Thou art the Dancer and the Dance,
Thou, the Singer and the Song,
Thou art Sai—Pure Joy.

By Thy Side

Since the mind of man
Is small to understand.
Thy master plan,
Lord; you came on gentle feet
Where holy rivers meet
On Bharat's sands.

To-cheer our hearts you came,
Uplift, to shower your gifts,
Grant what, sages pine for,
Gods crave for
—Eternal Bliss.

Blest am I to be alive,
To feel your touch,
To hear your ancient voice.
Sai, by Thy side
Let me abide.

—T. Ramanathan, Colombo

Thousands may attend a Gita Discourse and sit through it in pin-drop silence, which gives the lecturer the impression of deep appreciation, single-pointed attention, and unbroken assimilation. The Lord knows how few are being transformed or even touched! The eyes see but the ears wander: The mind is unheeding; faith is unsteady; even reason is the slave of desire.

—Baba

Man walks with two legs: Here and Hereafter, Dharma and Brahman, Goodness and Godliness. If he is totally engrossed in this world, he is choosing to hop through life on one leg! He may fall any moment and break his shin; and, he does! For a happy journey through life, equal use of both legs, equal attention to both, and vigilance at every step with either foot are essential.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Said Baba

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The Message

Sumantra continued his account of what Rama had asked him to announce at Ayodhya.

"Master," he told Dasaratha, "Communicate my homage to the Preceptor. Advise my father not to grieve over what has happened," Rama said.

After this, Rama called me near him, and directed me thus, "Call together the Ministers, the Citizens of Ayodhya, and the kinsmen of the Royal Family and tell them of this request specially made by me: Only those among them who help to make my father's life happy are dear to me."

Rama said, On Bharata's arrival, convey my blessings to him, and directed him to accept the burden of ruling over the empire, and to conserve and promote justice and integrity, fostering the welfare of the people through means that are pure in thought, word and deed. Tell him that I desire him to serve the parents so well that they will forget their agony at the separation from me.

While Rama was engaged in commissioning me thus; Sita too approached the place and told me to inform you she was happily spending time with Rama with nothing wanting, in the security afforded by the brothers. She wanted me to offer her prostrations at the feet of her father-in-law and mothers-in-law. She, wanted me to tell, them not to be anxious about her, to be assured of her being happy with her lord, and eagerly expecting them to bless her always. She requested me to tell them that she inquired often of their health and welfare.

Meanwhile, the boatman realised that it was Rama's wish that he should not delay any longer; so he started to dip the oar in the river. Soon, Rama moved off. I was looking on at the receding boat, with my heart literally petrified; I must have spent along time standing there, on the riverbank. I had to return perforce to this place to carry out the orders of Rama; else, I certainly would have drowned myself in the Ganga; I had become so desperate. I had to continue my life, just for this purpose—to convey to you the message from Rama. This Ayodhya which has no Rama in, it appears to me, forlorn and fearful as a forest.

Dasaratha's Distress

Listening to the words of Sumantha and the soft sweet messages from Rama and Sita, Dasaratha could not restrain his anguish; he could not forget all that had happened; he fell in a faint.

The Emperor's breath was suffocated, like a fish which struggles to wriggle out of the thick slush into which it has fallen. Seeing his plight, the, queens burst into heart-rending wails. Words cannot describe that moment of desperate distress. Seeing their sorrow, even Sorrow could not restrain its sorrow. The agony of the queens, the agony of the Emperor, the agony of the maids of the palace, spread confusion and consternation over the entire City. The residents of the Capital scattered in terror, just like the birds of the forest, frightened at midnight by sudden thunderbolt.

Like a lotus stalk which, plucked and thrown out of the water, fades fast, the emperor was fast leaving the body. Words could not emerge from the throat, the tongue became, dry. All the senses turned dull and ineffective. Kausalya watched the emperor and she noted that the Sun of tae Solar Dynasty was setting.

She mustered courage and stepping near, she placed the head of her lord on her lap and tried to make him listen to a few words of consolation, and comfort. She said, "Lord! Sita, Rama and, Lakshmana will be arriving soon and seeing you. Hear my words; take courage; strengthen yourself." When she so compassionately prayed into his ear, Dasaratha opened his eyes, and muttered audibly, "Kausalya! Where is my Rama? Show me, show, me, where is he? Take me to him. Alas! My sweet and tender daughter-in-law is not here now by my side, And Lakshmana, where is he? I don't see him here."

The Hermit and the Curse

Dasaratha bent his head, unable to hold it up any more. The burden of grief was so heavy. A few minutes later, the Emperor remembered, the curse that was pronounced on him by the blind hermit, the father of Shravana. He sat up with a straggle, and began telling Kausalya in feeble accents, the story of that curse.

"Kausalya! On one occasion I had gone into the forest on a hunting expedition. A large number of soldiers and huntsman followed me thither. We could not meet any wild animal the whole day; but, I felt that I should not return to the Capital with empty hands, having achieved nothing. We entered the forest in the night, and waited and watched for some luck. The dawn was about to break into the darkness around us, on the brink of a vast lake, when something moved on the edge of the waters. I could also hear the sound of the movement.

I inferred that it was a big beast of the jungle and since I could shoot the arrow straight at the sound and effect a kill, I drew my bow and let go the sharp, sure arrow. It flew fast and furious and hit that animal already on the move. Suddenly, I heard the cry of pain, 'Ah', emanating from the place where it fell. I ran forward with the soldiers and lo, I found it was not a beast, I had killed; it was the young son of a hermit!

I bent by his side and prayed that he should pardon me, for the tragic error. The son of the hermit told me, "Emperor! Do not grieve. Fulfill this request of mine, the request I shall presently tell you; that will be enough requital for the sin, you have perpetrated.

My name is Shravana. My father and mother are both blind. I was spending the days of my life serving them both; that service was granting me all the happiness I needed. I was blessed with even the highest knowledge, the Realisation of the Reality. They are now suffering from excruciating thirst. I came here to this lake to take some drinking water for them. You shot at me, imagining me to be an animal of the forest. Who can overstep the rules of destiny? My present condition is such that I can no longer give this water to my parents. Therefore, take this vessel of water with you to then; go in the northerly direction, until you come to a lonely thatched hut, and, after they have slaked their thirst, describe what has happened to me here. "Do not tell them anything about me, before they slake their thirst."

The Blind Parents

Saying this, he placed the vessel in my hands, and, passed array. Kausalya! O, how miserably anxious he was for his parents! He never worried about his life which was fast ebbing away; he did not speak a harsh word to me; those soft sweet loving words he uttered are still echoing in my ears. With his last breath, he repeated the sacred Pranava, Om, Om, Om, clearly, three times.

Seeing him and his calm courageous death, I decided that I should make amends for my sin, by fulfilling his last desire. I hurried to the hut he had mentioned, and gave the vessel into their hands without uttering a single word. But, those parents started asking many questions; they inquired, "Son! Why did you take so much time? Why this delay?" they moved their hands forwards and waved them about, so that they may touch him, and feel his presence before them. I stepped back a little; meanwhile, the aged couple, wailed, "Son! Why is it that today you are not speaking to us? We shall not drink this water that you have brought, unless you talk to us and answer our queries!" In their sorrow, they rolled on the ground.

I had directed that the body of Shravana be brought behind me by the soldiers to the parents' hut. They arrived at this time with the corpse. I placed the body within reach of the mother. She wept most pathetically over the body; I couldn't look on at the tragic sight. Some time later, the mother established some little mastery over her grief and told me. "Emperor! There is no use extending our, lives hereafter, since our son has left us. We have grown old; who will serve us and foster us? Kill us too, as you killed him. Or else, erect a pyre, so that we can immolate ourselves, with our son." I bowed my head, and accepted their command. I heaped dry wood and piled up a pyre. The son's corpse was placed on it. They sat on it and by sheer exercise of Yogic power they created fire in themselves and burnt themselves.

Grief and Joy

Before they immolated themselves, they addressed me and spoke a few words. Those words are affecting me now, word by word. Their holy curse is proving true today. At this point, Dasaratha stopped some time, in order to take rest and to compose the agitation of his mind. Kausalya pacified him and gave him consolation and mental calm. She said, "Lord! What did the parents say? Tell me, I am anxious to hear." Dasaratha stayed silent for a while and replied, "Kausalya! What can I say? How can I repeat those words? Those old people, the aged couple, spoke thus: You will end your life, as we are doing now, out of unbearable agony at separation from your son; and then, they breathed their last, amidst the rising flames.

At that time, I had no son; I wondered how their curse would affect me. How could their word come true, I thought within myself. But, I also thought, that being the words of an aged sage, they cannot but become true. That meant I must have sons, so that I may be separated from them. You know how sad we were for we had no sons then. I felt that the curse might prove a blessing; I prayed it may come true; so that, even though I may have to be separated from them, I might get sons. I could not tell you this secret, till now. Now, I understand that the words of that holy hermit represented genuine truth. The agony of separation from Rama is bringing about my end. I can live no longer. I have recalled to memory the tragedy of Shravana. My courage is spent. I cannot muster it any more."

The Shadow of Death

Dasaratha was lost in the contemplation of the incidents of the past. "Rama! Rama! Rama! He cried thrice, and leaned back on Kausalya. Kausalya noticed the change that had come over him, and screamed most pathetically. The attendants and maids gathered around. They found that the Emperor had drawn his last breath. The Pity was turned into a vale of tears, a seething pool of grief. Crowds surged into the palace. The streets became fast moving torrents of weeping humanity. People cast curses on Kaikeyi for, they felt that the City had lost its eyes, as a result of her machinations.

Vasishta, the Royal Preceptor, arrived at the hall, where the body of the Emperor lay. He spoke appropriate counsel and tried to curb the sorrow of the queens. He consoled Kausalya and Sumitra, telling them about the deceased, forefathers and how they too could not escape death, in spite of their might and majesty. Since there was no one present who could officiate during the obsequies, the body was, according to the instructions given by Vasishta, kept immersed in oil so that it might not disintegrate. Vasishta beckoned a courier, and told him, "Here! Go quickly to Bharata; do not tell him a word about the death of the Emperor; but, tell him only this the Preceptor wants that you and your brother should return immediately to the Capital City." The courier fell at the feet of the Preceptor, and took leave of the Minister, before he started on the long journey in a fleet chariot.

Mysterious Fears

Ever since Ayodhya was plunged in sorrow, Bharata was experiencing various premonitions in the form of ominous dreams. He was awakened, by the terror and the turmoil which the dreams presented before him. Many nights Bharata had not even a wink of sleep. He sat up in bed, in an eerie state of expectation. He feared that some bad news was coming fast towards him. He moved out even before dawn, and, after, an early bath, he engaged himself in various rites and ceremonies in order to propitiate the Gods and avert the expected calamity. He sat long in the shrine, praying for relief. In spite of all this, he was haunted by mysterious fears and anxiety,

The dreams were persisting since fourteen days and so, Bharata had reached the very bottom of his, courage and faith. Meanwhile the courier from Ayodhya managed to reach the City of Kekaya, where Bharata was, on the fifteenth day of his long journey. When Bharata was informed of his arrival at the main entrance to the Palace, Bharata ordered that he be brought in, immediately, so that he might know what had brought him.

The courier prostrated before Bharata and prayed that he and his brother start without, the least delay, wording to the command of the Preceptor, to Ayodhya. Bharata inquired about the welfare of people in Ayodhya, plying the courier with a variety of questions, He replied that there was nothing special to report, except that the Preceptor wanted them to return soon, without delay. This was the task on which he had come and he had nothing more to say. Nor, did he know anything else.

Bharata knew that couriers would not speak more than a few words before their royal masters; and the royal masters too should not keep on talking to them, intimately, for long. Etiquette demanded that he should not converse with him for more than a few minutes. The courier too had a code of discipline and humility. So, he rose and left the chamber.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness.
(To be continued)

(Please note that this, the 46th installment of Ramakatha Rasavahini had to appear in the November Issue, but, instead, the 47th installment was published therein, due to an error which is highly regretted. We premise that care will be taken to see that readers get the serial continuously —Ed.)

Sai Family News

Malaysian Letter:

Sri. P. Lakshminarayana Rao, Mangalore, arrived by air at Kuala Lumpur, on September 22, in response to our earnest request to exhibit a few films on Bhagavan and his Divine Activities in India and Abroad. We knew about him and the films he possessed from friends in Ceylon, who had seen them when he travelled for ten days in Ceylon earlier this year. The Customs Officials at the Airport wanted custody of the films, so that they could be reviewed by the Censor Board and certified for release. The prescribed fees had also to be paid, before they could be given over. When Inquiry was made next morning, the Customs Officials returned the box of films unopened and told us that the films could be shown, and asked for no fees. This was indeed a good augury; Baba had helped us get over the initial hurdle. For three weeks thereafter, it was Baba Film Festival in Malaysia. Fifteen towns had the unique pleasure of witnessing the film shows. Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, Batanga, Burgentina, Clang, Malacca had large gatherings of eager onlookers. Temples, school halls, municipal town halls, and other spacious places were chosen in order to accommodate the people. While the films were projected on the screen Mr. Rao played tapes of Bhajans sung by Baba, as well as the English translation of Baba's speeches. This created an atmosphere of sublime silent reverence. Malaysians of all denominations attended and enjoyed the films. Many learnt from Mr. Rao details of Baba's Life and Message. The film on the Inauguration of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women at Anantapur by the President of India in the Divine Presence of Baba was widely acclaimed by all. People were impressed by the mammoth gatherings that assembled and sat in perfect order for hours to listen to Baba and sing the Bhajans. On 7th October, the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti of Malaysia was inaugurated by a large number of devotees.

Mahila Vibhag Training Programme:

Guide lines for the Bal Vikas Classes to be conducted by the Mahila Vibhags, and for the enrolment and training of Mahila Seva Dal Units have been drawn up; however, the Central Committee of the Mahila Vibhag, Bangalore City, felt that it would be very useful to gather workers in these two fields of activity, so that information and inspiration can be drawn from each other; and, they could also listen to the elders of the Organisation, and evolve a common approach and a common method of realising the common objective. The response from the units of the Organisation was very encouraging. Units from the far-flung areas of the State of Karnataka, as well as the several Units working in the Capital City of Bangalore, contributed in

all 248 delegates, for the two-day Training Session. An Exhibition of Book for Children, and a Pictorial Exhibition on the Concepts and Principles of the Sai Way of Education were arranged at the Gandhi Bhavan, where the Delegates met. A Model Lesson for Bal Vikas was also given for the benefit of the teachers. Bhagavan blessed the project in a message. Dr. M. B. Sundara Rao, the State President, inaugurated the Classes and Dr. V. K. Gokak delivered the Valedictory Address. Talks and discussions were arranged on 'Story Telling', 'Gita Chanting', 'Bhajan Singing', 'Namasmarama', 'Seva as Sadhana' and 'Sai Seva Dal—its special task'. Prof G. P. Rajarathnam spoke on Bal Vikas, Dr. (Mrs.) Annapurna Niranjana, on Home Nursing and Child Care, Sirdar S. R. Venkataramiah, on Seva Dal, Smt. Padma Embar, on Moral Education and Child Psychology, and Dr. P. S. Rao on Spirit of Seva. The delegates held some discussions among themselves and with the lecturers, on the topics dealt in the classes. The delegates dispersed in an atmosphere of thankfulness and appreciation.

—Ed.

The Birthday

Thousands gathered at the Township of Prasanthi Nilayam, the holy centre of the Sai Revolution that is fast transforming the world from within, on the 23rd November, for, it was the 48th Birthday of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. They were happy to share in the pre-dawn Pranava Recital and the Suprabhatam hymn singing and to move with the massive chorus group singing the Gory of the Lord as they went round for Nagarsankirtan.

At 7-30 a.m. Bhagavan came through the, Silver Doors of the Porch above, and gave Darshan. It was the occasion of the hoisting of the Prasanthi Flag, over the Prasanthi Mandir. Dr. V. K. Gokak addressed the vast gathering on the meaning and significance for us of the Sai Avatar. Bhagavan spoke of the need, for world peace and human security, of Faith in an omnipresent omniscient, and omnipotent God, who can be won by Love, and Love only. He called, upon the people to transform their hearts into abodes of Peace (Prasanthi Nilayams) and hoist on them the Flag, symbolising harmony and tolerance.

At 9 a. m. Bhagavan visited the Samadhi of His Parents: He distributed gifts to the students of the Srimati Easwaramma High School and other schools of the Puttaparthi Village; who were assembled in the Samadhi premises. He gave cloths to needy women and children. During Bhajan, at the Poornachandra Auditorium, He gave sweets (laddus) to every one present.

In the evening, all the tens of thousands assembled at the Auditorium, for the Public Meeting. Dr. John Smith Hislop from Mexico addressed the gathering on the steps in Sadhana that can earn for us the Grace of Bhagavan. Sri Sainath Chandavarkar, from Calcutta, a B. Com. student of the II year Class at a Calcutta College, who had attended the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality in 1972 and 1973, spoke on the transformation that Bhagavan blesses us with, through His Love and His example, Bhagavan, in His Discourse, explained the effects of the three Gunas on spiritual life, and exhorted us to cultivate faith and sincere yearning for Truth. Bhagavan sang a few Bhajans, which the mammoth gathering sang after Him with ecstatic jay.

Later, Bhagavan fulfilled the prayers of the vast multitude for Darshan on the Jhoola. At night, the renowned actor of the Andhra stage and screen, Sri. V. Raghuramiah and party put on boards, the Telugu play, "Sri Krishna Tulabharam".

On the 24th evening, Sri Ghantasala, and Srimati P. Susheela, famous playback singers of South India sang in Bhagavan's Presence a number of devotional songs, which thrilled the vast audience. Then Swami Karunyanandaji of the jeeva karnaya Samajam, Rajahmundry addressed the gathering on Bhagavan's Message. Bhagavan in His Discourse, elaborated on the karma, Bhakti and Jnana paths of Realisation and declared that each of them is but a step towards the other. He emphasised, that Love and Tolerance are the signs of the aspirant whatever path he may tread.

The Festival filled every one with delight, and enriched all with a new vision of the Reality and a new hope for achieving its Realisation. —*ED.*

The Family in the Sai Era

In the world today, especially in America, the sacred role of the mother in family life has reached a deplorable state. Human family life has retreated far from the ideal which God intended for all.

The key words today are, 'birth control' and 'woman's liberation' (from the home). Meanwhile the family unit disintegrates and so does Society. Divorces and adultery are as common as marriage, due to the disturbing lack of God-oriented homes. Children are too often raised in a haphazard non-spiritual fashion. An American psychologist warns that a nation that ignores children as its greatest natural resource has no future.

Baba says, "Good mothers make a good nation. Praise be to Sai Baba, for, from His all-seeing, world rejuvenating will, a 'counter-movement' to the family disintegration is striking root, in the world today. In America, India and around the world, many spiritually evolved young families are initiating unity through love in their homes, and are gaining fulfillment thereby. Baba's words are glistening guide-posts, to the new pathways which lead to wholesome family life.

The home must be a haven from the world in the turmoil of transition; it must be; a stronghold of culture, health, simplicity, and—above all—Joy in God. The "Sai Home" is a Refuge of Love that welcomes into the family circle, Sai's 'incoming' souls; these; new-born children are evolved spirits, destined to inaugurate the New Era of Peace through Love. Parents must richly fertilise the soil in which, their treasures—our children—are to grow, work and serve.

The mother has to be strong in mind and body, ripe in culture with her character sanctified, by holy thoughts and steeped in love and devotion, "such is the encouragement of the Lord." Children must grow up in an atmosphere of reverence, devotion, mutual service, and cooperation. Even as children they must know the amazing handiwork of God, the most amazing, being themselves." Yes. It is a joy to watch one's own child growing in natural ahimsa

(harmlessness, love, tolerance) toward even the smallest of God's creatures. And these children develop in the unparalleled security given by the knowledge that God Himself is here on earth to love and guide them.

Perhaps never before has the Avatar brought such comfort to that weary lot called 'mothers'. I once felt disheartened by my endless tasks, and disillusioned in their purpose... but, Sai Baba seemed to say, "If you, as wife and mother, do not know the art of home-making, then, you know nothing! Respond vigilantly to your home, in the same way that I, the Mother of the World, cares for the earth, supplying it amply, with natural loveliness". The dis-eases of the World have to be kept at bay, beyond the Divine Walls of the Home. We may recall the line from the Psalm and do accordingly: "I will walk within any house, with a perfect heart".

Sai Baba points out the Noble Path to all housewives, as did the ancient scriptures. Total fulfillment can be found within the realms of the home, the family and God. In the Dharma Vahini, Baba has marked out the duties of the mother. It has an inspiring message for wives and mothers: "if the wife feels that the husband's home is sacred, that home itself will endow her with every skill and qualification. There is no place and anywhere which excels such a home for her. One saintly poet has sung that it is her temple, her school, her playground, her political arena, her field of sacrifice, her hermitage."

Mother hood is a service that one does, unto the entire Universe. "Women's Liberation" is a household phrase today; but, women shall be genuinely liberated by the Avatar in the Sai homes themselves, serving with love and care; husband and children. The female soul thereby grows towards its own self-realisation. When she makes sacrifices in her own personal life for the sake of her husband and children, she learns the great lesson of the inter-dependence of all beings. She is blessed by an inkling; a microcosmic inkling, of the way in which God ever loves and cares for His Children.

We must never think of our work, of any work, as insignificant. Sai Baba allows us to see that the arts of family life were never more needed in the world than today in this crucial phase in the career of humanity.

Baba says, "The dawn of Peace can be brought about only by learning, practising, and reaching the art of living together in peace and amity in the home. Then, peace can be established in the world, without delay and travail. Let the Satsang start with your homes."

The condition of the world is but a reflection of the condition of the family unit. With many Sai Families springing up in joy, love and mutual service in many parts of the globe, Hope is bright.

Together, we are setting foot on the triumphant pilgrimage towards the Golden Era of the Lord. May Baba bless us all.

—K. Shultz; Tustin, California

The Festival of Lights

Legends

Some days in the year are marked out as holy days, in the calendars of all human communities. They are distinguished by greater attention being paid for worshipping deities, propitiating the deceased, praying to the forces of nature, and similar elevating spiritual exercises. They are occasions to remind man of the God without and the God within. Such holy days are prescribed and observed in India also, along with some other festival days. One such festival is Deepavali, the festival of lights, which people are celebrating today. Deepavali means, a garland or festoon of lights, the most characteristic way in which the festival is observed by all.

Illumination, such as is done today, is a sign of victory, of triumph over some foe or, some, impending obstacle to happy living. It is a way of expressing one's joy and attracting the attention of others to one's achievement of unexpected happiness. Festivals of which illumination is a part are found among the Parsis, Christians, and Muslims. They are thus celebrated in Malaysia, Nepal, Japan and a host of other countries.

There are countless legends which seek to explain the origins of Deepavali. In Northern India, it is believed to be the day when Sri Rama was crowned Emperor, after his return from exile. In Kerala, it is believed to be the day when his grateful subjects welcome Emperor Bali, who was allowed to visit his erstwhile kingdom just for one day in the year. The Lord had trampled him down into the nether regions, as a punishment for his egotistic tyrannical expansive program of conquest. But, He melted a little when he pleaded for mercy, and allowed him to return to earth for just one day out of the three hundred and sixty-five, and his subjects to welcome him, with illumination and fire-works.

The most widely current among the legends refers to the demon Naraka whom Lord Krishna, accompanied by His consort, Sathyabhama or Sathya, destroyed in battle, this day. Naraka was the son of mother earth, as the story goes, of Bhoo-mata. She asked for a boon from the Lord, that the day should be observed, in this memory, as a day of light, of joy, and the sharing of joy.

Therefore, hundreds of tiny lamps are lit this evening and kept in rows before and within every home in India today; but, few are the lamps that are lit in the cavity of the heart to destroy the darkness that lies thick within! Deepavali is the day when old clothes are discarded and new ones worn; when the home and its precincts are swept clean, given a new look, and made to appear fresh and fine. Flowers are arranged in lovely designs in each room and in the courtyard; festoons of green add charm to every door. But, even while doing all this, attention has to be paid to the discarding of worn-out prejudices and predilections, the adoption of new habits of love and mutual respect, the freshening of one's attitude towards one's kith and kin and brothers and sisters of all creeds and castes, the hanging of festoons of friendship and fraternity over, the door-sill of the heart. This will make the festival really meaningful and fruitful; it will be saved from the calumny of being an occasion for pomp and barren hilarity.

Naraka

Who exactly is this Naraka, the demon Naraka-asura; let us inquire. He is described as a tyrant, who had no reverence towards elders and saints, who was afflicted with a severe type of land-hunger who looted and plundered unchecked, who carried away princesses and damsels by the hundred and threw them into prison without any compunction and who never repented for any of his crimes and sins. When the good men of the world appealed to Lord Krishna for succor. He invaded his kingdom, laid siege to his capital city; and overwhelming his forces, allowed His queen, Sathya, to slay him on the battlefield.

This legend has a profound under-current of meaning, which you should not miss. Naraka is an *asura*, a demonic person. His city is named, *Praag-jyothisha-pura*; *praag* means the previous; *jyoti*, means light; and *sha* means, forgetting or ignoring. So, the City's name means—The city of those who have laid aside the previous light, that into say, the City of those who are ignorant of the *atmic* splendor. No wonder they are demons! No wonder they were lustful; full of hatred, greed, envy, and egotism. They had become so lost in their sins that Lord Krishna did not vouchsafe to give them the honor of being killed by His hands. He directed Sathya to destroy them. Yes. Ignorance so fundamental and so deep can be destroyed only by the flash of *sathya* or truth.

Egoism is of the earth, earthy not of heaven, heavenly. So, Naraka is the son of the earth. And, he is called Nara-ka, *nara* means, man, who knows his *manas* (mind), who practises *manana* (discriminating reflection on what he has heard and what he has been taught). But, *naraka* which also means hell, is the name appropriate to one who believes he is the body and toils to cater to its needs and its clamor. When man grows in physical strength, economic power, mental alacrity, intellectual scholarship and political authority, and, does not grow in spiritual riches, he becomes a danger to society and is calamity to himself. He is a Naraka to his neighbors and his kin. He sees only the many, not the One; he is drawn by the scintillating manifold into the downward path of perdition. *A-suras* have another name in Sanskrit—*Nakthancharas*, those who move about in the dark. This is a fair description of their pathetic condition. They have no light to guide them; they do not recognize that, they are in the dark; they do not call out for light; they are unaware of the light. Their intellect has become the bond slave of their passions and their senses, instead of establishing itself as their master. When at last, truth appears before them and overwhelms them, they recognize the One and merge happily in it.

The Lamp

The lamp is not merely the symbol of the knowledge of truth. It is also the symbol of the One, the *atma* that shines in and through all, this multiplicity. Just as with one lamp a thousand lamps can be lit, and the One is as bright as ever in spite of the thousands deriving light from it, so too, the *atma* illumines the *jiva* (individual selves) and shines in and through them, without undergoing any diminution in its splendor. The *atma* is the cause; all else are effects.

Naraka sought to act freely, as his emotions and passions dictated. But, the Sanskrit word used for this kind of license has another and a deeper meaning: *swaiccha*, one's desire, means, the desire of the One, the *atma*. The *atma* desires, if at all, only for merger, for absorbing the sparks that have emanated from it, the waves that play upon its surface. The *Upanishads* call upon man to roam about in the jungle of life as the King of beasts, the Lion, and not as a sheep

panic-stricken, cowardly, ashamed to lift its head. Face the six foes that are ferociously gnawing the heart of man—lust, anger, attachment, pride, hatred, greed—and be **men**, *nara*, not *naraka*, who cringes before these foes and tries to propitiate them by yielding to their demands. That is the lesson that Deepavali teaches you.

Tamas

The Vedic prayer is, *Thamasomaa jyothir gamaya*: from darkness, lead me, O Lord, into light. Lead me from the blindness of ignorance into the vision of the truth. Cleanse the mind and the truth will be reflected therein. This is not as difficult as some people imagine. The tiny ant can travel a hundred miles, if only it puts its leg forward and starts. Faith and steadiness will achieve the rest of the journey. But, if an aeroplane that can fly faster than sound does not rise from the tarmac, it can only be, where it is. Each one must first decide on what is worth living for and striving for. For this, one has to meet and converse with elders who have traveled along the same route; one has to taste the bliss of realization that their lives express. And, inspired by their example, one must practise what they prescribe, with single-minded confidence.

When man fails to use his attainments for the welfare of others he becomes a *naraka-asura*, hellish demon. But, when in a competitive race for individual glory, he spends billions on getting to the moon and bringing rocks from its crust, instead of feeding millions who starve down below and promoting the prosperity, of backward nations; he is only condemning himself. Even the best of things can be misused by, wicked men. Ravana, Shishupala, Kamsa and other demonic persons mentioned in the Indian *Puranas* and epics had vast scholarship, enormous economic and military power, and even immense yogic and occult skills won by years of austerity and disciplined living. But, they could not earn one skill, the skill to suppress the ego, and so, they became too obstinate, too obstructive, and too dangerous to be allowed to live! The, lesson taught by the careers of Naraka and of Bali is that man should be master of his ego if he is to succeed in the art of successful living.

Dhana

Deepavali is also a day dedicated to the Goddess of riches, called, Dhanalakshmi. They celebrate the day as *Dhanalakshmi puja* day in many states of, India. Newspapers highlight the celebrations with big headlines. But, riches when one comes by them, have to be revered as some thing given on trust, and must be used for the amelioration of the wants of society, and not for personal aggrandizement. When people use it for parading their wealth they become ludicrous specimens of humanity. How can wealth and scholarship shine, except against the background of virtue and humility? Riches may come or riches may go; scholarship may be; acquired or may not be acquired; even joy and grief may come and go. Whatever happens, man must be unmoved; he must not give up his equanimity. He must not swerve from the path, that he has chosen towards the goal.

There was a merchant once who, while walking through the streets of Benares [city in Northern India], was suddenly confronted by two sisters who were frantically quarrelling over the issue, who was fairer! They were none other than Dhanalakshmi and her famous sister, Daridralakshmi; the Goddess of poverty! They stopped the merchant and compelled him to agree to be the judge; they asked him to pronounce who was the fairer of the two. The merchant feared to say that Dhanalakshmi was fairer; for then, the Goddess of poverty might inflict her boons on

him; he feared to declare that she was the fairer, for, then, her sister, Dhanalakshmi might deprive him of her favor. So, he devised a stratagem, to save his skin. He asked that the sisters walk a few steps, forward and backward, in front of him; he stood silent for a while watching their slow deliberate comings and goings, and then, he asked them to come near him, in order to hear his judgment. He said, "Dhanalakshmi is fairer when she comes towards me; Daridralakshmi looks fairer when she goes away from me; how then can I give a definite verdict?"

This was a clever reply, framed to escape punishment. But, you should not change the face of truth to please people; utter what you have in mind, act according to the words you utter. That is the safest, the easiest and the most correct procedure. That is how a self-respecting man should behave. Nothing is more right than truth. Do not play false to the God, in you; being led into evil through fear or greed. March along, straight, never deviating towards falsehood or trickery. Do not be attracted away, by the glamour of name and form; seek the atma, with one-pointed zeal. This is the message I give you on this festival of lights.

—Bhagavan's Discourse 25-10-73 Prasanthi Nilayam

Your Eyes

The Love in your Eyes
made me forget my existence
and I soared with you
to new peaks of ecstasy.

The Fire in your Eyes
burnt my soul to cinders
and I writhed in torment
of helpless, suppressed feelings.

The Pity in your Eyes
brought forth tears from
my penitent flesh
and I suffered with you.

The Anger, in your Eyes
gave my mind exquisite pain
and, I reached a crescendo
of fused temperaments.

The Pain in your Eyes,
haunted my consciousness

and I resolved to try to
see joy in those pools of emotion.

The Fulfilment in your Eyes
the Gratitude in my heart
and, I, unaware of the surroundings
gazed, spellbound, into limpidity;

—Chaitanya

What Are You?

You are that; tat twam asi—
Who know the truth, whatever it may be,
You are that, tat twam asi— (Sathya)
Whose truth is eternal, neither he nor she,
Not slave to temporal love.

You are that, tat twam asi—
Who walk in the valley fear without fear,
You are that, tat twam asi— (Dharma)
Whose path is straight; narrow and clear,
The way of perfect love.

You are that, tat twam asi—
In whom faith can move the tallest mountains,
You are that, tat twam asi— (Shanti)
Whose thoughts flow like crystal fountains,
Overflowing with selfless love.

You are that, tat twam asi—
Which loves without reason, without motives,
You are that, tat twam asi— (Prema)
Which loves without cause, without emotion
Justification of love.

You are that, tat twam asi—
Who turn the other Cheek to an enemy,
You are that, tat twam asi— (Ahimsa)
Who love your neighbour more than then,
For love, of love, to be, from love.

These are the 5 Principles of Virtue set out by Sri Sathya Sai Baba in his inaugural speech on the first day of the 1973 Summer Course.

—Mukanda Kumari