

Baba's Perception

—Sri N. A. Palkhiwala

Some of you might be aware, as I am, of various things which are said today by people who call themselves rationalists and scientists. I have nothing against rationalism and science. In fact, I would be proud to call myself a rationalist and a scientist. But I think what is being missed is that there is no dichotomy, there is no contradiction between science and spiritual values. A man who really and truly works in science will never believe that science can give the last answer to every problem—either of men or of the universe. This is accepted by some of the greatest scientists themselves. Sir Isaac Newton, who is as great as any scientist who ever lived, did believe that there were great spiritual forces which play their role in determining the destiny of men of which man himself knew nothing. Sir Arthur Canon Doyle, Sir James Jeans—They were all great believers in spiritual values. It did not lower their status as scientists, but on the contrary it gave a certain fulfillment to what they did in the scientific field. Sir James Jeans, one of the greatest Physicists of our time came to the conclusion, after devoting decades to the study of science, that perhaps this world may have to be looked upon not as a great machine, but as a great Thought, the thought of God, and it is just the thought that has been translated into the material sphere. So the world is Thought and you can imagine what you can do with a thought. You can analyse it, you can probe it but ultimately there will be some illusive thing about it which will escape you and me. And, it is Baba's great perception which enables him to look at the spirit, the spirit behind the universe, the spiritual values which alone can re-generate this nation, and I think the whole nation should be grateful to such a great moral and spiritual Force who has dedicated his whole life to the service of this country.

You might be interested to know some facts ignored when people talk of science. The very latest discovery came about a fortnight ago. You will find a write-up in the Times of London. The scientists believed that the atom is the smallest particle. But they were proved to be wrong. They found that now there are neutrons, electrons and protons which go to make up the atom. But there is something else which was missing which they call 'CHARM', which is the name they have given to the particle which lives according to this latest discovery some one millionth of a millionth of a second. This is the entire life span of this particle 'charm'. One millionth of a millionth of a second, and in that short period of time, it moves one-fifth of a millimeter. Now you can imagine how much science can know when it comes to a problem like this. That is why it has been rightly said by Sir James Jeans that while the river of science goes back upon itself, it seems to progress and then, you find something said or discovered which shows that what you thought yesterday was wrong. The great thing about spiritual values is that they continue ever-lastingly.

What the Rishis taught 5,000 years ago in India is what Baba is preaching today. There is no change in it because these are eternal values. When Baba teaches discipline, service and love, these are values which will not change; but, scientists come and go and whatever the advances made in the fields of knowledge, these eternal values remain constant for ever. It is only when the scientist begins to understand that, that he can be truly called a scientist. Otherwise, his mind just blinkers, his eyes are fixed upon something beyond the region of which he is able to see nothing. This has to be said because very often as I have said already, people are making a mistake of thinking that science is in contradiction to spiritual values. Nothing can be farther

from the truth. May I, on your behalf and mine tell Baba how deeply touched we are by his great love for all of us and for the momentous work that he is doing for the re-generation of the Indian nation. I think it is by efforts like this that India will become what Sri Aurobindo predicted India would be, the great Moral Leader of the World.

—*From Speech at Dharmakshetra 12-12-1976*

Brindavan—Bethlehem

Christian Charity, Brotherhood and Love cheered the hundreds who sang Carols in chorus along the streets of Kadugodi Village, adjacent to Brindavan in the early hours of Christmas Day, 1976. The Villagers,

Silent night, Holy night
All is calm, All is Bright
Round yon virgin, mother and child
Holy infant so tender and mild
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, Holy night
Son of God, Love's pure light

It was indeed the Happiest Christmas Morn for every one who shared the unique delight. Bhagavan gave His Christmas Message in the evening, at the end of an eight hours Bhajan Sessions. A Festival Dinner the students of the Sathya Sai College, and over a hundred oversea devotees paid homage to Sathya Sai with Carols, at Brindavan. Baba gave Darshan from the terrace of Brindavan, while the devotees sang:

Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With a dawn of redeeming grace
Jesus Lord at Thy birth

Silent night, Holy night
Hail to thee, Lord of light
Sathya Sai, Thy name so sweet
Praise we bring to Thy Lotus Feet
Bless the world with Thy love

around a Christmas Tree in one of the Halls of the Brindavan Complex brought joy overflowing into every heart. Bhagavan's Blessings inspired all to deeper dedication and more intense Sadhana.

Darshan

The long and tidy lines sit silent as the sands;
Men to one side: women on the other.
A mother cradles bay on outstretched arms.
Small children squat in awed solemnity.
Most people seek the shade, but, failing that,
They sit in patient resignation thro' weary hours.
"Forget the Body," Baba says, "Think only of soul."

But, Love it is that keeps them there,
Unmoving, in the Sun's bright glare.
And, yet, He has not come.

Ah! There, a sudden stir ...Heads turn
Seeking as Sunflower seeks her God—the Sun,
Their Sunand Moonand Star-and Firmament.
And, Lo! The Loved Face and Form are there.
The longed-for Flash of saffron-red.
He slowly moves and with infinite Grace
While hearts stand still in trembling ecstasy.

Will He come this way? Come thus far?
Take letters from that outstretched hand
Or lay His own, blessing packet or book?

But, look! He pauses, moves His Hand
In the familiar gesture of Creation,
Gives Vibhuti to a woman here, an infant there—
His Hand upon its head. Faces are eager,
Hands in fervent supplication, hungry eyes,
Quick in a moment—just a flash, it seems.

He passes by—even the last in the farthest line.
He mounts verandah; pauses for a look
At all the souls come in concrete form,
Many, from half the world away—to greet this God.

He turns, takes a few steps—the doorway—He is gone!
The hundreds rise, flexing their limbs,
Loosening cramped muscles and backs—
Even the brief glimpse of that beloved Face
Makes the dreary hours a treasured memory
Because the culmination was sublime.

—*Dorothy Plant, Hongkong*

Five Days of Bliss

Bhagavan flew into Bombay, on the 10th December, and reached Dharmakshetra at 11 A.M. when thousands of Devotees were offering Bhajan. He moved among them and granted them the coveted Darshan. On the 11th, mammoth gathering assembled for the Bhajan sessions, both in the morning and the evening hours. On the 12th forenoon, Baba visited Ulhasnagar in the Thana Disirict of Maharashtra. An unprecedentedly heavy gathering of over two hundred thousand eager seekers welcomed Bhagavan there and listened with rapt attention to His Discourse exhorting them to cultivate Love and the spirit of self-less Service. While returning to Bombay, Bhagavan visited the. Central Jail at Thana, and at the assembly of the prisoners, He sang some Bhajan songs which thrilled them into ecstasy. In the afternoon at Dharmakshetra, Bhagavan addressed the Office-Bearers of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations of Maharashtra State.

On the morning of the 13th a gathering of handicapped children from the institutions in Bombay City where units of the Organisation are rendering Social Service, offered their homage to Bhagavan at Dharmakshetra and Bhagavan gave the children gifts that they will cherish with gratitude. In the evening, at the Public Meeting at Dharmakshetra, Bhagavan distributed Certificates to members of the Mahila Seva Dal who had finished their training in Civil Defence at Bombay. Sri Palkhivala, the renowned jurist and legal expert then addressed the gathering. Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourse which filled every one with inspiration and guidance.

On the 14th, Bhagavan witnessed the preview of a Film on Shirdi Sai Baba as well as of Documentaries on the Service Activities of the Sathya Sai Organisation. In the afternoon, He departed by plane from Bombay, leaving the immense numbers of devotees sad at the conclusion of a happy five days, but grateful that He had showered this rare Grace on them.

Love is the article that is most scarce today in the world. There is no love in the home, between father and son, between husband and wife, between brother and brother. There is no love between teacher and pupil, neighbour and neighbour, elders and youth, employer and employed. Living has become very artificial. Your duty is to prove by your thoughts, words and deeds that Love, based on the awareness that the One God is the motivator in all, can solve all problems involving fear and hatred. Be Lamps of Love; become Premaswarupas. That is the consummation of spiritual endeavour.

—Baba

Health and Happiness

The 5th of December was celebrated as Medical Services day by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, all over the world; the Seva Samiti, Bangalore, had the unique privilege of having its celebrations in the immediate Presence of Bhagavan at Brindavan, Whitefield. They inaugurated the Oxygen Cylinder Supply Service for emergencies, to be used by private medical practitioners of the City. They presented an Anaesthesia Unit to the Sathya Sai Hospital, Whitefield. They gave cassettes with the recordings of Bhajan songs as well as Braille rendering

of the texts of the songs, to three institutions for the Blind. They presented a wheel chair to a polio afflicted child, as well as crutches to a few crippled young men. They also placed well-equipped First Aid Boxes in the hands of a bunch of trained Seva Dal members, living in various sections of the City. A team of expert doctors began a project for an intensive medical check-up of the students of Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce. Bhagavan blessed the gifts as well as the recipients. Then, Bhagavan spoke on the twin needs of health and happiness and commended the efforts of the Samiti in undertaking such useful projects.

The scriptures speak of four goals for human endeavour—Dharma, Artha (Wealth) Kama (Fulfillment of Desire) and Moksha (Liberation). No one of these can be achieved without health. Not even the smallest task, a task of even the fraction of a second, can be carried out successfully without a healthy mind and body. Health is mostly a matter of good habits and good mental attitudes. These are cultivated through the process of education.

Men have devised various modes of education, and various curricula for training that will help better living and more efficient service to the community. But, the most rewarding education is, certainly, spiritual. What is the real objective, if it is not spiritual? asked Prahlada of his father. Vemana the mystic poet of Andhra declares, "One should learn most the art of avoiding death." Sri Krishna says in the Gita, "I am Adhyatmavidya among all the Vidyas," meaning that of all subjects of study, the study of the soul and its relation with God and Nature is the most beneficial.

However, even the most brilliant scholars are illiterate in the spiritual field. They are in the dark, though standing in the full splendour of the sun; they are thirsty, though standing knee-deep in the pellucid stream. Though they are, more intensely than anything else, the undying Atma, they impose fear, anxiety, weakness and desires on themselves and suffer. Of what use is education if it cannot equip man with confidence in his Atmic Reality and give him purity of heart, detachment from sensual cravings and faith in his strength? Education must make man aware of his innate Divinity and arouse spirituality.

When that lamp is lit in his consciousness it will illumine his every thought, word and deed. Search for joy in yourself; do not seek it from outside, from the ever-changing objects in nature. Your truth is the truth of creation; you form the world you design. The angle of your vision decides the picture you get of Nature. Do not depend on the vision others develop and correct your own.

The education of past ages was totally different from what is called by that name now, in both content and aim. Then, the goal was the conferment of self-knowledge, self-control. But, the most widespread feature in educational institutions today is "absence of faith in the validity of the education imparted." The products of the system are embodiments of anger, fear, pleasure-seeking and envy. They are unhappy and sour; they are not delighted at the chance to serve and to share in the adventure of living. Anger and envy turn men into wild vicious tools of violence.

There is a proverb which warns us against four evils which have to be completely uprooted; or else, it says, we are in for a quick recrudescence of the same. An illness must be cured fully; if a

small symptom persists, it may through inadvertence, flare up into serious proportions soon. A fire has to be completely put down; a stray spark left unnoticed may grow into a flame and a conflagration that spells disaster. A loan has to be repaid without balance; for even if you allow the lender to retain a rupee out of a thousand as the balance of loan to be repaid later, the interest on it will accumulate so fast that the thousand rupee loan will be restored in all its awesome terror pretty soon. So too; hatred has to be fully wiped off the mind; for, even if a slight tinge of it is allowed to lurk, circumstances might fan it again into a storm which becomes difficult to allay. Love all, in spite of whatever the provocation, to give up that attitude. Love all, in spite of whatever may tempt you to give up that love.

Anger, lust and hatred have deleterious effects on health. They breed worry and rob peace. If you face the worry, and analyse it, you will find that it is a flimsy foe. It will disappear as soon as you confront it. But, if it is welcomed and installed in the mind, it will eat into the vitals and ruin life. It will sap the springs of joy and promote grief. Conquer worry by developing faith in God and contacting the Divine through prayer. I shall illustrate this by means of a story.

The son-in-law arrived at his mother-in-law's house! She was extremely poor, living on the scanty earnings of daily toil. But she managed to provide him a festive meal the first day; the next day, the fare became poorer, the third day, it was worse, and the fourth day, she could scarce give him a coarse meal. He became a problem for her. How to persuade him to leave? It would be most unpleasant, besides being highly insulting. And, she had come to the end of the tether. So, she took refuge in Vedanta. She discoursed to the son-in-law on evanescence of life, the stupidity of living for the sake of food rather than eating for the sake of living, the absurdity of catering to the cravings of the tongue etc. The son-in-law saw through her game; he said, "Dear Mother-in-law! I am in no mood to listen to your Vedanta. I know that there is no place like the mother-in-law's house for happy living. Why, our legends say that the gods too know it well. Siva is living in his mother-in-law's place the Himalayas. Vishnu stays on the Ocean of milk, where his consort, Lakshmi was born." The mother-in-law had, at last, to take the extreme step of locking the door and leaving the village, so that she could get rid of the fellow who had determined to stay. That made him quit in no time.

This story has a moral. The body is the mother-in-law's house into which the son-in-law, Worry, has come. He will not leave, even if you teach him detachment and give him sane advice. He will leave only when you give up the attachment to the body and the senses, when you become aware of the triviality that is inherent in life. Realise that the world has only a relative value and that the absolute is more lasting and more capable of yielding Bliss.

Of course the body is essential as an instrument for gaining the goal of life. But, that does not mean that you should cater to its every call. Be its master, not, its slave. Once you start listening to its fancies, there is no end to the troubles it will bring upon itself and upon you. Even a new car needs petrol, but, pour into the tank only up to its capacity. Food is only a drug to cure the illness of hunger and clothes are devices to ward off the in-clemencies of the weather. Have limits for both food and recreation. When you reflect on it deeply, you will find that life is a match-box with just one stick left. A young man was lighting his cigarette with a matchstick, when his friend appeared and began asking questions; but he got no reply. When at last, the cigarette was nicely lit, the reply was given. When the friend asked why he was silent so long,

the man said, "I had only one single stick in the box. If, through carelessness it went out, how could I have a smoke?"

You have just this chance; if you don't use this life to realise the Reality, it is a sad waste. Get the flame of the Atma lit, with all the care you can bestow; don't allow any disturbance to succeed in postponing the consummation; be vigilant. What can one achieve; after the body falls and is buried or burnt? And, what can power, authority, wealth or scholarship avail, if wisdom has been lost? Or, if faith in God has not taken root? The devotee can even bind God to his will; for God will assume the Form he craves for and devise the victory he prays for.

The devotee should not be limited to his own happiness. He must cultivate sympathy with others and love to be bound to them by bonds of love. To leave others unattended in sheer selfishness is the sign of the animal, indeed, of the worst of them. Such exist only as a burden on the earth and they only exhaust the food resources it has!

Nasyamaatma balaheenena labhyah, say the Vedas. The Atma cannot be attained by the weak. Therefore, the World Council has advised that this day be devoted to the problems of the handicapped and the diseased, the weakened sections among brothers and sisters, and to carrying on some useful projects. The weak will be terrorised by the strong; that is the nature of this world. Even monkeys and dogs will frighten them. But, if you are strong and brave, and stand still facing them, they will flee with the tail between their legs. So, what the weak require is Atmic strength, more than physical strength. A brave mind and a confident spirit—these can achieve victory over the fiercest of foes. In the world, there are millions of defectives and handicapped persons. Why should it be so? The question has deep implications which you cannot unravel. He who knows all knows this too. For each is given the knowledge up to his level. The doctor cannot judge the engineer nor the engineer the doctor. The plane cannot move on rails nor the train take to the air. Each must follow its own line, respect its own limitations. Swadharma nidhanam sreyah; paradharma bhayaavaha, says the Gita. Prosperity lies in following one's path; fear lurks when one takes up another's path.

One word of caution. It is more creditable to avoid doctoring yourself and escape illness altogether. Even when illness comes upon you, many can be cured by diet control, fasting or some such simple remedies. The dog when it has fever will not cast a glance at its favourite foods, flesh or milk. It will inflict a fast on itself. But, man has no control over his tongue. He may be having a temperature of 105 degrees; yet, he clamours for a heavy plate of idlis and sambar. There is a close relationship between the sights, sounds and passions that we entertain and the quality of our bloodstream. Bad thoughts, bad emotions, and bad habits contaminate the blood and lead to blood pressure defects, heart attacks etc. These diseases are spreading fast in societies where evil habits and evil talk are becoming fashionable.

Doctors too very often create fears which bring about what they warn us against. If they intimate that a person's heart is getting weaker, they only hasten the process; the words instill fear; fear leads to greater weakening. If you are strong in faith and believe that you have a Divine Guardian, you can resist such fears and escape the consequence. There was a doctor once who lived in a bungalow at the very entrance to the town. The story goes that one morning he saw Dame Cholera entering the town; he asked her what was her intention, that is to say, how many

victims she was after. She replied fifty; but, by evening, a hundred had died. Challenging her when she was leaving the town, the doctor asked her why she had taken fifty more lives. She replied, "I killed only 50: the other fifty died of fright." Fear is the most prolific cause of illness now. Awareness of the "fearless" Atma is the proper remedy for this contingency, for ensuring lasting health and happiness," said Bhagavan.

—Ed.

My Story—The Silver Door

—Genevieve Savoroff

Part One: On the way....

I'm making my way slowly through the town and the pavement is very hot in the early morning. Inside I am singing within my heart to my Lord Sai Baba whom I love..... His song, "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam" I am thinking how happy I am, independent as a person who walks, instead of riding in a machine also driven by man. Because, when they are driving they must concentrate on the road ahead. They cannot look at other things such as the sun rising, or the sunset, or the banks of cloud shapes... just a strip of pavement. But, I am free and not a prisoner of the car and if I want to I can turn and go back at any time. So, I coast along at my own rate and feel bliss. I can see something of the world and even though it exists in my head, it is all my own within, and also I can worship as I do on the way the form of the One I love who made me whole and gave me PEACE and LOVE. I feel the breeze on my face and I sing and I keep all the things of His in my heart. And, I am flying without fear. I was not always thus, No... Once I stood outside the door and was forlorn and lost and lonely. Baba was that door and I waited for someone to come and open the door.

Part Two: My Vision...

I seem to be standing in front of a beautiful temple and the most astounding thing about it is a Door of Silver with all the symbols of all the religions on the Door. Now I can say what the vision was that I saw some years ago. Here I am waiting breathlessly in front of that Door, with hundreds of thousands of people around also waiting. The silence is immense and even the birds fly noiselessly and perch on the trees in hushed silence awaiting for something in great expectancy. Their silhouettes stand transfixed ...not a sound is heard, as if the world has stopped for the moment. My whole self is beginning to vibrate with the tension of those few minutes. I am afraid to close my eyes for fear of missing something, as I keep my gaze upon the SILVER DOOR. And I say to myself, "O be still my heart," as its beats are too loud, and so as not to miss the sight of my beautiful and wondrous Lord.

The sun has not even shown a slight silver of gold, and time seems suspended for just a moment. If I shut my eyes I see the dear Lord's form, but I am trying to keep them open so as not to lose that first sight. I count the seconds on my Japmala which I hold there. The 108 beads will be but a moment or two. Has he gone away? Has something happened? Or is this all illusion and the Lord who is all light will not be there? Is it really true???

Then the SILVER DOOR swings wide and in front of it shining in a bright gleam of light with a golden Halo around His hair and the shining red fluorescence of His robe like the sun as it rises in the morning—there He is!!!

There He stands, and a glance comes from His beautiful soft eyes and He raises His hand slowly and gives the sign of blessing to all. His voice is like a flute undulating and soaring, and sweet starts the song as He stands in a aglow of heavenly light. The birds circle all around singing their best to the Lord, and with the early streaks of the sunlight even the trees shake their leaves in ecstasy toward Him. The birds are still circling, all the while singing their hearts out to Him. The sun has come out of the blank night, as if it too was doing some homage to Him. All nature seems to be singing in praise to the dear One. He lifts up his hands slowly and seems to lift the hearts of all to the Consciousness of God. Am I crying for joy? Or sorrow—because of the agony I know, He has suffered in silence for us all? For the ones who have kept Him in agony by disbelieving Him? And going against His precepts? Although He says He loves all whether they love Him or not.

Then I noticed a difference in His hair as it seemed to me a crown of thorns appeared to be sitting upon His head. But He still is smiling. He started to look very stern and in a moment He took off the crown and it was all flowers which He picked off one by one and threw down to all the people below. I tried to pick one up, but it was gone to someone else. Then I looked up and saw to the aide of BABA a dragon-like thing standing over Him in a menacing attitude, seeming to be whispering into His ear. But then a dazzling flame came out from between BABA's eyes and the terrible thing was nothing but smoke and ashes, and disappeared. Perhaps I was the only one who saw it. My Lord's voice came out in clear strong accents as He sang to us. Then after the Darshan was ended, He turned and with a last farewell of His hands high in the air, He went back behind the SILVER DOOR.

Peace and contentment came over me and I was immersed in a state of happiness that I never had known before. As the tears came from my eyes and rolled down my cheeks, I thought of how filled with Love for us He was and how if I were to die right then, I would be so overcome with joy that I would be deliriously happy anyway.

For that brief time when He looked down at us who had waited in the dawn, so lovingly and compassionately, and yet so intimately to each and every one, the place seemed to be electrified with His LOVE. And, the children singing in joyous tones the Bhajans that He taught them also were filled with LOVE.

Was this a vision or was it real? Is it all MAYA? Whatever it was, I am always in a state of bliss and don't know or seem, to care for anything except to live as though He were here beside me. I thought, "For Him I have surrendered my life and I know that He will never forsake me nor ever leave me alone." He is mine and I am His, forever and ever... OM NAMAH SIVAYA...

Personal Potential Analyses

Mrs. Patricia and Mr. Raphael Diegel are occultists of a high order residing in Honolulu, Hawaii. I had the pleasure of getting to know them during my visit to the Shri Sathya Sai centres in Hawaii in 1974. They were kind enough to arrange at their centre a talk by me on Bhagavan at the request of a friend. They had almost developed at that time an institute for teaching the occult sciences.

The Diegels were kind enough to send this year a personal potential analysis and I had the privilege of presenting it to Bhagavan on his 51st birthday. I give herewith a brief account of some aspects of this reading with the kind permission of Bhagavan.

In their blueprint for immortality, the Diegels have classified human beings into 13 categories. The categories are as follows:

1. Organic, Lower, Elemental.
2. Higher Elemental, Lower Animal.
3. Higher Animal, Sub-Human.
4. Animal-Human (The Masses).
5. Human (Psychics) Creative.
6. Metaphysicians, Magicians.
7. Mystics, Gurus.
8. Adept, Free Beings.
9. Perfected Souls, Masters.
10. Master-Teachers, Avatars.
11. Beingness.
12. Knowingness.
13. Oneness.

Of these categories 11, 12 & 13 are to my mind, really one; they represent, Sat, Chit, and Ananda which are the three aspects of the one Reality, as the Vedic seers have told us. Reality is threefold—Existence, Consciousness and Delight. The three aspects constitute one Reality. Categories 11, 12, & 13 have therefore to be merged into one category, the supreme Reality or the Divine. The Diegels say that Bhagavan has His origin in this Divine Being. The 10th Category has been called the category of perfected Souls, Masters. This is further elucidated and it is pointed out that it is really a Hierarchy of Light, that is to say, the perfected souls live in a body of light. The Diegels say that Bhagavan can return for one more incarnation and then His body with him to rejoin the Hierarchy of light.

Another analysis has been received from Germany from Mr. Niels Roeber of Hamburg, West Germany. This is a reading which gives fuller external details but does not quite grasp the essential significance of Bhagavan's personality. Mr. Roeber says that Bhagavan is occupied with the problems of the future. He can give spiritual healings. The world is said to be His family. He is most favoured teacher, a model master, an educator, who is outstanding and shows dignity and harmony between teacher and disciple. His spiritualisation is worldwide and He stands for the widening of the mental horizon of the public. His creative thinking tends to lead the world towards a change for the better in its world order. His is a cosmic religion. He is engaged in improving the destiny of the poor people and in fighting against stupidity and

superstition. He shows the way from earthly love to cosmic love and brings harmony to the earth and its people.

—V. K. Gokak

Ramakatha Rasavahini
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
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The Return

The Vanaras and Bears had to obey the orders of Rama, however unwilling they were to depart from his Presence. They turned towards their homes with mixed feelings of joy and grief praying to Rama for continued blessings and with the Form of Rama imprinted on their minds. Nala, Sugriva, Hanuman, Vibhishana and other leaders and warriors could not utter their feelings; they simply stood silent with their looks fixed on the face of Rama, trying to subdue their anguish with tears streaming from their eyes. Observing the depth of their love and attachment, Rama had them seated in the aerial chariot named Pushpaka which he was ascending.

The Pushpaka took off and turned north. When it flew up, there was great commotion on the ground; Vanara hordes raised thunderous shouts of Jai—"Victory to Rama," "Victory to Sita, Rama and Lakshmana." Inside the Pushpaka, there was a high throne charmingly carved and designed. Sita and Rama took their seats on it. They then appeared to all as a cloud with Lightning flash resting on the Sumeru Peak. Rama drew the attention of Sita to the battlefield below, and said, "Here is where Lakshmana overpowered and killed Meghanada." He also showed her other spots associated with similar exploits and successes. He showed her the bridge that the Vanaras had constructed across the sea, and described to her the heroism, devotion and faith of the Vanaras.

Very soon, the aerial chariot reached the Dandaka Forest. Rama had the vehicle land before the hermitages of Agastya and other sages. With Sita and Lakshmana, and the members of his entourage Rama visited the holy sages, paid reverential homage to them, and after taking leave of them, he ascended the Pushpaka again, and reached the Chitrakoota Hill.

There too, he offered prostrations to the sages, and flying into the sky again, he showed Sita the City of Kishkindha from the chariot itself. Even while the Pushpaka was speeding fast. Rama indicated to her the sacred rivers—Yamuna and Ganga. Sita offered worship to the holy streams in her own mind. Soon, they could see the thrice-holy Prayag, where the Yamuna flows into the Gangs. They could get a far glimpse from that position of the splendorous City of Ayodhya itself.

The chieftain of the Nishada tribe, Guha, who was yearning for the return of Rama, his brother and his consort, espied the Pushpaka in the sky; he fell flat on the ground in grateful obeisance, the very moment he saw the vehicle. And, to and behold, the Pushpaka landed just then at the very place.

Guha ran forward and fell at the feet of Rama. Tears streamed from his eyes; he could not contain his delight; he rose up and embraced Rama in the ecstasy of his heart. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana conferred their blessing, on the tribal chieftain. They took their bath in the sacred river and ordered Guha to bring his ferry-boat for them to cross the Ganga. The Pushpaka, which belonged to Kubera, before Ravana appropriated it, was sent back to its original owner.

Hanuman at Ayodhya

One day more had to be spent, outside Cities, in exile. Therefore, Rama commissioned Hanuman to change himself into a Brahmin and proceed to Ayodhya. He was to inform Bharata the news of Rama and others, and bring back from Ayodhya news of Bharata. Hanuman left immediately; Rama, with Sita and Lakshmana, and all who had come with him, moved into the hermitage of Bharadwaja and accepted the hospitality and gratitude of that sage.

Hanuman found the residents of Ayodhya lean and famished, despondent and depressed; they had not relished food or drink during the absence of Rama. All over the town, one could hear their grievous groans and wailings. No one could move towards another to console or nurse, for every one was too weak to take a few steps, nor had any one the desire or the capacity to nurse or console.

But, rays of hope had already been cast by the news he was bringing. Bharata had some welcome premonitions of the happy event: his right eye twitched and his right arm too. He anticipated the receipt of the good news of Rama's entry into Ayodhya. He was grieving that one more day was still to pass before the period of exile would end. He was worried that Rama had not sent any one to communicate to him which place he had reached. He told himself how fortunate Lakshmana was, since he was all the time in the presence and serving the Lotus Feet of Rama. The Lord cast me into this City, for, he knew I am a hypocrite. My Lord is all softness and sweetness. He is the kind kinsman of the downtrodden and the fallen. He is compassion itself. He will certainly arrive tomorrow," he consoled himself.

Just then, Hanuman was within his sight as a Brahmin come with tidings. Hanuman was thrilled at the condition of Bharata. His body had been very badly reduced; he was worn down by anxiety. His hair had become a matted crown. His eyes had become perennial streams of tears. He was repeating the name of Rama without intermission.

Hanuman was full of joy at the sight of such a dedicated soul. The hairs of his body stood on end at the sight of this great devotee. His thoughts ran in several directions. But, he remembered his mission and poured the nectarine news he had brought into the thirsty ears of Bharata. He said, "O Bharata! The person from whom you have been separated and for whom you have been pining without sleep or food all these nights and days, whose virtues and powers you have been extolling and reciting every moment of your life all these years, who guaranteed safety to the gods and security to the sages, who fosters truth and righteousness in all the worlds—He, Rama, has achieved victory over all enemies, and the gods are singing his glory."

Just as a man suffering from acute thirst is rendered happy at the sight of water, Bharata was filled with joy when he listened to the nectarine words of Hanuman. He wondered whether he

was actually listening to some one actually speaking to him. But, he assured himself that it was true. "How can this be an illusion? Who is this person who brought the good news? Where did you come from?" he asked the visitor, embracing him out of sheer gratitude.

Hanuman replied, "O Bharata! I am Hanuman, the son of Vayu, the Wind-God. You seem to have forgotten. I am the Vanara who fell to the ground, before you, while I was carrying the Sanjeevi Hill. I am a servant of the Lotus Feet of Rama."

Maratha's Delight

Hearing this reply, Bharata rose most respectfully, and was overwhelmed with joy, tears flowed from his eyes; he bowed his head in reverence. "O Leader of Monkeys! You have demolished my sorrow. Your very sight has ushered calm in my mind. Ah! How fortunate am I! I could see a Messenger come from Rama today!" He continued to repeat the same sentiments for a long time. "Is my Rama hale and happy? My mother, Sita, how is she? Hanuman! How am I to express my gratitude to you? What shall I do for you in return? I cannot find anything of equal preciousness which I can offer you in gratitude So, I will ever remain indebted; I do not know how to repay the debt, or with what. Where is Rama now? At which place is he staying? Relate to me the exploits he fought unto victory," he said, with unbearable eagerness.

Hanuman was struck by the devotion and dedication that Bharata evinced and he fell at his feet to demonstrate his admiration. He said, "Bharata! Rama is very near the city of Ayodhya itself. You can see him within a short time, His achievements are indescribably wonderful. You know this. He too was constantly remembering you. Toe Lord of the Worlds, Rama, has said with his own Divine Mouth that in the whole world, there is no brother equal to you in purity of heart, sharpness of intellect, and equipped so fully with all the virtues. How can those words be negated?"

Bharata was overcome with delight when he heard these words. "Has Rama spoken of me thus? O How fortunate am I!" he cried and embraced Hanuman fondly. Hanuman declared that he should not delay any longer; he took leave of Bharata and reached the Presence of Rama. He informed Rama about all that he had seen and heard.

Now, Bharata started preparations; he seldom put both his feet down at the same time on the ground! He was ever on the move, most busy. He arrived at Ayodhya from Nandigrama and offering prostrations to the Preceptor, Vasishta, communicated to him the news of Rama entering Ayodhya soon. He rushed into the Queens' Apartments and announced to the three mothers that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are arriving. The mothers rose quickly and were filled with joy. Bharata ordered that the entire City be informed of the good news through all media. The news reached all ears with lightning speed. Children, the aged, men, women, ran helter-skelter shouting the news at the top of their voice.

The Re-union

Bharata collected the sages, the scholars, the preceptors, the leading citizens and the four Sections of the Armed Forces, and with the three Queens and the Ministers led by Sumantra, he walked forward with Shatrughna by his side to meet Rama. Rama while nearing Ayodhya was describing to the Vanaras and others around him the charm and beauty of the City. "O Sugriva,

Angada, Vibhishana! Ayodhya is a holy City. It is a beautiful City.” In the midst of Rama's enthusiastic description of the City's charms, Bharata appeared at the head of the Armed Forces and with his brother and the Queens.

As the ocean heaves up in joy at the sight of the autumn moon, the vast populace heaved a breath of joy at the sight of Rama Chandra, Rama the Moon. Their excitement reached the sky. The Mothers embraced Rama, with ecstatic delight and forgot themselves caught in the flood of happiness. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana fell at the feet of the Mothers; the joy of both parties knew no bounds. Rama drew Bharata near him and pained at his weakened frame, he consoled and counselled him lovingly for long. He praised aloud his brother for his steadfast devotion and affection towards the people. Sita, Rama and Lakshmana prostrated before Vasishta, Jabali Vamadeva and other sages, as soon as they were sighted. Even the most ascetic among the sages could not restrain the tears at the happy reunion with Rama.

The Vedic scholars raised their voice to the sky and showered their blessings in traditional formulae: "Live victoriously for hundreds of years" "Live prosperously for hundreds of years." Bharata and Shatrughna fell flat on the ground before Rama in reverential homage. Though Rama pleaded with them again and again to rise up, they found themselves unable to rise and leave hold of the Lotus Feet. Lakshmana and Rama had to exert jointly to lift them. The brothers embraced each other in fervent affection, and shed tears of joy and relief at the sight of each other's faces.

The Delight with which their minds were filled gave their innate beauty a rare splendour. They shone like embodiments of physical charm. The sadness of separation gave place to the joy of togetherness. They were now deep in the ocean of bliss.

Sugriva, Nala, Neela, Angada, Hanuman and others assumed beautiful bodies for the festival occasion. The citizens were overjoyed at the sight of the entourage of Rama. They extolled in various ways the austerities that Bharata went through and welcomed the result thereof. They appreciated his sterling virtues; Rama admired the faith and devotion of the people of the City. He gathered around him the Vanaras and Vibhishana; he introduced them to his brothers and his preceptors. When he took them near the Queens and told them, "These are my mothers," all of them fell at the feet of the women, saying, "O How fortunate we are. We see the mothers who gave birth to God Himself. You are indeed most worthy of worship. Bless us most graciously."

Kausalya addressed them thus, "O Vanaras! You are all as dear for me as my son Rama himself. May Rama never forget you; may he ever protect you." Then, after deciding among themselves, they ascended the chariots made ready for them and entered the City.

In front of every home, were placed golden pots filled with auspiciously coloured water. Flags were tied across the streets on houses. The faces of the people which were faded and folded with sorrow, like lotuses in moonlight, blossomed into freshness and beauty, like the same lotuses at sunrise, when Rama came before them. Their countenances shone with attractive effulgence. The sky resounded with their cheers and shouts of Victory.

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

Sai Family News

Passenger Service

During the busiest hours of passenger traffic at the Trichinopoly Railway Junction Southern Railway, a group of twelve Seva Dal members from the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti of the City can be seen on Fridays smilingly helping the distracted passengers into their seats and berths, collecting tickets and discovering malpractices, and making themselves highly useful for the old, the sick and the defectives among the travellers.

Kalikapur

The enthusiasm of the Mahila Vibhag of the Calcutta Seva Samiti has transformed this hamlet, a few miles away from the City from squalor and anti-social activities into a charming village, with its Siva temple cleaned and renovated; a tube-well and public washing place donated by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority; a Library of religious books, including books on and by Bhagavan; an active First Aid Class, a Mahila Seva Dal Unit, a Bal Vikas Centre, a Homeopathic Medical Van visiting every fortnight to treat patients and diagnose cases of illness.

Jakarta

The Jakarta Sai Centre the Sai Baba Seva Samiti has won laurels by its consistent and sincere service activities. Recently, a Blood Donation Contest was held in Indonesia for all foreign organisations operating in Jakarta. The Sai Centre was declared winner and a Certificate of Appreciation was presented to the Samiti by the Governor of Jakarta and the Minister for Health.

U. S. A.

The Sathya Sai News Letter dated September 15 contains an Important Notice, which is of interest to our Readers too. "Individuals are attracted to Sathya Sai Baba and the Sai Organisations by a variety of motives; occasionally, non-spiritual motives are mixed up with sincere ones. It is not our place to judge the activities of any individual organisation; however those who use the name of Sathya Sai Baba must be expected to adhere closely to his principles and teachings.

The Central Committee receives reports of Baba's name being misused and misrepresented in a variety of ways, sometimes for commercial profit, for self aggrandizement, or to endorse or support activities unrelated to Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and in obvious conflict with his principles. Baba has asked that devotees be publicly warned against having contact with such individuals and organisations. The Central Committee requests your co-operation by informing us of any questionable situations! This applies to India and other countries too. The State Presidents may be contacted in India, whenever such persons or organisations are found using the Name for invalid purposes.

Medical Service Day—5 December:

Seva Samitis, all over the World, celebrated this Day with appropriate service programmes. Most of them had Medical Check-ups in local Schools done by expert doctors. Large numbers of students who were discovered to suffer from defective vision, were helped with treatment and glasses, as at Coimbatore. At Varanasi, the holy pilgrim City, an Eye Treatment camp was organised by the Samiti, The Nagpur Samiti is continuing the Village Malegaon Project with a similar Eye Camp which carried out 51 cataract operations. They held on 5th December a Diagnostic Camp at the same village. The Seva. Dal of the Hyderabad Samiti conducted a Health check-up and Immunisation Programme at the Kavatapalli Village they have adopted for intensive rural service. A Health Exhibition was an attractive feature of the programme. Reports have come in from Samitis from all parts of the country, about many inspiring and useful items of service done to the weaker sections of the population.

Arusha (Tanzania) East Africa

The Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Arusha, is routing its Service activities towards the Blind Institution and the Institution for Poor at Tabora, as well as the Orphanage and the Government Institution for the Poor at Moshi. Food and food articles were distributed at these Institutions.

Quiz Competitions for Students

The Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Erode, held interesting quiz competitions for Pre-Seva Dal students of the entire District, as well as for High School and College students of Erode in separate sections The subject for Pre-Seva Dal was 'Satyam Sivam Sundaram Part 1'. For the others, the subject was 'Lives of Saints'. The Quizmaster for the College Competitions writes, "This Competition has belied the belief that College Students are not informed or interested in spiritual matters. They answered all questions with zeal and exemplary promptness. The Quizmaster could not secure any marks."

Carleton University, Ottawa:

More than 300 people from all walks of life were thrilled when they heard the Message of Sathya Sai Baba expounded by Indra Devi, at the University. She spoke for two hours and a half and later, showed a film on the activities of Bhagavan. Indra Devi talked about Baba in a television Interview, arranged by the Ottawa Sai Centre.

The Drop and the Ocean

Tennyson describes, in one of his longer poems, 'prayer' as a moment when 'the man in God and the God in man' meet! He must have dimly foreseen what Baba has put so clearly and compassionately, "You have not heard me full; when I say I am God; For, I also insist, you too are God."

To understand the real import of this statement, is perhaps, one of the most urgent needs today. What Tennyson means in that compact phrase is also very simple, but, profoundly meaningful. His statement presupposes two things: there is humanity in God and it answers to the Divine in

man. We can understand and appreciate the statement that there is Divinity in man. But, when it is asserted that there is humanity in God we do not feel so comfortable.

But, that statement only means that God has profound concern for man. He worries for the well-being of man as no one else does and as he himself does not. He delights when man cultivates and expresses true love, deep virtue and sincere detachment. God's Grace, Love, Indulgence and Joy are showered upon mankind, whenever it treads the path to Him. The fully conscious Divine answers the unblossomed unconscious Divine. It is the call of the part for the Whole, the Holy. It is the answer of the Whole, the Holy, for the yearning of the Part. It is the hunger of the drop for the Ocean, the urge of the Ocean to replenish itself. It is the particular, finding its fulfillment in the Universal, and the Universal finding its fulfillment in fulfilling the particular.

When we come to the statement of Bhagavan Baba, we have to grasp it at a slightly higher level of significance. It speaks of the keen desire of the Universal to help the Particular to identify itself with the Universal. This little game of Brindavan, the game of the many and the One, has been going on through the ages. But, the curious fact is, the Ocean has more of the agony of separation than the drop! The depth of compassion in the Divine for man is deeper than the yearning in man for the Divine. So, Bhagavan adds..."You too are God."

If you have ever heard Bhagavan speak with a deep pathetic and simple smile on His quivering lips, "So many people come to me every year, but, I don't find a single devotee among them," and if you have a pair of sensitive eyes in your heart (not head!) you can certainly sense the agony of God.

The Whole has come in the garb of the Part, in order to draw the Part to itself. But, the Part blinds its eyes, and dodges. "Come, Bindus!" calls the Ocean. But, the Bindus would rather stay away, get evaporated and lost. That is the tragedy of man, who is unaware of the loss the impact of which is writ large in the face of Bliss.

—Prof. B. B. Misra

Unbroken Bliss

This day, you have resolved to imbibe Divine Bliss, by reciting the glory of God, in chorus and with music, for twenty four unbroken hours. You call it Akhanda Bhajan, though it will end after that period. Though the name is not apt, the idea is good and the programme will yield good results. For, in this busy age of fear and anxiety, the remembrance of God and the repetition of His Name is the one means of Liberation that is accessible to all. People toil years and years for maintaining their families and for bringing up their children, and though they do not succeed as much as they hope or wish, they continue their efforts unabated: But, in the effort to gain the Grace of God, they do not evince equal interest; they get dispirited when they do not see signs of Grace after short spurts of Sadhana.

Bhajan is more important than Bhojan. Prayer is more desirable than pining for meals. Birds that fly, beasts that roam and worms that crawl—all these do feed and keep fit. Man is the crown of Creation, the monarch and master of all beings in Creation. And, if he too seeks only food and shelter as inferior species do, it is deplorable indeed. From the moment of waking from sleep, until the moment when he lays himself down again to sleep, man is engaged in endless errands, unceasing turmoil, never-ending tangles and boundless anxiety; and what does he gain there from? More confusion, more mental agitation.

Is this the be-all and end-all of human existence? No. It cannot be. He has the nobler goal of self-illumination, lighting the lamp of Love inside him and sharing with all around him the Light of that Lamp. Kama and Krodha are the two enemies that will not allow him to keep that flame bright and burning straight.

Bhajan, such as this, is a good disciplinary process by which these two can be kept away. Kama is the Lust for physical pleasure, for power, for fame, for wealth and for scholarship. Krodha is anger, which is the result of foiled lust. When you long for peace of mind, you must take up the Sadhana that will confer on you the Peace. Instead, if you engage yourselves still in old attitudes, how can peace be yours? You stand at the square yonder and wishing to come to Whitefield, you board a bus that moves in the opposite direction and takes you to Hoskote. Is that the sign of an intelligent man? You choose the wrong path and then, complain that you have been missed! Salt and camphor look alike; you have to exercise your intelligence to discriminate between them. Brass makes more noise than gold; you should not be deceived by noise and choose brass, instead of gold.

If men make more noise and mislead people into believing that they are wisp, they are brass. Do not mistake them for gold. Ascribe value to pure hearts, sweet words and dedicated deeds. And, never indulge in talk that hurts others through scandalising. When you intend to harm another, the evil recoils on you. The grief which you suffer from is only the echo of the grief you inflict in another's heart. So, when you have injured another, pray for pardon; repent and resolve never to do it again. Through genuine prayer mountains of evil can be pulverised and destroyed. From now on, decide that your words shall be soft and sweet; your acts beneficial to others; and your thoughts always about how to serve others who are weaker and less prosperous.

In this and in other villages, there are many persons who are either too old or too weak, or with some physical defect—the lame, the deaf, the blind, the polio affected, the paralytic—who are finding it difficult to earn as much as is needed to keep themselves alive; some of them have family responsibilities also. What they are able to scrape together is very inadequate, in these days when prices are soaring sky-high, for even a few days in the week. So, the family has to fast for a day or two. I am proposing to help such people in the villages around Brindavan with finance and facilities to start some employment opportunities through tailoring, carpentry, painting, spinning, weaving, smithy and other such village industries. They can recite the names of God, sing Bhajans, and practise Namasmarana, even while engaged in these crafts, so that they can earn both peace of mind and food for the body. As Vemana sang, they will have the "art of earning cash to be happy here and the art of earning Grace to be happy there."

The others too, villagers who toil hard in the fields during all the hours of the day, can gather after their night meals, in this Venugopalaswami Temple Hall and fill themselves with the joy and peace that Bhajan can confer. Those who sing Bhajans get what can be called 'double promotion', for, they derive joy and distribute joy! Life today is filled with sorrow, it is beset with fear and despair. The only time you can forget these thoughts and strengthen yourself to meet the hard times is when you contact the source of all strength, God. You cannot get that peace and joy, while you bend under the weight of the burden of daily life? You are carrying a huge load of worry all day. Keep that aside for an hour every evening and spend that time with God who can make your shoulders strong and your burden light. You will relish the Bhajan and enjoy it as you make it a daily function, like eating and sleeping. You eat twice a day for the upkeep of the body; should you not do Bhajan as least once for the upkeep of the mind?

Bhajan has been part of our culture; part of the Sanathana Dharma tradition. It has survived, in however attenuated a form, in the villages only. It has disappeared from the towns; they have other more exciting and more depressing ways of spending time and recuperating their spirits. But, this programme of congregational Bhajan by all the residents must be fostered, developed and transplanted in the towns later. I am glad to note that the young men of this village and of the adjacent villages, especially those who are attending the Sri Sathya Sai College, are evincing keen interest in these Bhajans. That is indeed a promising sign, fraught with great potential for the future of this country and its culture. They are cleansing their own minds and helping to cleanse the atmosphere of these villages. The air even over these villages is polluted by vulgar film songs, by demeaning disgusting conversation. The 24-hour long Bhajan will purify it by divine vibrations. And, those who breathe the purer air will be healthier and more upright in behaviour.

The student who made a speech welcoming me ended by requesting me to come once again to this place, for some function which he referred to. Let me tell you I am ready to come to villages, as often as you wish. For, I find the humanity of man persisting only in the villages; in the towns, people have lost it. You know Sri Krishna was born in a village; he tended cattle; his brother had a yoke always on his shoulder and was proud of it. Dharmasthapanam or the restoration of righteousness has to start from the village where it is still found however feebly or faintly; therefore, you have to live in the path of Dharma and treat it as the very goal of all your activities. Be united in that adventure; encourage one another while proceeding along that Path. Then, success is assured.

—*Bhagavan's Discourse: Seegehalli, 4-12-76*

Why Fear?

Bhagavan Baba assures us repeatedly, whenever we approach Him with some anxiety or fear, doubt or worry, "Why fear when I am here?" This affirmation of His help and guidance, available for us when we rely on Him, reminds us of what He told Arjuna in the Gita, "Maa sucha", "Do not grieve". It is not inappropriate that in His present Incarnation, He tells us, "Maa Bheeh" "Do not fear."

For, the world is now quaking in the gloom of fear. In earlier ages, man was afraid of his immediate neighbours, but, today, the world has become one intimate neighbourhood and when hate manifests itself anywhere, it can soon unleash war which may envelop vast areas of the world and may even wipe humanity off the face of the earth.

The Dictionary defines 'fear' as a painful emotion, aroused by a sense of impending danger, alarm, dread, solicitude, anxiety; reverence towards God; to regard with dread or apprehension, to anticipate (as a disaster), to hold in awe, viz., to be afraid, to be anxious."

We are experiencing doses of fear every moment of our lives; the morning newspaper tells us of strikes and riots; floods and drought; political and economic crises; high jacking and murders; diseases and disasters. Invisible sources of fear lurk at every corner of our lives; the family, the community, the nations are beset by some fear or other. Young men are afraid of elders; elders are afraid of youth and its vagaries. Conscience has made cowards of us all for; every one is compromising every moment with the dictates of his inner voice. They slide down the slippery path stating to themselves, "This is not a world for good people; only bad people thrive here" "You can't afford to be good, if you wish to survive" "We must live and then only can we think of living a good life" etc. But, the conscience that has been insulted and by-passed starts hurting us and reminding us of the inevitable punishment. This leads to fear. Hundreds of daily slips leave unhealed scars on our Conscience. President Nixon had no sleep because of the Watergate secrets that he had to keep within himself.

To such a world, Bhagavan declares, "Why fear when I am here?" He gives us a sense, of security and proves his words by concrete manifestations of His timely counsel and intervention. He is with us all the time, as guide and guardian, provided we accept Him and install Him as such. He knows our innermost thoughts and he responds as soon as we cleanse ourselves of the ego. An ex-Judge told me that when he went to Whitefield, he felt that Baba had ignored him and showered blessings on people on either side of him. He felt it as an insult, because he was proud of his status as the Judge of a High Court. But, he soon told himself. "How can you expect God to come to you, if you have such egoistic feelings?" The moment he chided himself thus, Baba turned round and walked towards him with a smile. Baba says, "It is you who come near or go far away from Me."

Once the faith that Baba is with us starts growing, we become certain that He is watching our thoughts, words and deeds. As a result, we fear His admonitions. We give up doing things which we might have indulged in otherwise. The dictionary defines fear as 'reverence towards God'.

In the daily duel between ourselves, and the Inner Voice, which is God or Baba or Conscience, the Voice has now a better chance to win. We listen to His words; they ring in our ears. When we read His discourses, they make a better impression, in our minds. Gradually we start taking stock of ourselves and realising that the only permanent cure for our problems is to cultivate detachment from both good fortune and bad. We discover that joy is just the interval between grief and grief.

"Why fear when I am here?" says Baba. Does He mean Prasanthi Nilayam, when He says 'here'? Yes and No. He helps us when He is in Prasanthi Nilayam or when we make our hearts a

Prasanthi Nilayam. His telephone has its receiver all over the world. That telephone brought me a truck from nowhere when I was in dire distress in the interior of a thick jungle in Madhya, Pradesh and helped me to reach a doctor in time to relieve my illness. There are thousands of such instances which make them believe that He is ready to save us and give us succour, when we call on Him. Baba says 'My Prasanthi Nilayam' is your heart. When Prasanthi is established in the heart, His Voice can be clearly heard in the silence and the calm.

"Cowards die many times before their death," it is said. This is the repeated death of which the sages warned us; the word for Liberation or Release from this chain of death and birth is Abhaya, Fearlessness. Once we decide to accept and welcome both good and bad with equanimity as signs of Grace, (and Baba gives us the courage so to do), we can secure Abhaya, or Liberation. The Bhavasagara is really the Ocean of Fear. And, Baba has raised His Clarion call, "Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam Dusthara Bhava Sagara Tharanam." Let us start tuning our lives to His Message, His Lotus Feet, the Gurucharanam, will lead us to Fearlessness, Abhayam.

—*M. V. N. Murty*

Bhagavan Baba's Avatarhood

—Vinayak Krishna Gokak

A few moments ago, the Hon'ble Sri T. A. Pai gave us a very interesting and useful exposition of what the expression, 'scientific temper' stands for, as one of the Fundamental Duties imposed on us by the latest amendments to our Constitution. There is another duty mentioned in the same chapter, to which I would like to draw your attention—the preservation of our composite culture and the integration of the nation through that culture.

When we consider what has been happening in Prasanthi Nilayam, ever since it was founded by Bhagavan, we can easily see that the Composite Culture of India has' been persistently sought to be preserved in all its splendour, as an instrument of Unity. Here as well as in all centres that the Nilayam has influenced. The disparate elements of caste, creed and language have been fused together here as, can be seen from Swami's classic definitions: "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". He has extended the compositeness and the integration of Indian Culture so as to posit Universality of Human Culture. When he exhorts us, to enshrine in our hearts the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man', it is this ideal human society that he would like us to fashion on earth.

During the long centuries of human history, there have been quite a few questions raised by seekers. For example, there is this controversy on Matter and Spirit, which of these came first and which came later? Many scientists have said that it was Matter that came first, as if they were there right before the dawn of Creation itself! They hold the view that Consciousness or Spirit is only a consequence of Matter. Descartes said, "I think; therefore, I am". But, the Transcendentalist would say, "I am; therefore, I think. The Spirit came first and Matter came later. I am. I may think with my brain, my hand or my foot. The brain is only a mechanical contrivance to aid my thinking". Some others maintain that Matter and Spirit are two enduring coordinates.

It is said that the world is governed by cosmic and physical laws and it is asserted that they are unbreakable and omnipotent (greater even than God who laid them down!). Of course it is understandable that you and I are bound by them and have to observe them. But, there might be one or two, now and then, in a millennium or two, who need not observe them. You cannot prescribe these limits to them and insist that they too have to observe them. In what way are those who praise the laws related to them? No human being has laid down these laws nor has any one known all the laws that are there. The scientist who dogmatizes and says that spiritual life is nothing but moonshine is indeed presumptuous, to say the least.

It is possible for a Ray of the Divine Consciousness to come down to earth (as it has done in Bhagavan) and function here as a transcendental phenomenon which exceeds the cosmic laws and is, therefore, not subject to them. A nineteenth century poet has said, that he found Necessity as the Supreme Law. This is true, possibly for you and me and the poet. But, when Divine Consciousness comes among us, it makes its own laws. It moves along its own path. No one can draw a line and restrict its freedom.

The acts of the Divine Consciousness in furtherance of its Will are called miracles. When the lives of the great Upanishadic seers and the saints of India and the West are studied, it will be seen that miracles are 'natural occurrences' for them. They are so common that they are not specially noted or discussed. Specially now, the Sai Principle (Sai-ism, if Swami will pardon my use of that expression) consists essentially in the use of miracles as a systematic technique; for elevating the consciousness in man making the man who is non-moral, moral, elevating the person who is moral to a greater level of morality, making one who is spiritual, more spiritual. This is the purpose for which miracles flow from him. His Will is identical with the Divine Will and so, the miracles that emanate from him are bound to transform the lives of men and raise them to the very Heaven of Consciousness.

A friend of mine, travelling with me from Bangalore to Puttaparthi asked me "How would you define Baba? What do you find in him? Is he a Vedantin, an ascetic, or a Sanyasin? Does he propound the subtle truths of Moral Philosophy?" I said, "I have three reasons for loving him." (Usually I give a number—2-3-4 and then, I try to elaborate each, after discovering what the numbers indicate!) Then I tried to specify them, selecting the best three. The first: "You cannot find in any one else on earth, a love, so deep, so intense and so universal. It envelops every sentient creature—a dog, stricken with disease, a human child, a tottering old man, or any ailing human being. This compassion extends to everyone, whether he is rich or poor, near or far. This love alone is enough to fill our hearts, for one life-time, nay, for the whole cycle of lives one may go through.

The second reason which I gave him was: when Swami looks at you, whoever you may be, wherever you may come from, Greenland or America or the other side of the Globe, he is aware of your total history from A to Z. He knows this of all sentient creatures since the dawn of creation when the universe was but a ball of fire. I was a spark in that fire. All that has happened to me since I was that spark, evolved into the elementary inorganic and then organic life and into animal, possibly bird life.... then.... through various lives into a human, he knows them all. And the most effective part of it is that when you sit with him, he transfers his wisdom to you for the time being and you also seem to know yourself from A to Z. He confers on you this illumination. His is the gaze of the Divine Sun. Where else on earth can you get it?

Then, I tried to remember the third reason. This is what I told my friend: Swami not only knows me like an open book, he has the power to transform me, for, his will is the divine will and even if a flash of his divine gaze falls on me I am transformed into a deeper, higher human being with greater sense of fulfilment. Of this grace, this power, he gives all in abundance. This is what makes him God, and announces him as a Divine.

Let me sum up. His heart is full of that all-inclusive love; it embraces those who do not like him, even those who positively dislike him. He loves everything living and there is none beyond the ambit of his love. He has the third eye which gives him the knowledge of the past, present and future, the destiny of every one of all the millions that are here on this globe. And he has the power to transform every one of them. He is the 'unchanging will' that is behind all change. When everything changes, this will remain unchanging like the pole-star among the stars.

While some men have been pleasing themselves in our country by deriding Swami, let me tell you of a happy couple in Hawaii in the United States, occultists of high order whom I met when I last visited Hawaii. They have been made aware that Bhagavan is 'One-ness, Growing-ness and Being-ness' (Sath-chit-ananda) and they feel blessed. While some of our own bright young men get involved in heated discussions on science and the scientific temper (very often losing their own temper in the process), here are Americans who see things steadily and whole, for, to them the spirit is something tangible and has intensive meaning. The other day I was reading a book by Roy Eugene Davies from Georgia, U.S.A., the State the new President comes from. His book on health has a chapter on Ayurveda, and the tridosha (three faults) theory. Instead of recommending vitamins and minerals he gives lists of desirable diets based on the analysis of ionic particles through tridosha principles.

So, when Indian spirituality seems to find more and more acceptance in America and Indian mysticism and Yoga achieve greater and greater popularity there, let us, with the blessings of Swami, try to regenerate them in India itself.

Blood and Even More

We give value to the cane because it contains sugar; the more the content of sugar, the more we prize it. Man will be honoured more, appreciated more, if he has wisdom—that is to say, if he sees himself in all, and all in himself. This is the stage which the educated man must reach. This is what is taught in the Gita and by all the saints and sages. This is what is called spiritual education, the training of the mind by which it comes to know the One that appears as the Many. Learning to eke out a livelihood is important; but, learning to know the truth behind all this appearance is much more important, indeed; it is most essential.

First, you must learn the truth about yourself; then, you will know that the truth about others is the same. You are not the body; the body is the house in which you live, and think and act. Within you, urging you to see, hear, smell, taste, touch, think and act is God, who is also in every other being. Plants, birds, animals, do not know this; they have no desire to know their truth. But, you cannot have peace, unless you know it. You have the wonder, the curiosity, the thirst, to know it. That is the difference between man and the other animals. That is why it is said that man is the highest among all animals. If man does not search for this Truth and discover it and delight in it, his life is a waste. The children who sang a verse now told us 'not to hate anyone'. Why should we be so careful? Because, 'the others are we ourselves'; the same God is in them, too. God is present in all living beings.

Remember each of you is three persons, not one. You think you are the body, with a name by which you are called, a house, a set of relations, a set of skills and ideas. That is the first person. Others think that you are good or bad, mischievous, talkative, intelligent, serviceable, quarrel some, kind, cruel etc. That is the second person. But, you are really, neither the first nor the second. You say, my body; so you are not the body. You are distinct from the body you are occupying. You are really, God, also called Atma. So, you must develop and demonstrate Divine qualities—not, animal qualities or merely human qualities. What are these Divine Qualities? The

most valuable Divine quality is Love. If you have love, then, you will be free from envy, hatred, and anger. You will speak only truth, for, you will have no fear. People utter lies because they are afraid. Love knows no fear. Love is the basis of service. I find that in Bombay, the Seva Dal members have given 2,000 bottles of their blood, out of love, for the brothers and sisters who needed it very badly and have thus saved many lives. Love is God; live in Love. They have helped many to live in Love. You should give not only blood, but, your talents, your skills, your strength, so that those who are diseased, distressed, desperate, disheartened, defeated, can benefit by them. Always be alert to find out how you can help others, with the resources you have. Develop those resources, with that end in view. To serve man is to worship God, to please God.

Be bold, and give courage to others. Study more, so that you can instruct better. Keep healthy, so that you can be ever ready for service. If you keep high ideals before you, you can overcome all obstacles that come in your way. Every obstacle is a challenge; meet it with boldness and intelligence. Life is a game; it has its rules and regulations; it has its umpire who is God speaking from within you. Play it with joyful zest.

Children! You have a long, long journey before you. The elders are nearer the end of this journey. You have to equip yourselves to meet the rigours of the long years of travel. Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema are the equipments that will make your lives pleasant and happy. Your mother is Bharat; she brings you up in her Sanathana way, in the culture she has stored for you. The Vedas, Sastras, Ithihasas, the Gita—this is the Father. Adore these parents as well as your physical parents.

Some children spoke here now of the unity of all religions; they have friends who call upon God by some other name; but, that does not matter. The God who guides them and guards them is the same God who guards and guides them too. They pray together and sing the same Bhajans to the same God.

Keep your minds pure and strong. Do not give place to anger and jealousy. They poison the mind and ruin health. Speak out from the heart, as these children did now. Then, you can do great service to Bharat, and be examples for all. Teachers, parents and elders must recognise the preciousness of these gems, and gladly serve them and transform them into jewels of our land.

—Discourse: Bombay. 10-12-1976

Jesus

Man is as a seed. The seed sprouts, becomes a sapling, grows into a tree and fulfils its destiny, offering flowers and fruits to the world. So too man rises from childhood through adolescence into youth and middle age and when fully grown up, he has to justify himself by offering the world, the flowers and fruits of good thoughts and deeds, himself acquiring the fullness of wisdom. A bird has need of two wings; a cart must have two wheels. Without these, they are mortally handicapped. Man too must have two types of knowledge—to live on and to live for. The one helps him to eke out his livelihood and the other rewards him for having lived at all. The one

is called Jivanopadhi and the other, Jeevanaparamavadhi, the means of living and the end of living. The one enables us to garner the material riches which make our lives comfortable and safe; the other answers the questions that haunt us and pressurize us for answers—wherefrom have we come, whereto are we proceeding, whence has this world originated, etc. No religion concerns itself with the first type of knowledge; all are interested in stressing the second type only. Each of you have to pay attention to this second type even more than to the first, for, it has beneficial impact on the first also.

Man has set down, in all lands and communities, certain rules and regulations in order to secure orderly and smooth running of his daily schedule of activities directed to the actual process of living. Since they have become part of the code of conduct, they are also described as 'discipline'. They are also subsumed under the basic principles of Dharma. Dharma promotes peace and happiness, contentment and joy. In every community, there have appeared off and on great personalities who shaped and burnished the codes and adapted the details to the needs of the times.

What we must strive for today is not a new religion or a new society or a new code of morality; they are there already, in each race and country. We have also the basic plans for spiritual training already laid down in most religions. But, we need persons who have attained purity in all levels of consciousness. Man can reach perfect bliss only when his heart becomes free from envy, egoism, greed and other evil traits. We need persons who can recognise and relish the recognition of the kinship and even the identity between man and man, as well as between society and society. They have to move beyond the bounds of the limited 'I'; they have to break loose from the entanglements of the senses. They have to jump over the battlements of the fort called 'body' and enter enthusiastically the wide world beyond. From the narrow vision of 'individual need', he must voyage out into the broad vision of the 'universal'. When a drop of water falls into the ocean, it loses its narrow individuality, its name and form, and assumes the form, the name and the taste of the ocean itself. If it seeks to live separate as a 'drop', it will soon evaporate and be reduced to non-existence. Each one must become aware that he is the same Truth that is the Truth of everything in the Universe. It is reprehensible to stick for one's whole life-time to the low narrow paths of selfishness, envy, and greed. Make the heart big, and the mind pure. Then only can peace and prosperity be established on earth.

This day is a holy day, the day on which Jesus was born. He announced himself as the Messenger of God. In fact, all humans are born as messengers of God. The sole purpose of this human career is to propagate the Omnipresence of God and His Might and Glory. No one has incarnated for merely consuming quantities of food and catering to their senses. Human life is much more precious than that. That is why the capacity to appreciate beauty, truth and goodness has been endowed on man only.

To acquire the awareness of the Divine one need not journey to any special region or place. It is enough if the eye is turned inwards. In the Bhagavad-Gita, the Inner Reality, the Atma is described as 'splendorous like a billion suns'. But, man has not become aware of the Light and Power within; he still flounders in the darkness of Ignorance. The scriptures proclaim that men are Amritasya putrah, the children of Immortality. But, man is unaware of this glorious heritage. He feels he is mortal, his end is imminent and his existence is temporary. The scriptures also say

that the Atma, the Real Core of the Individual, is the very embodiment of Bliss, Anandaswaroop. But, man is blind to this truth, he invites sorrow and anxiety to hold mastery over him and discards the joy that awaits him. Every man is a messenger to men, entrusted with the task of spreading knowledge of the joy that is missed. If he misses this mission, and fritters his years in eating and mating, he only misuses the chance. He reduces himself to the level of beasts and birds. For, they do only that much and cannot aspire for more. If his level of life is as low as that of beasts in spite of his education, University degrees etc, the more the shame. He who announced himself as Messenger developed through the blossoming of Divinity in him, and the expansion of compassion and service activities, into a stage when he declared that he was the Son of God. And, then, he rose to the status of 'I and my Father are One'.

When one declares that he is the son of God, he becomes entitled to the paternal majesty and power. These he can claim only when he grows in himself the qualities that his Father has and appreciates. As a result, he attains Sayujya, or Mergence, which leads him to assert, 'I and my Father are One'. The scriptures say, Brahmaid Brahman Bhavati. He who knows Brahma becomes Brahma. Knowledge is Power.

These three stages are referred to as Dvaita, Visishtadvaita and Advaita in Hindu thought. Messenger has a Master; the two are basically two, and so this stage is Dualism or Dvaita. The Son and Father though two separate entities are bound by affection and kindred feelings and attitudes; they are like the whole and the part, the body and the limb. This stage is called Visisht (Qualified) Non-Dualism. And, when the Son and the Father are One, the stage is Advaita, Non-Dualism.

Even a little innocent boy would be eager to pass from one class to the next higher one; he would bate being in the same class, vegetating for years. So, what can we say of men with intelligence and discrimination satisfied with the attainment of the lower steps? Jesus passed through the entire series and inspired by his example and teachings all mankind to be generous and kind, detached and discriminating, and to bring Light and Love to all. He attracted people by his miracles and transformed them into apostles and exemplary servants of man.

You must realise that the Divine current that flows and functions in every living being is the One and only. When you desire to enter the Mansion of God, you are confronted by two closed doors—the Itch to praise yourself and the Itch to defame others. The doors are bolted by Envy, and there is also a huge lock that prevents entry, Egoism. So, if you are earnest, you have to resort to the key—Prema (Love)—and open the lock; then, remove the bolt, and throw wide open the doors that were closed. True education has to train you in this difficult operation.

You undergo training in various subjects of study; but, the crown and crest of all subjects of study is Adhyatmic Vidya or the training of the Inner Consciousness, the Antahkarana. People desirous of bathing in sacred rivers are advised by Thyagaraja, the famous mystic, poet and singer, to bathe in the Ocean, for all rivers pour their waters into the sea and a bath in the Ocean means bathing in the waters of all the rivers at the same time. So too, the Atma-vidya, if it is mastered, is the key to all knowledge. It teaches us that, which if known, all else is known. It reveals to us that the One is in the Many and that the Many is really One. Isavasyam idam sarvam, all this is enveloped by God, as the Shruti declares. Sadhana is the name for the mental

discipline and intellectual effort to realise this Unity. Jesus sacrificed his life poured out his blood, to instill Love and Compassion in the heart of man, so that he may be happy when others are happy and sad when others are sad. It is not by festivity and fun that you can celebrate Christmas; celebrate it rather by resolving by putting into practice at least one of the ideals he enunciated or endeavouring to reach at least one of the goals he placed before man.

Let me call upon you to give up, in memory of this Holy Day, two evils from your mind: Self-praise and Scandalising others. Adopt one habit as yours: the habit of loving service to the distressed. If you spend all your time and energy merely to pile up worldly comfort and sensual delight, you are disgracing this human existence. Life is not to be spent in eating; eating is only for the purpose of living. Have a sense of proportion in these things. It is easy to spout a billion words advising others what to do and how to behave. But, it is very hard to practise a billionth of what you say. You consider this habitation of yours as your body; no; it is the temple of God. God resides therein. Keep it clean, fresh and fragrant, through developing compassion and love. Use the temple of God only for holy thoughts, words and deeds. Do not demean the instrument by using it for low, trivial and unholy tasks. Wherever you are, whatever you do, have this resolution steady and strong.

—Divine Discourse: Christmas Day-1976 Brindavanam

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Preparations

The chariot which bore Rama entered the city streets. The streets were bursting with excitement and delight. The auspicious flames of the lamps that were held by devoted hands and waved as he passed, shone like stars and gave the impression that the firmament had fallen on the ground. The roads were soaked with fragrant rosewater. As the chariot passed, showers of flowers were rained on it by the citizens from the windows and the terraces. The ecstasy of the citizens broke all bounds. With his three brothers three mothers, Rama with Sita by his side gave immense satisfaction to the thousands packed on the sides of the roads. People congratulated one another on their good fortune in being alive and present on this happy occasion. When they reached the Palace, the women of the inner apartments and the aides and servants of the household came forward and received them with customary rituals, like washing the feet.

As soon as they entered the Palace, Vasishta, the Royal Preceptor announced the date when the Coronation of Rama as the Emperor of Ayodhya will be celebrated giving details of the auspicious attributes of the Day which had persuaded him to choose it for the great event. He invited also all the Pundits and Priests to take part in the ceremonies, that the Vedas had enjoined, to consummate the Coronation. They appreciated the decision of Vasishta, for, they said, the Coronation would confer Peace and Prosperity for all mankind.

Vasishta called Sumantha into his presence and addressed him thus, "Assemble the armed forces—cavalry, elephantry, chariotry and infantry—at the City, for the Coronation of Rama is to be celebrated." Those words filled Sumantha with extreme delight; he arranged for the presence of the Army with all its components. The elephants, horses, and chariots were decorated grandly for the occasion. They were posted in serried ranks outside the City Gate. The horsemen and the foot-soldiers wore colourful uniforms and they stood at attention, ready to march into the City for the festival.

Messengers were sent in all directions to gather in time the various auspicious articles necessary for the rituals that formed part of the Celebrations. The entire City was agog with joy; citizens vied with each other in decorating their houses and streets. People felt that their two eyes were not enough to imbibe the charm of the City

Rama was especially considerate towards the persons who had accompanied him from beyond Ayodhya—Sugriva, Vibhishana, Angada, Nala, Neela and others. He ordered that proper arrangements be made for accommodating them and looking after their needs. Accordingly, servants from the Palace rushed to perfect the arrangements he had desired for the comfort of the guests.

Rama called Bharata near him and with his own hands, he combed his hair that had got matted since he had not paid any attention to it, for years. The three brothers personally poured holy water and attended on Bharata while he bathed. Then, Rama received the assent of Vasishta to disentangle his own matted hair, and had his auspicious bath. The queen mothers meanwhile had Sita finish her bath also. The mothers carefully combed her matted hair too, and dressed her in yellow silk; they made her wear jewels in plenty. She shone like Goddess Lakshmi. She moved to, where Rama was and took her seat to the left of her Lord.

The three 'mothers' experienced the highest bliss, looking on, while Rama and Sita were seated together. "Is not this day the luckiest day for us? This day, our lives have achieved fulfillment. This day, our dearest wish has come true. This day, our eyes have had their purpose realised", they said to themselves. They lost all consciousness of their bodies or surroundings, watching Rama and Sita, and taking them to be the God Narayana and the Divine Consort of Narayana, Lakshmi. Vasishta the great Sage was moved by the splendour that shone in the face of Rama. He was delighted beyond measure at the divine effulgence of Rama Form. 'I achieved today the goal for which I have been waiting so long', he felt, and he ruminated on that joy and remained blissful and silent.

He called the servitors and instructed them to bring the Great Throne and install it in the Coronation Hall. It was a Throne set with multifarious gemstones which shone like the sun, with dazzling brilliance.

The Coronation

Rama prostrated before Vasishta and other sages, and fell at the feet of the queen mothers. Then, he prostrated before the entire assembly of elders and citizens and ascended the Throne, with Sita following him close. The vast gathering rejoiced at the unique sight, so full of majesty and glory. The Rishis, the elders, the leading citizens, and the saintly well-wishers were filled

with gratefulness and joy. The Brahmins recited appropriate Vedic hymns. The populace shouted Jai, Jai, so loud and so often that the sky threatened to fall. It was the seventh day of the dark half of the moon, in the month of Vaisakh. Taking the permission of the assembly and the assent of the Brahmins, Vasishtha wound round the brow of Rama the insignia of Imperial Authority.

Kausalya, the mother of Rama, turned her eyes on Rama every now and then, and felt supremely happy. And, what can be said of the joy of the brothers—Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna! It was beyond words. They were holding whisks and the umbrella, and standing behind the throne, as attendants on Rama. In fact, they were all through the years doing penance for the culmination that they were enjoying that day!

The gods beat drums of victory in the sky; the celestial musicians, the Gandharvas sang hallelujahs; the celestial dancers the Apsaras, danced in joy. Vibhishana, Sugriva, Angada, Hanuman, Jambavan, Nala Neela, Dadhimukha, Dvida, Hainda—these heroes bore bows and arrows, scimitars, spears and other weapons and stood on both sides of the throne, in reverential humility.

With Sita sitting on his left, Rama manifested the beauty of a billion Manmathas (Manmatha—the God of Love) rolled into one. The gods were fascinated by the divine charm of the Lord of the Raghu line. Rama wore silk interwoven with gold and he had fish-pendants in his ears brilliant with precious gems. He wore ornaments on his ankles and wrists, which derived beauty from his entrancing charm. All the three worlds exulted at the sublimity of the event and the personal grandeur of Rama. Really, those who witnessed that scene were the fortunate ones among the living.

A Jewel For Hanuman

Vibhishana came forward with a dazzling necklace of gems, which the Lord of the Sea had offered to Ravana. Sita accepted it. Its brilliance shone all over the vast Hall and struck every one as a unique string of gems. But, with the necklace in her hand, she cast a questioning glance at the face of Rama. Rama knew what was passing in her mind; He said, "Sita! You can grant it as a gift to any one among those here who draws your Grace towards him." Sita thought just for a second and looked at Hanuman. Becoming aware of the compassion in that look, Hanuman approached her in great humility and stood before Sita with bowed head. The necklace was given by Sita to Hanuman.

Hanuman turned it around many times in his hand, its dazzle enrapturing every one in that vast assembly. He was struggling to discover its specialness, with unslaked curiosity. He plucked every gem, put it between his teeth, and placed it adjacent to his ear, and with a face indicating disappointment, he threw away the gem in disgust! All eyes were watching with increasing amazement this peculiar behaviour. They were stunned into silence and inactivity. Until he treated the last in the same cavalier fashion, no one dared interrupt or condemn. They could only protest in whispers among themselves. Who is this monkey that treats the diamond necklace so lovingly and so compassionately presented to him by Sita, was the question on most faces.

Even Vibhishana was sad that Hanuman had so brazenly insulted the priceless jewel that he had brought; 'he has pulled it to pieces and cast the gems aside', he told himself. Every one in the

Hall surmised the reason for this strange behaviour in his own way. At last, one vassal ruler could not restrain himself. He rose and gave vent to his resentment thus, "O Unequalled Hero! Why did you break that necklace of gems into so many bits? Was it right to do so? Tell us the reason why? Give us some consolation, and assuage our doubts."

Hanuman listened to him patiently and replied, "O King! I examined each gem in order to discover whether each had in it the sacred Name of Rama. I could not find it in any gem. Without that Name of Rama, they are but stones and pebbles. So, I cast them on the ground." The ruler was not silenced by this. He asked, "Hanuman! Is it your demand that in every article and particle, there should be the Name of Rama? Are you not asking for something impossible?" Hanuman replied, "Of what good, of what profit, is any thing which has not in it the Name of Rama? I have no need of such." The valiant hero, Hanuman, belittled the arguments of the Ruler thus. The Ruler, however, continued his objections. He said, "You would not wear any thing that has not got in it the Name of Rama. Well. You are wearing your body. You are carrying it about with you. Prove to us that you have the Name in it." Hanuman laughed aloud; he said, "I shall prove. See." He pulled a single hair from off his hand, and held it very near the ear of the Ruler. The ruler could hear the Name, Rama, Rama, Rama, uttered by that single hair! At this, the Ruler was overcome with a sense of wonder; he fell at the Feet of Hanuman and prayed for pardon.

I Give Myself

Rama called Hanuman near himself and warmly embraced him. He asked him, "Hanuman What can I offer you on the occasion of this Coronation? I have no gift that is worthy of you. I am giving you myself, as my gift to you. Then, he offered his body into the clasp of Hanuman's hands. The assembly was moved into shouts of Jai, at this unique act of Grace. They praised Hanuman and declared that there was no one to equal him in all the worlds. They praised the devotion and dedication of Hanuman.

Then, Rama rose from the Throne and moved out into the open, where vast congregations were awaiting his appearance. He gave them the Divine Darshan of His charming majestic Form. They were all thrilled as never before in the bliss the Darshan conferred.

All who were in the City were provided festive reception and given lavish food and luxurious shelter. Rama arranged the distribution as charity of gold and money, of vehicles, household utensils and clothing, of houses and other amenities in plenty. Vibhishana and the Vanara heroes were wonderstruck at the magnificent elaborateness of these events. They stayed on for six months in the Capital, serving Rama both day and night, in full exultation. The six months sped away as a single day for them. They had no memory of their homes, their families or their kingdoms during all that period of time.

Leave Taking

At last, Rama called all the companions and comrades, who had accompanied him, into the Audience Hall and seated them in appropriate places. Then, he addressed them in soft, sweet accents, thus: "Friends! You have all toiled hard on my behalf. Of course, it is not proper to praise you to your face. You confronted various types of difficulties for my sake, giving up your homes, not worrying about your wives and children and unconcerned with your properties and possessions. I have no friends other than you all. Therefore, I have special love and compassion

towards you. More than my parents, more than my brothers, more than my kingdom, more than my subjects, and more than even my Sita, you are my loved ones. This is my firm assertion. So, I now require you to proceed to your homes. Serve me after installing me in your hearts, with faith and devotion. I shall grant you the fortune of seeing me, beside you, behind you, before you and in your homes; I shall grant you Grace.”

They listened to these words so full of Grace and Love, and, they were so overcome by gratefulness and joy that they forgot their body and their surroundings. They did not allow their eyes to stray away from the face of Rama; they shed tears of delight abounding. They could not utter a single word in reply; the tongue was unable to pronounce any.

Then, under orders from Rama, the servitors brought large quantities of clothing and jewels; Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna were requested to offer them to the members of the party and to personally help in wearing them. The Vanaras and Vibhishana were then assisted by them in putting them on and they shone with added charm and brightness. But, the Vanaras were unaffected by what was done; they stood unmoved, and stiff, looking only at the Feet of Rama, their adored Lord. All bowed their heads and fell at those lovely feet. And, Rama lifted them gently and embraced them with great affection.

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

Sai Family News

Sai Family News:

Bhagavan reached Brindavan, Whitefield, on the evening of Makara Sankranti Day, Jan 14. He addressed the students and others on the significance of the Festival.

On Monday 16th Jan, the internationally renowned Santur artiste from Kashmir, Sri Shiv Kumar Sarma played delightfully on his rare instrument in the Presence of Bhagavan, the College Students and devotees. He was accompanied on Tabla by Sri Zakir Hussain, son of the famous master percussionist Alla Rakha, Sri Zakir Hussain also provided Tabla accompaniment to the entrancing Flute Recital by Sri Hari Prasad Chaurasia, of international fame.

In the evening, the students and devotees had the good fortune of listening to a rare Sitar recital, offered in the presence of Bhagavan by the celebrated artiste, Sri Nikhil Banerjee, accompanied on Tabla by Pandit Misra. Baba blessed the artistes, creating rings for Sri Chaurasia and Sri Zakir Hussain and a gold chain for Sri Nikhil Banerjee.

Vice-Chancellors:

Sri S. K. Dutt, former Chief Justice of the Assam High Court and now, Vice-Chancellor of the Kurukshetra University had Darshan of Bhagavan on 19th Jan. Dr. Jogi, Vice-Chancellor of the

Himachal Pradesh University, Simla, also arrived the same day and stayed for Bhajan, in the evening.

Kumbh Mela:

The Kumbh Mela, inaugurated by Adi Sankara in the 8th century as a means of integrating the Hindus was celebrated at the holy confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers at Allahabad from 14 Jan. to the 19th. It attracted 20 million pilgrims, an unprecedentedly fantastic number. The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Uttar Pradesh, had opened a Seva Centre at the confluence, to render first aid and other services like rescue, care of children, provision of drinking water, watch and ward etc. The Seva Centre had Seva Dal members from a number of States. It worked successfully from 12th Jan. till 25th Jan.

Jaipur College:

Hon'ble Sri T. A. Pal, Minister for Industries and Civil Supplies, Govt. of India was the Chief Guest at the second Annual Day Function celebrated by the Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Jaipur. Sri Mohan Chhangani, Minister for Education and Agriculture, Govt. of Rajasthan, presided.

Training Camp for Convenors:

A crowded programme of three days was drawn up and carried out at Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, for the Convenors of Seva Dal, who are the inspirers and guides of the Dal in each Samiti Centre. The training included Field Work in the various items of Seva like road laying, Narayana Seva, Medical Relief, etc. besides classes on Nutrition with special reference to Village needs and nursing. Village Handicrafts Bhagavan inaugurated the Technical Education Centre, the Adult Education Centre as well as the Health Centre, as part of the Village Resuscitation Programme, at the village of Seegenalli, Hoskote Taluk. The villagers pledged their full and faithful co-operation in this venture so graciously encouraged and blessed by Bhagavan.

Sathya Sai Hospital, Whitefield

The villages around Whitefield are deriving immense help from this Hospital for Women and Children, equipped with 30 beds, the latest surgical appliances and the most modern drugs. It is now four months since it was inaugurated by Bhagavan and some estimate of the service it has rendered can be made from the following figures: Out-patient is treated-5542. In-patients: Child-births-65; General and Gynaecological-65. Operations (Minor and Major) 36. Laboratory Investigations-117. The Hospital has a band of competent and devoted medical personnel who are popular and efficient.

New Delhi-Short Term Course:

A short Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality lasting for full nine days for College students from Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh was held from December 25 to January 2 under the auspices of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. The Hon'ble Sri K. Brahmananda Reddy, Home Minister, Govt. of India, inaugurated the Course. (Address printed elsewhere in this issue). The course included, besides lectures on various cultural and spiritual topics, training in Yoga, and talks on Spiritual Primers related to the chief religions of the world. An attractive Exhibition on the Educational Ideals and achievements of the Organisation was also held during the Course. Hon'ble Mr. Justice P. N. Bhagawati, Judge, Supreme Court delivered the

Valedictory Address on the 2nd January 77 and distributed prizes to students who had distinguished themselves at the Tests held at the end of the Course.

West Bengal:

The Second State Conference of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in West Bengal was held on 25th January 77, at the Burdwan University Campus. Hon'ble Dr. Gopal Dais, Finance Minister, and Hon'ble Sri Bhola Nath Sen, P. W. D. Minister, both of the Government of West Bengal addressed the Conference. Hon'ble Sri Tarun Kant Ghosh, Home Minister of the Government of West Bengal inaugurated the Conference. The State President of the Organisation presided.

Colombo:

Bhajan on Tapes: Lending Service:

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti Colombo Central has made arrangements to record full length Bhajans, with suitable musical accompaniments, on cassette tapes.

Each tape will have different sets of songs, sung in the Prasanthi style and the running time will be one hour, both sides.

The recorded Bhajans will be on the set pattern, beginning with Om and the Vighneshwara song and thereafter step-by-step in the usual way and end up with the Arati song—Om Jagadeesa Hari.

These tapes are lent to Sai Organisations or Sai homes, for play back on deserving occasions. Tapes will be given out free of charge on a week's safe return agreement.

The Mahila Vibhag Handicraft Centre:

Training is given to ladies, in the production of plastic bags, soft toys, paper pulp models, knitting, tailoring, embroidery work, children's garments, preserved food items and manufacture of agarbathies (joss sticks).

Sai Bhajan over Sri Lanka Radio

Every Thursday of the week, Sai Bhajan songs are beamed over the Tamil Language Service No. 1 of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, on wavelengths. 540 meters, 558 kilohertz and 59 metres, 5020 kilohertz: The programme starts at 6-50 a. m. (Ceylon Time) and goes on for about 10 to 15 minutes.

Devotees who have not heard this programme so far can tune Sri Lanka Radio, on Thursdays.

This world is keeping you in bondage; it is a prison from which you get released. The means of this permanent release are Sadhana, Satkarma (Good deeds), Bhakti, Upasana. All these help you in decreasing your wants by curtailing your wishes, by teaching you detachment from sensory pleasure. These are the shackles which bind you to the body and the senses, to the limiting emotions of greed and hate, to the blinding passions of anger and lust. Escape from them, you will have lasting peace.

—Baba

The Religion of Love

—Hon'ble Sri K. Brahmnananda Reddy

I am very glad to be in your midst today, to inaugurate this short-term Spiritual and Cultural Course for College students. I understand that this is the third such Course, arranged by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Organisations at Delhi and that it is a condensed version of the month-long Summer Course for College students which Baba holds every year.

The highest aim of all education is to bring about an awakening in the mind, heart and soul. It is meant to create an enlightened awareness for the finer and nobler values and ideals of human life and of society.

In our colleges and universities, we gather information and facts, skills and crafts and knowledge of techniques of advanced science and technology. The entire educational landscape, however, would look like a barren 'waste land' if the end-product of our educational institutions is a soul-less robot or a cultural philistine.

With the ascendancy of science and the growth of a materialistic and hedonistic culture that is now sweeping in various degrees over all the world, religion and spiritualism might have lost some of its appeal. But, can an educational pattern or a society that does not draw its strength from a synthesis of culture and religion in the highest form and expression succeed in the ultimate test of contributing to human happiness?

Soon after the Industrial Revolution, many a thinker of the West lamented the prospect of the emerging society, where 'wealth accumulates and men decay'. Industrial and economic progress brought unprecedented prosperity and affluence, but, did not satisfy the fundamental cravings of the human mind for peace and truth. In the midst of their material possessions, comforts and luxuries, you can discern in the affluent West a void which leads to a yearning for spiritualism and religion. Younger generations there, at times, not being able to find meaning or faith in life, are giving themselves up in waste and dissipation and some of them are becoming special drop-outs, like the hippies.

In some ways, this sense of lack of direction in youth is not confined to the West alone. In our country, as in so many others, we have witnessed much of unrest, anarchy, violence and disorder in the campus life of our educational institutions. While there are undoubtedly deep-rooted socio-economic causes and tensions, for these events, I think it also reveals our failure in bringing up the younger generation with the right mixture of education, religion and culture that alone can give balance and poise in life.

Where there is no vision, the Bible teaches us, people perish. Religion or spiritualism gives us the vision which is necessary in the life of a society, and of a nation as of an individual. While I speak of religion, I am not having in mind the rituals and ceremonies that often pass in the name of religion. What I am talking about is the philosophy and quintessence of religion that teaches

forbearance, compassion and goodwill. This gives us poise and grace, a sense of duty to the community, a discipline and strength of character to face life through thick and thin and to contribute our mite for the welfare of society. Dharma, according to the Indian conception is what should hold us all, together in society in these values and in the spirit of righteousness and justice.

The importance of imparting social, moral and spiritual values in our system of education has been emphasised by a number of educational committees and commissions. It is through such education that we can fashion the attitudes, outlook and reflexes of young and impressionable minds. Even though the fact is well-known, I would like to stress that secularism as enshrined in our constitution does not mean an irreligious or anti-religious policy. It implies, on the contrary, religious tolerance, equal respect and active reverence for all religions. It is to emphasise this aspect of the matter that we have been increasingly using the expression 'Sarva Samabhav', in place of 'Dharma nirapeksh', which was the word in vogue for secularism.

An orientation to spiritual and moral education taking the essence of all religions would be needed in any multi-religious democratic society. And, nowhere would it be more important than in our country where human history had seen some of the highest attainments of man's spirit in the quest for Truth, the Ultimate Reality and the Absolute. Max Muller had said. "If I were asked, under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life and had found solutions of some of them—I should point to India" A study of religion and spiritualism would help us to discover ourselves—our culture, heritage, our age-old values and ideals. Throughout history, Indian culture and way of life were permeated with the spiritual outlook on life. The greatest Indians of all ages from Gautama Buddha to Mahatma Gandhi have been the acme of spiritualism, renunciation and sacrifice. Our great kings have been Rajarishis—Rajas and Rishis both together. We had called our spiritual Gurus, Maharajas, Kings of Kings. Similarly, our ideal man of action has been a 'karmayogin'. The resplendent India that Mahatma Gandhi dreamt of was to be built on the foundation of this age-old spiritualism and culture of ours. In this Course, I understand, the teachings of our great religious leaders from all religions will be discussed by various speakers. The quintessence of all religions is the same lofty and ennobling message for humanity. In the cosmic vision of our ancient seers the entire humanity were the children of Immortality. The Buddha tells us that the Mahakarunachittam (the Heart of Supreme Compassion) is to be found in every human individual. The Christian prayer speaks of the immortal heritage of which we are the inheritors. The Muslim prayer looks upon God as the Merciful, the Compassionate. One of the great Sikh Gurus said, "Mandir Masjid tere Dham; Easwara Allah tere nam" (The temple and the Masjid are your houses; Easwara and Allah are your names). Throughout history, the keynote of India's culture has been synthesis, tolerance, harmony. People of different faiths, religions and beliefs have lived side by side in amity, peace and goodwill for centuries on the soil of this vast area of humanity that is India.

I have spoken in various forums about national integration. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations by spreading the message of religious harmony and goodwill and particularly by imparting these values through their educational institutions and such courses are rendering a useful service to the community and to the cause of national integration. Bhagavan Baba has

himself often said that "There is only one caste, the caste of humanity and only one religion, the religion of Love."

With these words, I inaugurate the Course.

—*New Delhi: 25-12-1976*

The Three Gunas

The three Gunas play a crucial role in Creation, in the Cosmos and in Human nature. When they are equally balanced, there is no agitation and no movement though there may be Resolution and Will. They are however basic to the progress and the liberation of man. They are called Tamas, Rajas and Satwa, and persons in whom each predominates is named Tamasic, Rajasic or Satwic.

But, the names carry very significant connotations. The three dominate man one after the other and when he reaches fulfillment, the Satwic nature is the master. Each Guna directs the thoughts and deeds of the person according to its own tendency and awards the results too in the same manner.

Take the example of the mango, when it is a tender fruit, in the infancy stage, if we attempt to eat it, the taste will be very astringent. But, after some time, if you try to eat it when it is fully grown, it will taste very sour. But, when it is fully ripe, it can be eaten with relish, for, the taste would have changed to very pleasant sweetness. The life of the mango is geared to attain the final stage of ripened sweetness.

Man too begins in the Tamasic stage of sloth, inactivity and indolence. But, he must be aware of the goal, the consummation that is in store, and attempt to escape from the insidious attractions of the Tamasic stage. Then he attains the Rajasic stage, when he enjoys power over others, when he pursues vigorously the fancies of the senses, and when he prides himself on his selfish greed. At this time, he must be vigilant to remember the pitfalls yawning before him and pull himself back in time, to gain control over his passions, emotions, prejudices and desires. This alone can make him a ripe, wise, sweet personality, equipped with equanimity and fortitude strong enough to enable him to face the ups and downs of life.

Each one can, with a little introspection, judge for himself, which Guna is predominant in his life-stage and each one can resolve to progress onward to the next, without delay. The mango may be of a highly valued species, but, that will not make the tender fruit less astringent; you should not condemn it as of an inferior species, for that reason. All its excellence will manifest itself only when the fruit is fully ripe. The spiritual path alone can enable you, through the three fold Sadhana of Work, Worship and Wisdom, to achieve that fulfillment.

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse 19-12-76 Brindavan*

The Yoga of Surrender

"Recognising the immanence of the Divine, one has to dedicate all acts to the Divine. What is an act, when you analyse it deep enough? It is manipulation of the Divine by the Divine, for the sake of the Divine through the skill endowed by the Divine; there is no 'I' or 'Mine' in it, except the Universal I and the Divine My" says Bhagavan Baba.

When coursing across the sea of Samsara being tossed about by the wild winds of destiny, a cry rises from the heart of man, "O, Lord! You are my only hope; I surrender to you; save me from this catastrophes"

This by no means is surrender. This thought of the Omnipotence of the Lord and the insignificance of human strength in meeting the onslaughts of fate is sudden and short-lived and is not grounded in Faith which alone can constitute the basis for Surrender or Sharanagati. The devotee endowed with such Faith has to consecrate his actions feelings and thoughts, nay his will and his life itself at the feet of the Lord, leading to the erasure of the ego. The result of such a Sadhana is nothing but Self-realisation which is the goal of all Yoga, whether it is Jnana, Karma or Bhakti. In fact Surrender is a total discipline and is by itself a Yoga—the Yoga of Surrender. Surrender or Sharanagati alone can lead one to Mukti. "Sharanagati or unconditional surrender is the main gate to enter the mansion of Mukti", says Bhagavan Baba. It is for that surrender that Lord Krishna, the Divine Charioteer sake Arjuna when Ho says, "Abandoning all Dharma, come to me alone for shelter. Be not grieved, for I shall release thee from all evils."

Emphasising the fact the pre-requisite for surrender is resolute faith in the Supreme Bhagavan Baba says, "To get the attitude of Surrender or dedication, you must have faith in Clod... Without faith, Sadhana is an empty rite.... Faith in God is the secure foundation on which hope has to be built." A question is asked whether such absolute faith in the Supreme and the surrender of one's own will is not tantamount to sacrificing self-confidence and giving up faith in oneself. If the 'self' is understood as the Atma or the Divine Consciousness, such faith in the self becomes virtually faith in the Supreme; in fact, the self does not exist, distinct from the Supreme. But. If the reference is to the personality made up of the body, mind and intellect, the faith in the self is totally misplaced, and can lead us nowhere. Instead of helping the aspirant to transcend the ego such confidence can only strengthen the ego and make detachment or Vairagya more and more difficult.

Bhagavan points out that there is justification in our talking about Sharanagati or Surrender only when we are fully in control of our minds, words and body. The body, mind and intellect foster the ego and so long as the ego is in power, the control of the ego can be eliminated by subordinating it to the Omnipotence of the Lord, surrendering it at the altar of the Supreme.

We have to emulate the unique example of Arjuna. We see in the Bhagavad-Gita, how in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna began thinking that he was using his own intelligence, his own capacity of enquiry and his own ability to distinguish right from wrong. The Arjuna of Bhagavad-Gita is the representative man who relies on his feeble intelligence for meeting the crises

which confront him in life. But Arjuna fails and with full faith in the Lord he becomes a true Sadhaka. Having been cured by the Lord of his ignorance (nashto moha) and having regained the knowledge of his true nature (smritir labdhaa) he surrenders to the Lord and becomes an instrument in His Divine hands.

The Yoga of Surrender, like the Karma Yoga or the Path of Dedicated Action is indeed the path for Self-realisation for the modern man. A question generally raised is whether one should not have ambition and how else can one survive in the competitive world. The Eternal Philosophy does not advocate inaction; on the other hand it calls for the employment of the maximum skill and effort in all one's actions—yogah karmasu kausalam (yoga is skill in action). The difference however is in the motivation for action. While in the normal course one expects certain results from action—expectation of continuing success in the case of one charged with ambition—for a Sadhaka on the path of surrender, the actions are offerings at the feet of the Lord. In such offerings the question of degrees in the quality of effort cannot arise. There is just one way for such a person for performing his actions and that is the best way. Having done one's best as offering to the Lord, he remains unconcerned with the results. The ambitious man tries to correlate his efforts (on the basis of his own judgement) with the results and manipulates his efforts appropriately to gain his objective. The Sadhaka surrenders his actions and having done his best without thoughts about the results; he views the success or failure or any degree of either, with complete detachment. The Lord asks Arjuna, "Resigning all thy works to Me, with thy consciousness fixed in the Self, being free from desire and egoism, fight, delivered from thy fever." In the words of Bhagavan Baba, "Have no other thought than God, no other aim than knowing His Command, no other activity than translating that Command into action. That is what is meant by surrender." The attributes of such dedicated action are again brought out in the characteristically affectionate language of Gita, "Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest, whatever thou givest away, whatever austerities thou dost practise, do that, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna) as an offering to Me." There can be no clearer guidelines for a Sadhaka who is on the path of surrender, irrespective of whether he is householder, professional or Sanyasin. In fact the advice was directed to a Kshatriya prince who was on the battlefield, and not to one who has taken up Sanyasa.

A Sadhaka who surrenders all actions at the feet of the Lord has obviously no cause for fear. Fear arises from desire; desire begets anger and anger brings in its trail other consequences which ultimately result in self-destruction. Having surrendered oneself, the results of one's actions are also surrendered and the question of Raga (desire) and Krodha (anger) do not arise and there is no consequent Bhaya (fear) also. There is the assurance of the Lord in his words to Arjuna that "those who, laying all actions in Me, intent on Me, worship, meditating on Me with unswerving devotion, these I straightaway deliver from the ocean of death-bound existence. Surrender has to be complete without any reservations. "Your minds are wayward like monkeys that skip and jump from bough to branch. Give them to me," says Bhagavan Baba "I can make them steady and harmless... But it must be a complete handing over, no reservations."

The stricken soul which thinks of surrender, perhaps seeks only the alleviation of the suffering; it should seek release from the bondage of Samsara, of Ignorance, which is the prime cause of all suffering. The pain cannot be removed unless the cause of the pain is removed. The suffering

cannot be removed by substituting it by pleasure since that also will be short lived. The mind that is the source of all pleasure and pain has to be conquered, the ego which is the sufferer or enjoyer has to be eliminated. This conquest, this elimination is achieved by surrendering them at the feet of the Lord without any reservation. Even if a trace of these is left, the Sadhaka continues to be the subject of the onslaughts of the results of Karma.

Not only Hinduism, but all religions emphasise the need for complete surrender. In 'Imitation of Christ' of Thomas a Kempis, the Lord asks the disciple to surrender his all. Some people surrender themselves, but keep something back. They do not trust God utterly, but try to provide for themselves. "Some at first offer all they have, but later when temptations buffet them, they take it back and that is why they make no progress in goodness... Give your all for the one who is all; expect nothing, want nothing back; leave yourself with Me wholly and without regrets and you will possess Me."

The path of surrender is therefore a perfect Yoga. With steady faith in His Omnipotence, with no thought other than the Lord, with all actions done as offerings to Him the Sadhaka progresses on the path of surrender to become Yoga Yukta (Firm in Yoga).

—C. P. K. Nair

Time-Its Use

Time is a very crucial feature of the world; it has to be treated with a great sense of reverence. Take care of the seconds and the year will be worthwhile. The point of time in which you are is fleeting fast into the past; the past has gone beyond recovery; the future is most uncertain. But, you are aware of yourself in the past, present and future and, so, you are the omnipresent one. The length of time at your disposal has to be utilised for beneficial acts, exemplary acts, acts that emanate from high ideals. When you resolve on a good deed, do not postpone it for some later day; when you are prompted to do some evil, do postpone it, so that better sense might prevail with further discrimination. You can postpone an engagement, like attending a film, or cancel an engagement like attending a wedding; but, death is an engagement that cannot be either postponed or cancelled. When a man decides on a walk, he equips himself with shoes, a stick, a muffler round his neck etc; when he decides to see a picture, he equips himself with some cash. But, man does not care to equip himself for the journey into the unknown that he is invited to undertake on death. Death is a cameraman who does not give any notice for you to get ready for the click; so, you have to be ever ready with a smile on your face. Many people declare that their goal is Liberation, Mukti, Immortality, Freedom etc. Well! What is the preparation man is making for reaching that goal? Each of you has to spend some thought on this problem, this day, when the Old Year is rung out and the New Year is rung in.

With the coming of the New Year, people indulge in new dishes, new dresses, new games, new fashions etc, But, they don't relish new thought. They stick to the old polluting thoughts and habits, company and conversations. Years roll by, new-year days succeed one another, but, transformation of character and habits waits. When we are proceeding to Bangalore, after some time, we say, "O Bangalore, has come" But, the truth is, Bangalore has not moved at all; we have

moved and reached the goal. The sooner and the steadier the journey we make, the quicker and the safer we can reach the goal.

The first requisite for a safe journey is 'mind control'. The mind has to be trained to undertake the steady march, after dropping the heavy luggage which now slows its pace. Again, you must perform your duties, the responsibilities that have devolved upon you; but, do not let the duties and the responsibilities overwhelm you.

Do the work that comes to hand. Work is worship. Reduce talk, for, vain and wordy talk reduces physical energy; silence promotes and preserves energy. That is the reason why the sages of yore emphasised the value of silence. In silence, sadhana yields more fruits. Concentrate on Sadhana while here; you travel thousands of miles to reach this place, spend thousands of rupees for this chance; but, many fritter away the time involving themselves in low company and paltry pursuits. The more you attend to Sadhana, the easier will be the journey to your inner self.

The New Year that you calculate from today, 1st January is called 1977 A.D. That is to say, it is related to the Birth of Christ that we celebrated on 25th December. Christ's birthday is when he is born in each person's heart. It is only that day that he is entitled to celebrate as Christmas. Mary is the symbolic representative of the heart of man. Christ is the Ananda principle that arises in the heart. That is the reason why the idea of immaculate conception is laid down. That is the reason also why Mary is pictured as with the Child Jesus in her lap. (Here, Baba materialised a medal, with Mary and Jesus on the obverse and Joseph on the reverse, and passed it round for being handled and adored by the Westerners assembled).

—Morning Discourse: Prayer Hall Prasanthi Nilayam 1-1-77

Baba and Bhagavad-Gita

Bhagavad-Gita is a conversation between a doubting Arjuna and a confident Lord Krishna. It was narrated on a battlefield when suddenly, the otherwise extraordinarily competent Arjuna was engulfed with an indecisive thought whether to fight. It was a peculiar situation in which he was placed. Having waged a number of wars previously and having come prepared to decide an issue in a Dharmayuddha (righteous battle), delusion suddenly overtakes him and he says to Lord Krishna in sloka 7, Ch.2 thus

*Karpanya doshopahataswabhavah
pruchchamitwam dharma sammudhachetah
yachchreya ssyannischitam bruhi tanme
sishyastheham sadhi mam twam prapannam.*

He says he was puzzled with regard to his duty and prays for instructions, as a devoted student of his, for what is decidedly good. He almost surrenders completely and is mentally prepared to have guidance from Lord Krishna. Earlier, he tries to put forth one argument after another to justify his line of thinking for not fighting. These are nothing but ignorant outbursts since the situation was not unknown to him. All the same, he relies on some plea or other to strengthen his thinking. At the end of the discourse (Krishna-arjuna-samvada), he says in sloka 73, Ch. 18 thus:

*Nashto mohah smrutirlabdha twatprasadanmayachyuta
Sthithosmi gatesandehah Karishye vachanam tava.*

My delusion is destroyed and I have gained knowledge; through your grace, I stand freed from doubts. I shall therefore carry out your bidding. It is therefore clear, that Arjuna could not see through clearly since he was deluded. This delusion overtakes everyone of the average category of individuals very often during the discharge of his actions. Therefore Bhagavad-Gita is as much relevant today as it was before during Mahabharata days. It is not a *topical* problem pertaining to Arjuna alone but it is a *fundamental* problem facing every one of us. It will be relevant even in future till eternity since this answers a fundamental problem of human personality. Hence Bhagavad-Gita is verily *universal* scripture and not a *Hindu* scripture as some people ignorantly limit it. It addresses itself to all human beings irrespective of caste, creed or religion. May one be an Indian, English, man, American, Russian or anyone else, one gets immense benefit of a proper guideline for his behaviour in the society.

This great country, India, inherits this scripture. Not only that, it had the unique fortune of having a succession of wise masters, saints and seers from time immemorial to maintain unbroken the tradition and cultural heritage of the country. In sloka 7, ch. 4, the Lord says

*Yada yadahidharmasya glanirbhawati bharata
Abhyutthanamadharmasya tadatmanam srujamyaham*

Arjuna, whenever there is a decline of righteousness (dharma-glani) and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, then I reveal myself in a body form.

Thus one finds that whenever there is a deterioration of human values, whenever there is a distraction from Dharmic way of living and whenever man has come to a stage of forgetting the inner core of his personality, then a god man appeared on the scene to re-mint the old cherished ideas so that they gain currency once again. It is not very difficult to discover this god-man or super-man. He has also a limited form and shape like any other individual but he possesses all the qualities of a Sthitaprajna depicted in ch. 2, a Bhakta depicted in ch. 12 or a trigunateeta depicted in ch. 14 of Bhagavad-Gita. The Nirakara concept (shapeless and formless) of God being difficult and not easy to comprehend by an ordinary, average, mundane individual, the Sakara concept (with a shape and form to suit the individual's faith) has been conceived as a much more easily identifiable and distinguishable method in this country which resulted in idol worship in temples built for several supermen like Sri Rama, Sri Krishna etc. These supermen distinguished themselves during those days not by their military prowess or material excellence but by their super-natural way of life which was exemplary to others. Thus, they stood heads and shoulders above the contemporary human society and were considered as Gods. We, in this era, have not witnessed them in flesh and blood but we adore them today as God-men or Gods.

The identification of such god-men becomes difficult these days. Also, it appears that the craze for running after the so-called happiness as a sequel to the acquisition of material things has been the motto for all human activities. The tendency is to run after the unreal and run away from the real. This aberration or wrong identification of human values appears to be the cause of our present day misery. The scientific and technological progress to establish man's excellence over other forms of life is very much welcome. But that alone does not make the earth a heaven. The correct approach or a right attitude to life is very much important to establish harmony and peace in life or in other words the Dharmic way of life has to be reestablished.

I was following for the last few years the divyabodha (divine utterances) of Sri Sathya Sai Baba published in Sanathana Sarathi. I felt that Lord Krishna is once again addressing the contemporary society. The profound statements are so meaningful and thoughtful that it is no wonder that people who understand him call him Bhagavan. His preachings are helping in restructuring and reestablishing a Dharmic society which is very much necessary these days. When *Artha* and *Kama* are based upon *Dharma* surely they lead to *Moksha*. If these pursuits after *Artha* (money) and *Kama* (desire) are not anchored in *dharma* (righteousness), then there is no salvation to humanity. The four pillars which Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba wants to reinforce in the society are Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness), Shanti (peace) and Prema (universal love) and I offer my felicitations with all humility unto Him.

—Prof D. V. Ranmna Rao, Rourkela

Beloved Baba—Take My Hand

Beloved Baba, take my hand
As I hold it up to you;
Dispel the cloud of Maya
Which obscures you from view.

My haughty Self and You are One
Which in my heart I know;
I also know to reach that state
I must be pure as snow.

But, on my own, I cannot weld
My human will with Thine;
So, this is why I seek your help
To relinquish all of mine.

Help me, dear Baba, to let go
Of my imaginary needs
And, I will try to turn from all
On which my ego feeds.

And, as I reach up high to you
Please take my hand in yours
Until I'm empty of myself
And my lightened spirit soars.

But when I first catch sight of that
Which seers call the Light
I may be overwhelmed by It;
So, hold me very tight.

In pouring out my heart to you
I've lost that cloud so dark
And, can relax in quiet relief
Till my soul soars like a lark.

—*Phyllis Krystal*

God-lit Night

"Lead me from darkness into Light" is the Vedic prayer. "The night of ignorance shall be transformed by the Grace of God into the brilliance of Wisdom"this is the message of Mahasivaratri. As a means of prodding man to yearn for the awareness of this Truth, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba manifests on the Night of this Holy Festival the Lingam that is formed within His Divine Body, indicating thereby that Being is moved to Become and Becoming merges into Being, when the Divine so wills. This year, more than 20,000 devotees from all the States of India and even beyond, gathered at Prasanthi Nilayam to receive instruction and inspiration from the Presence.

The ceremony of hoisting the Flag of Prasanthi over the Mandir was done before the mammoth gathering at 7-30 in the morning of the holy day (amidst Vedic Recitation, Bhajan, the peal of bells and drums the paeon of pipes and the play of student Bands from the Sathya Sai College at Brindavan (for Boys) and at Anantapur (for Women.) Sri. N. Kasturi spoke on the three aspects of Siva—the Sat (Lingmurti), the Chit (Dakshinamurti) and the Ananda (Natarajamurti), and coordinated these three with the explanation given by Bhagavan on His Name, BABA, B meaning Being (Sat), A meaning Awareness (Chit), B meaning Bliss (Ananda), and A meaning Atma.

Sri Kamal Sahani of the Sathya Sai College also spoke on the Divine Love that Baba showers on all, especially, the rising generation who have to be the custodians and promoters of Indian Culture and Spirituality.

Bhagavan began His Discourse with reference to the Sun which had bathed the earth with light and roused the world into activity. He pointed out that the Sun can disperse only the external darkness and man has to struggle with himself in order to bring Light into the dark corners of his inner self. He said, "Life involves ceaseless activity; even keeping quiet is an activity. It is believed that the sensory organs prompt man to engage himself in activity; but, they are urged on by the mind and are incapable of independently involving themselves with the outer world. The mind too cannot operate abinitio; it has to be set in motion by the Intelligence, which is prompted by the Divine, the Atma that is one's real core. Without the Divine, man is helpless and cannot exist at all. The field may be ploughed and prepared well; seeds may be sown; manure and pesticides may be provided; the crop may be protected by proper fencing; but, if the rains fail, and the canal is dry, the entire process fails. The rain is the Grace of God."

"In order to win the Grace of God, prayer is the best means; but all prayers do not reach God, for, most prayers are addressed to minor deities in charge of departments, like Police, Revenue, Food etc. God responds to prayers that are unselfish in intention, universal in outlook and full of yearning for peace, joy concord and prosperity for all mankind. There should not be any egoistic, narrow, limiting factor tarnishing the prayer," Baba clarified. He said that persons behave egoistically, due to the misconception that others are separate and distinct. They pray for trivial benefits because they are unaware of the joy they can earn by complete surrender to the will of God." He emphasised. The speech filled all hearts with courage and confidence.

Baba proceeded to the Poornachandra Auditorium in procession at 11 A.M. for the Abhisheka Function. Student Bands played Bhajan Music; the elephant Sai Gita, splendidly caparisoned, led the way; Vedic Pundits recited holy hymns. Twenty thousand hearts poured forth their adoration in unison, when they filled the vast Auditorium with Bhajan song. Bhagavan created a Gold Necklace and placed it Himself on the idol of Shirdi Baba, after the ceremonial Abhisheka. Then, He scooped out of an empty pot enormous quantities of sacred Vibhuti, and showered it on the idol, to the immense delight and wonderment of the huge gathering. Later, He sprinkled the consecrated Abhisheka Teertha with a bunch of Kusa grass on the devotees, moving amidst the thickly packed congregation for the purpose. Every one was thrilled into ecstasy at the Power, Compassion and Love of Bhagavan.

The evening Function started at the Auditorium at 5-30 P.M. Authors and Publishers of new books and journals were privileged to offer their works at the Lotus Feet. Sri Jagat Adwani, Editor of the Sindhi Version of the Sanathana Sarathi monthly magazine placed the First issue of the Magazine at the Lotus Feet. Dr. M. V. Krishna Reddy, District President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Nellore Dt., Andhra Pradesh presented the Telugu Book, 'Manasu-Marmamu', being the collection of Bhagavan's Discourses during Dasara, 1976, all of them dealing with the "Mind, its vagaries and the means of mastering them," transcribed from tape records. Sri Sohan Lai, State President of the Organisation in Delhi and the Chairman of the Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation offered the book "Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains" published by the Foundation, being the Discourses given by Bhagavan during the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality for College Students held in May-June, 1976, at Ootacamund on the Nilgiris in South India. Dr. Fanibunda from Bombay placed at the Lotus Feet, his artistically produced book, "The Vision of the Divine," being a collection of essays on his own personal experiences with Bhagavan, a highly revealing study of the Message of Baba in the background of Zoroastrianism, and a memorable analysis of the invaluable teachings of Bhagavan. The book has also a large number of rare coloured portraits of Bhagavan.

Thereafter, Sri Sunil Rajan, and Sri. Hirok Changakoti, two students of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, Bangalore Dt., spoke on the Divinity of Baba as experienced by them. Dr. Rama Raju, M.A., Ph.D., Professor and Head of the Department of Telugu, Osmania University, Hyderabad, then gave a brief account of the Seven Day Symposium on the Ramayana which will be held at Prasanthi Nilayam between May 2 and 9, this year. The Symposium will be held in the Presence of Bhagavan who will address the Gathering every day. Renowned scholars will speak on the different versions of the epic in the various languages of India. Dramas, Recitations and folk songs on the Ramayana will also be featured.

Srimati Ambika Soni, President, National Youth Congress, then addressed the huge congregation. She pleaded that she be transformed into a flute so that she could listen to Sai Krishna's Message and transmit it to the world. She offered her gratitude to Bhagavan for His ceaseless endeavour to redeem souls that are going astray or that have given up the struggle in despair. She spoke of the service rendered by the units of the Sai Organisations—the Bal Vikas, the Seva Dal, the Mahila Vibhag, and the Seva Samiti—ever intent on doing good deeds and sharing with others good thoughts and good deeds. She spoke of the special features that mark out from the rest the units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, namely, the shunning of publicity, seeking out chances to render self-less service and new lines of service activities and deriving joy and satisfaction through greater and deeper involvement with projects of service. She lamented the craze in the youth of the country for emulating the styles and manners of other countries, forgetting and ignoring what is good in their own culture and civilisation. She was certain that the students passing out of Bhagavan's Colleges—men and women—will be emissaries of Indian culture. She hoped that Indian youth will give up the negative approach to the problems of the Country and adopt the positive approach of constructive Service. "Bhagavan!", she concluded, "You are the only hope for this torn world, suffering from anxiety and fear; yours is the panacea to cure the mental and moral illness which is weakening humanity"

Bhagavan then blessed the vast gathering with His Divine Discourse. "For generations, the rulers, saints, seers, sages, lawgivers, leaders and mothers of India have been fostering and

propagating the discipline of tolerance and peace, proclaiming, 'Lokas Samasthaas Sukhino Bhavanthu', May all mankind be happy and prosperous. They have each sacrificed a great deal in order to promote this ideal. The darkness of ignorance might now and then keep this ideal away from view; but, once man takes up the spiritual path, its value and validity will become evident and it will struggle for realisation. That is the message of Sivaratri—to illumine the darkness which hides the truth of Unity and reveal the Unity which is the Truth." Baba said.

Even as He was discoursing thus the first signs of the emergence of the Linga could be sensed; Baba asked that Bhajan be sung and sat on the Chair, trying to help the Linga proceed from the stomach to the mouth in a few minutes the epochal Event happened and Baba held forth for all to see, the Lingam that was a crystal sphere bigger than the egg of a hen, that had emerged through the gullet and the mouth, to the amazement and adoration of the thousands who thankfully had its Darshan. Baba said it was the Prithvi Lingam, representing the Five Elements that composed the Globe. It was sparkling and splendidly transparent, as every one could see, when Bhagavan with infinite Grace held it in his fingers and showed it to the devotees moving among the lines of devotees all over the Auditorium. From the moment of Lingodbhavam, Bhajan was continued without break, until sunrise the next day. The Auditorium was fully packed at all hours of the night, even between midnight and dawn. Such was the enthusiasm of the devotees for that sacred discipline of Namasankirtan.

Bhagavan graciously gave Darshan at the Auditorium at 7 A.M. on the 17th and concluded the Namasankirtan by receiving Arati. He gave the concluding Discourse emphasising the value of Bhajan and Sankirtan in purifying the mind. "God does not need praise or adulation, nor need He be called upon loudly and for long. He is not carried away like humans by flattery or fulsome praise. You are only reminding yourselves of the God within you when you do Bhajan. When you allow your mind to dwell upon the attributes of God all the dross in it will be removed and all the good will be promoted. The mind is coloured by the thoughts that pass through it. Dwell on the ONE and your eyes will see only the ONE. You may say 'ten'; but there can be no ten without the ONE repeated ten times. This ONE is the Divine in each one. It is like the sugar at the bottom of the cup of water; unless it is stirred the water will be tasteless. But, once it is stirred, all the water gets sweet. Stir God with the spoon of Intelligence in the water of insipid life and that will make all the moments of life sweet and tasty. Have faith in God and believe that He is Omnipresent—that is to say, present in all others equally. That will give you sufficient inspiration and strength to make your life as well as the lives of others happy."

On the evening of 17th, also, Bhagavan gathered the devotees at the Poornachandra Auditorium in the evening and addressed them. Before his Discourse, however, Swami Karunyanandaji from Rajahmundry spoke in Telugu on the uniqueness of the Sai Avatar. Bhagavan in His Discourse, exhorted the devotees to decide upon the discovery of the truth behind the I which they were using in a variety of contexts, without a proper grasp of the implications. "When two or more I's are added, the result is only I, because, one I merges in another and all I's are only reflections of the one I. When the I is fully understood, the ONE that is appearing as all this will become evident. Distinctions will then disappear; boundaries between man and man will be wiped off; there will be no more fear or envy or hatred. All will be known as drops of Love in the Ocean of Grace.

In order to realise this Truth, action without any attachment to the fruit thereof, or without even the sense of one's doer-ship will have to be practised. God is the prompter, the promoter and the provider; he grants the fruit, with-holds it, delays it or distorts it. No question can be asked why.

The same blood flows through the eye, the tongue, the nose and the skin; but, the eye sees, the ear hears, the tongue tastes, the nose smells and the skin recognises hardness and softness. It is all one organism—not only the individual body but the entire Cosmos. The eye sees a thorn on the road; the feet move away from it, since the very seeing warns them. The eye guards and guides the feet and when a thorn enters the soft sole, the eye weeps in sympathy with the erring and the hurt feet. How closely are all the limbs and parts of the human body interlinked! In the same way, all God's creation is interlinked; no one can be happy in seclusion, nor can any one be miserable without affecting the joy of others.”

Bhagavan left for Brindavan, at dawn on the 19th February. The thousands who could attend Mahasivaratri at Prasanthi Nilayam through His Grace returned to their homes with their hearts cleansed and purified by the experience of the Divine Manifestation and their life-purpose indelibly impressed upon their minds through the discourses Bhagavan vouchsafed to them in His Infinite Mercy.

—Ed.

Holy Half-Year

This festival of Sankranti, the day on which the sun enters the tropic of Capricorn marks the happiest day in the lives of the agriculturists of these regions. The fields are shining in gold, the hills and downs are covered with a carpet of yellow flowers and are interspersed with plots of chilly plants thick with bunches of crimson fruits. The toils have come to a close; prosperity is at the door; there is song and dance, laughter and leisure at last. The cattle which toiled equally hard with man to fill the home with joy have a few days of rest. It is a festival to celebrate plenty and prosperity. It is also called Pongal, the day when milk and rice boil over and overflow the vessels, symbolising delight and exultation.

The Sun starts his northward journey on this day. Hence it is called Uttarayana, the pilgrimage to the north. When he moves towards the south, more and more to the south with each succeeding day, the progress is towards the region of the ancestors and the manes. But, when at last, he turns north, he is facing the Gods who dwell on the Himalayas, region of purity, cool courage and comfort, calm and quiet. God is the repository of Aishwarya or Prosperity and Plenty. And, when the Sun, the bestower of Light, Activity, Energy and Health, of Life and Enlightenment, moves in the direction of God, Prosperity and Plenty of all kinds are assured. The Aishwarya that Easwara (God) bestows includes Jnana (Wisdom), Dharma (Righteousness, which promotes the Peace of Society as well as in the individual), Prema (the attitude of Universal Love, which knows no fear, no bargaining, and no limits) and Moksha (liberation from fear, illusion and the idea of separateness) are also gifts of Aishwarya. In order to achieve this in

this life, health is essential and the Sun is the promoter of health. Makara Sankranti is therefore the Day when the era of Health and Holiness is inaugurated by the Sun.

Each of the organs and faculties of man has a presiding deity according to the Vedas. The mind is directed by the Moon God and the vision by the Sun God. As the vision, so the world. The senses of perception are presided over by Indra; hence they are called Indriyas. Indra has to be prayed to, to help the mind to control the senses. The Intellect is ruled over by the Sun. That is why the Gayatri mantra is addressed to the Sun and prays for the proper development of the intellect.

If you desire to come to Brindavan from Bangalore, you can walk the distance of 12 miles; but, that will involve some trouble. If on the other hand, you get a seat in a car coming over here, the journey can be both quick and comfortable. The Sun is proceeding day by day more and more to the North and if your intellect is yoked to the Sun, it can reach the realm of God quicker than otherwise and with less travail.

This Makara Sankranti Day is associated with another holy event, according to the Bhagavata. This is the Day chosen by the Gopis to perform the Kathyayini Vrata (the observance of the vow and vigil to propitiate Goddess Kathyayini), which ensures the securing of the Lord Himself as one's Lord and Master. The Vrata held on this day ensured for them the Lord as Master. So, the message of Makara Sankranti is—give up mental and spiritual doubt and weakness, and seek to possess the Lord as Master, Guide and Goal.

The Indriyas must not be allowed to roam free over the objective world. Make the mind the controller of the senses rather than their obedient servant. Nor should you install the mind as an independent entity; the mind is too wayward and wild for that. The intellect, sharpened and cleansed of ego and attachment has to be vigilantly guiding the mind. And, the intellect again has to derive its light from the Atma within, the Divine that is the eternal Guide. The Atma has no master, superior to it. The Kathyayini Vrata aims at this supreme stage of realising the Atma as the Sovereign of Sovereigns. In common parlance the orphans are designated Anatha, without Natha, or helpless, with no one to protect them. God is the only Anatha, for He has no one to render help or to give protection. All the rest have God as the Protector and the Helper.

Emperor Sivaji once sent a large consignment of provisions and clothes to Sant Rama Das, the recluse living in his hermitage, and when the emissaries said they were for him since he was without any Protector or Provider, he refused to accept them; he had a Protector and Provider in Rama; so, he directed them to carry the provisions etc to the temple of Rama, since Rama did not have any Protector and Provider. The Gopis prayed that He who has no Protector must take them under His Protection. This is the anniversary of that Day.

This Day is the beginning of the sacred six-month period, when every moment is auspicious. Bhishma, the grandfather of the Kauravas and Pandavas, the hero who submitted himself to the thrall of the severest of all vows, the vow of lifelong continence, fell on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, 56 days earlier than this Sankranti Day. Death then would have been in the inauspicious half of the year. So, the mighty hero, armed with spiritual and physical might, resolved to keep alive until this day, on a bed of arrows. Though his body was suffering pain, his

mind was calm and composed. In fact, during those days, he gave invaluable discourses to his Pandava grandsons, on practical aspects of spiritual Sadhana, aimed at acquiring mental peace. He kept the flame of life bright until he was able to merge it in the Cosmic Splendour of God. Just as Bhishma waited for the coming of the auspicious Day for the supreme sacrifice of his life, people wait for the Uttarayana, to initiate or involve themselves in new undertakings. This day marks the beginning of the season of festivals, like Upanayanas, (Initiation into Sadhana), Grhapravesam (Entering the newly built house preliminary to occupying it), Marriages etc. Himachal or Himalayas is the home of Ishwara, say the Puranas. Himachal symbolises the Heart of Man, the heart which is as pure and as transparent as snow, as cool and as comforting as snow which caps the Himalayan peaks. Himalayas or the Abode of snows is the Heart, filled with Prema.

There are three types of Prema or Love. The first and the lowest type is the Swartha Prema (the narrow, selfish). This like the electric bulb lights up only the room and does not spread beyond. This type of love is shared only with a few, those who cater to selfish needs. The second is the Samanjasa Prema (the proper and pervasive) which like the moonlight spreads all over, but, feebly and faintly. The third type is the Samartha Prema (universal) which is like the sun-light, illumining and gladdening all, without any limit or motive.

On this sacred Festival Day, you should resolve to cast away all lower desires and urges, and decide to expand your hearts in order to welcome the highest type of Love. Cast away the ignorance that believes in the truth of only those things that you can see; accept the view that everything that we see has a basis in things that we cannot or do not see. The tree has its roots; the skyscraper has its foundation; man has the Divine as his basis. The unchanging Atma is the Reality. All else is subject to change. Fix your belief firmly on that unchanging Truth, That is the message I give you today.

—*Baba's Discourse: 14-1-1976, Brindavan*

Human and Divine

—*Sri Syamacharan Sukla, Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh*

I am happy I am able to attend this function. It is indeed a source of joy for me to note the progress that this College has accomplished within these few years. I know that but for Bhagavan's Grace, this institution would not have attained such competence and efficiency. A few days ago, the proposal for adding a few more subjects to the courses taught here came before me and, I agreed to them, without a second thought, and requested the Governing Body to carry out the proposals at once. We find today a number of graduates who are unemployed; but, yet, the thirst for higher education is so great that candidates in increasing numbers are seeking to appear as 'private students' for University examinations. This shows the urgency for many more institutions of this type in the State.

In fact, more emphasis has to be laid now on the education of women, and no stone should be left unturned in this process. We in the Government of this State as well as the Prime Minister at Delhi are both of this view. About half the population of India is sunk in illiteracy and so, it should be our endeavour to bring Light into their minds as soon as possible and in as ample a measure as we can. All our talents, strength and potentialities should be placed at the disposal of this programme. Here in this College, you are doing so; and, due to the keen interest that Bhagavan takes, you have been able to achieve such remarkable results.

I am glad that this institution has been established in the city of Bhopal, and that it is being directed according to the discipline and message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. This is an industrial area, grown beyond the fondest dreams of the people and the centre of an industrial revolution. It is also a sign of the revival of the values of our ancient culture that this College is thriving here. Under the inspiring leadership of Gandhiji, India was led into a new life of freedom and fullness. Independence Day, 1947, marked the opening of a new chapter in the history of our nation, in political, economic, social and religious fields. We have developed a new faith in the traditions and culture of our land. But, increasing urbanisation and the influence of western scepticism have eroded this faith a great deal. I have been hearing about the controversy about Bhagavan's Divinity; but, I have heard from these people nothing about the message that Bhagavan has been proclaiming—the Message of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. Let us leave the controversy to the individuals concerned; for such issues depend for their validity upon individual experience, and their capacity to imbibe and introspect. That is why in this country no coercion is imposed on any one or any group of persons to accept any religious tenet or spiritual experience, second hand.

I am glad that the students of this Women's College are equipped with the basic knowledge of Indian Culture. In institutions oriented towards western culture, faith in our age-long ceremonies and rituals, festivals and pilgrimage is shaken, and no substitutes provided. Students are left at the crossroads. Spirituality cannot be imported or bought. Nor can it be fostered through mere scholarship. It is the natural yearning of man to contact the elan vital that motivates all beings. The concept of this superhuman, super-natural power is at the very root of Indian culture. It was also sustaining the western peoples for many centuries. The Industrial Revolution brought wealth rolling into Europe and the West. Affluence led to gaiety and an indifference to the higher norms of living. The Puritans attempted to reform this tendency but, after some initial success, they were relegated to the background. Our country has never given up insisting on the closest relationship between the human and the divine. But, people were given utmost latitude in picturing and professing this relationship. There were worshippers of idols and there were people who did not believe in idol-worship. Bhagavan too reconciles in one expansive universal Love all forms of worship and all theories of God-man relationship. The symbol of His Message that you have here is indicative of this reconciliation.

Women who pass out of this College will be standard-bearers of this message; by their moral courage and character, they are bound to make a mark in society. Apart from the academic subjects prescribed in the curriculum, you train the students to appreciate and understand ancient civilisations, traditions and cultures—under the benevolent guidance of Bhagavan. The aim is to prepare the student to promote the best interests of mankind. The students are ever in the Presence of the Avatar itself and they are indeed fortunate to get this chance. I conclude with the

hope that the students of this College will enlighten the home, the society and the nation and promote unity, love and the spirit of service in the whole world.

—*Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Bhopal*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Departure Of Vanaras

Rama told the departing groups of Vanaras and others, "Children! And, friends! I am awarding you the Sarupya stage of liberation, by which you are endowed with power and attainments approximating to mine own. Go back and carry out the duties devolving upon you with success and fulfil the responsibilities in which you are involved. Rule over the lands and peoples entrusted to your care and enjoy the fruits of peace and prosperity." Rama gave them valuable counsel of various kinds and gave them leave to depart.

Bharata and Shatrughna were struck with admiration by the devotion that shone in the hearts of the Vanaras and others. As Rama commanded, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna accompanied the party for some distance until they reached the outskirts of the City. Even as they sat in the chariots provided for them, the Vanaras turned back wistfully and shed tears at the thought of leaving Rama. The brothers saw the anguish in their faces and could not bear the sight. They knew the meaning of those streams of tears and those sad looks and praised the spirit of dedication which filled their hearts. They gave them company until the riverbank and they supervised the arrangements for ferrying them across. Then, the brothers returned to Ayodhya. Hanuman also returned with them. He prayed and pleaded with Sugriva, his ruler and promised to return after about ten days, for, as he said, "I cannot bear the pang of separation." Though Sugriva was not very happy, and in spite of his protests, Hanuman came back along with Lakshmana and others, to where Rama was.

Asking For Instruction

One day, Rama proceeded to a garden with his brothers and his dear Hanuman, in order to spend some time surveying it. The place was replete with flowers and fruits. Rama sat on an elevated seat, with the brothers on his side. The brothers were found hesitating to ask some questions, though they had the desire within them. They looked at Hanuman and communicated their feelings to him. They knew that if Hanuman put those questions, Rama would fain give the answers. The omnipresent Rama recognised the situation. "Hanuman! What is it you seek to know? Ask." he said. Hanuman replied, "O Protector of the Weak! Bharata wanted to ask you a question. But, he was stricken by doubt; he is downcast with a sense of fear." He folded his palms and fell at the feet of Rama, for having answered his query so blatantly, and in thankfulness that he was commanded to speak in the presence. Rams then spoke thus: "Hanuman! You full well know my nature. There is no difference between me and Bharata, nothing to make either feel distinct."

When Bharata heard these words, he fell at the feet of Rama, and said, "O Healer of the Miseries of those who surrender to you! Listen. Pardon my errors and protect me. I have no doubts lurking in my mind. I have no griefs and no attachments, even in my dreams. Of course, I owe all this to your grace and compassion. You are the treasure-house of all the virtues. I only desire to learn from you the distinction between the men who are good and those we have to shun as bad."

The Good and the Bad

Rama deigned to reply. He said, "Brother! The qualities that mark out the good are endless in number, as the Vedas and Puranas say. The distinction that separates the good and the bad are as wide as that between the sandal tree and the axe. Note this; even when the axe cuts the sandal tree, the tree confers on the axe the fragrance it possesses. The axe is killing it but, the tree does only good to its executioner. Hence, the sandal is appreciated by all. The Gods love to have sandal on their foreheads. But, see what happens to the axe, that does harm to the tree that wishes it well. It is kept in fire and while red-hot, it is hammered into shape and sharpness. Wicked persons cause grief to good men in this manner. But, the good always wish well and do good to the wicked, whatever harm is done to them. And, what is their gain? They certainly attain heaven. That is to say, they are in constant bliss. The bad persons, on the other hand, will be constantly struggling in sorrow, and discontent. That is to say, they will be subject to hellish agony. Though they may appear happy to observers, they will be tortured inside by the infamy and the hatred they invoke.

I shall tell you the characteristics of good men. Listen. They are not fascinated by sensual pleasures. They possess all the best virtues and modes of behaviour. They will be happy at the happiness of others; they will be sad when others are sad. They look upon all with equal affection. They have no enemies and they are not bothered by foes. They are endowed with wisdom, knowledge of the objective world, and a deep sense of detachment. Their hearts are tender; they have great compassion towards the weak and the helpless. They adore my feet with purity of thought, word and deed. They delight in serving me. They have no concern with fame or infamy, honour or dishonour. They are always interested in serving others; they never yield to the urges of selfishness, even in dreams. Their actions are transparently simple; their hearts are ever cool and unruffled. They yearn for opportunities to renounce; they are every moment soaked in joy. For them praise and blame are the same. Brother! Whoever has these characteristics in him, take it that he is of my own nature. Why should I say, of my own nature? He is myself, I am himself. Take that to be the truth.

Now, I shall tell you of the qualities of bad men. Listen. You should avoid their company, by all means. Grief will descend upon you as a result of that companionship. Their hearts will be pained at the prosperity of others. They will delight in scandalising others, as if they have come upon a fortune. The six foes of good men—lust, anger, greed, desire, pride and hatred—are fostered by them and they are ever at their beck and call. They move about and act according to the commands of these six. Pity and charity are absent in their makeup. They pick up quarrels with others with no reason or provocation. They develop enmity even towards those who do good to them. Their actions are false; their utterances are false; their advice is false; their dealings of give and take are false. Their attitudes are hard; they have hearts of stone. The peacock is charming to behold; its cry is pleasant to hear; but, it kills snakes. So too wicked men

are eager to harm others, and craving for others, wives. They relish damaging the reputation of others. They revel in evil; they are evil minded all the time. They are the meanest among men. They have no fear of retribution. When they see or hear about the progress of another, they are possessed by envy so much that they are afflicted with unbearable headache. But, when others are caught in calamity, they exult over their sufferings. When others are suffering, they are elated as if they have been crowned kings of the realm. They are dominated by the ego; they do not have any thought of helping others, even in their dreams! Their hearts are the birthplace for lust anger and other passions. They have no consideration towards parents, preceptors or elders. They feel disgust at the very mention of 'good personages' or 'God'. Their intellects are dull; their conduct is reprehensible. They are blinded by lust. They can be observed in large numbers during the Kaliyuga.

Brother! Of all righteous acts, help rendered to those needing it is the most righteous. Of all the evil acts, there is nothing more evil than causing harm to others. Know that this is the essence of the teachings of the Vedas and the Puranas. This is the ideal held forth by good men everywhere. Those who are benefited by birth as men, and yet indulge in injuring others are degraded into lower bestial levels and have to be born and die as those beings. Or, when born again as men, they commit further evils through their ignorance and the blindness it causes. For such, I am the meter—out of Karma—consequence and it is only after a long passage of time during which they have to struggle out of the darkness, that I vouchsafe to those who seek a Vision of Myself. I throw them again and again into the vortex of life and make them experience the ups and downs so that they might be educated.

Bharata! The gods, the sages and the great personages do not engage themselves in acts involving dualities; they are ever engaged in adoring me in a dedicated state of mind. They engage themselves in activities without any desire or attachment to the consequence of those activities. If austerities are taken up in order to gain some ends, if activities are undertaken with a view to earn the fruits that they yield, people have to be born with bodies so that they may awarded the good and the bad which those austerities and activities deserve. When the fruits are not craved for, and acts are still done sincerely and rightly and correctly, they don't bind; on the other hand, they confer wisdom on the doer. The person will have his devotion and dedication advanced a great deal. And as a result, he will be nearer to the Supreme and to the mergence in the Supreme. When you are able to distinguish between the good and the bad on the basis of these characteristics, and act accordingly while choosing company, you will be able to extricate yourselves from the toils of the sea of change, the Samsara Ocean.

Brother! Know that all these distinctions between good and bad are basically the result of attachment and involvement, due to your considering the world as real, while it is neither real nor unreal. Those who have escaped this 'illusion' and this duality are the Mahatmas. They have realised that their reality is the unchanging Atma. They know that there are no two; they experience always only the One. Others are the ignorant lot.”

The brother and others who listened to this clarification attained equanimity. Their hearts were delighted with the upsurge of Love. They acknowledged the kindness of Rama by gratefully prostrating before him. This they did for each point that was clarified. Hanuman felt the ecstasy more than all others. Later, Rama proceeded to the Palace, accompanied by the brothers and

Hanuman. This became the normal routine every day-conveying counsel and then, the carrying on of the duties of administration. One day, Rama desired that the citizens of Ayodhya assemble in the Palace, with the Preceptors and the Brahmins. They all gathered at the Durbar Hall, and were provided comfortable seats. Rama came into the Hall and addressed them thus:

Rama's Role As Teacher

"Citizens! Preceptors and Brahmins: Prostrations to you. Listen to my words in peace and to the very end. I am not discoursing to you in the attitude of pride or of selfish conceit. It is also not to declare that I am your monarch. Nor is it to teach you to journey along evil paths. If my words appear good to you, then, follow the path I indicate. But, I must say this those who listen to my words and walk accordingly, those alone are my friends, those alone are dear to me. They alone are my brothers. If I utter anything wrong, point it out, to me, instantly, without hesitation. Well. Birth as a human being is hailed in the Vedas and Puranas and by wise men of all lands as the rarest chance of all. The human birth cannot be achieved unless a great deal of merit is built up in many lives previous to this. Even gods yearn for the chance and find it hard to get born as men. Birth as a human opens the door to Liberation. It provides wide opportunities for undergoing Sadhana and benefiting by them. The human body is to be used not for enjoying sensual pleasures. It is not to be treated as an instrument for reaching Heaven and delight in heavenly joys. These pleasures are all momentary. They bring you back again into the tangle of change, the toil of birth and death. Therefore, these pleasures bring about sorrow. Only fools will be led away into the pursuit of these sensual pleasures. Such pleasures are as poison to man; is it proper to seek poison, in preference to Nectar? Those who crave for poison cannot be good men. They are like the fools who discard the Wish-fulfilling-gem (Chintamani) and prefer a bead of glass.

Being endowed with the human body, if a person does not use it for crossing the Ocean of Illusory Existence (Samsara) he is indeed to be pitied as unfortunate and of dull intellect. He is indeed the slayer of his own self, the enemy of his own progress. Therefore, those who are born as men have to realise that God resides in all men as the Atma within and to serve every one as Divine, and regard that service as the most proper worship of God. Observe the dictates of God with full heart. Carry out all activities as if you are dedicating them to God.

Citizens! Those who yearn to be happy here and hereafter! Listen to my words. Have them as your guides and your goals. Follow this path. Of all paths that lead to God and Self-realisation, the path of Devotion (Bhakti) is the easiest, it is a path full of delight to the mind. The path of discrimination and elimination of illusion (Jnana) is fraught with difficulties and faced with obstacles. It is well-nigh impossible to extinguish the mind. And, even those who travel along the hard path of Jnana, can become dear to me only if they have devotion and love in their hearts. There is nothing equal to Bhakti. Bhakti is not bound, it is free. It endows man with all joys and delights. And, it must be emphasised that you can progress in Bhakti only when you seek and stay in Satsang, good company."

The Rams Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Sai Family News

Uttar Pradesh:

Unprecedented floods created havoc around the famous Govardhan Peak in Uttar Pradesh, recently. The Sathya Sai Seva Samitis at Mathura and Hathras threw themselves into action, with the help of other Samitis at Agra etc. 10 villages were adopted and medical and other help continued for over 3 months from August to December 76. The Seva was highly commended by the beneficiaries as well as by the Governor of the State, Sri M Channa Reddy, who wrote, on November 10, "I congratulate the Organization on this noble task. Service to suffering humanity is the gist of all the religions of the world. I am very happy to know that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, Uttar Pradesh, is rendering commendable humanitarian service in the flood-affected villages near Govardhan, and holding Eye Camps and camps for Diseases of Women.

What exactly is man's duty? First he should tend his parents with love, reverence and gratitude. Second—Sathyam Vada and Dharmam Chara—speak the truth and act virtuously; third—whenever you have a few moments to spare, repeat the Name of the Lord with the form in your mind; fourth—never indulge in talking ill of others or try to discover faults in others and finally do not cause pain to others in any form.

—Baba

Sathya Sai Baba: His Psychic Powers

In the past the Avatars appeared in disguise and did not reveal their true self except to a few of the inner circle and this is one reason why people failed to recognise them in their life-time and enrich themselves by their divine presence in full measure. It was long after their disappearance that they came to be recognised as Avatars and worshipped as such. Sathya Sai Baba strikes altogether a different note. He himself has declared that he is an Avatar and to make others realise that his is divine power, he showers miracles of amazing nature. These paranormal phenomena are drawing millions to his feet and these have convinced them more than anything else that he is an incarnation of the Divine Essence.

Avatars possess formidable yogic powers but they use them as little as possible. Ramakrishna was against occult methods and strongly expressed himself against miracles. According to Ramakrishna the paranormal powers are a positive hindrance in the path of spiritual progress. Although Sai Baba uses his strange powers from time to time for a limited purpose, he shows the same repugnance to them. Let the Master speak for himself. "If I were just like any one of you, you would not have cared at all. That is why I have to take up this human form and show you now and then these miracles and superhuman faculties." This simple statement of Baba, it should be noted, has been often misunderstood. It is therefore, necessary to point out that Sai Baba has never attached undue importance to miracles and times without count cautioned the Sadhakas not to go in for miracles in the path of spiritual perfection. Sai Bibs in his speech, delivered at the World Conference at Bombay on May 17, 1968, said:

"You elaborate in your lectures the unique power of Sai, the incidents that are described as 'miracles' in books written on me by persons. But, I request you not to attach importance to them. Do not exaggerate their significance; the most significant and important power is, let me tell you, my Prema. I may turn the sky into earth, or earth into sky; but that is not the sign. It is the Prema, the Sahana, effective, universal, ever-present, that is the unique sign."

Sai Baba further observed in a discourse on June 19, 1974 as follows:

...Those who profess to have understood, the scholars, the Yogis, the Pundits, the Jnanis, all of them are aware only of the least important, the casual external manifestations of an infinitesimal part of that power, namely, the miracles! They have not desired to contact the source of all power and wisdom, that is available at Brindavan (Whitefield, Bangalore).

"This has been the case, in all ages; people may be very near (physically) to the Avatar, but they live out their lives unaware of their fortune, but exaggerating the role of miracles which are as trivial when compared to my glory and majesty, as a mosquito is in size and strength to the elephant upon which it squats. Therefore, when you speak about these 'miracles', I laugh within myself out of pity, that you allow yourself so easily to lose the precious awareness of my reality."

What Sai Baba spelt out, in one of his discourses in May 74, on his miracles is of immense value and deserve careful attention of all interested in Sai Baba.

"All powers are in the control of Sai. Unfortunately many educated people who call themselves Yogis, Mahayogis, Pundits and people who have all kinds of qualifications talk only of the miracles that I perform. They do not make an attempt to recognise the strength and the true nature of Sai that they apparently see...it is foolish for people to think that I am just a man of miracles and no more... These miracles have an insignificant place in my totality... To always talk of the Vibhuti which I give or to talk of other things that I materialise is not correct... Do not be led away by people who always talk of having got a locket or a watch or a ring from me. These things have no deep meaning. If you can earn my grace, it is as good as getting the entire world. Do not talk of my miracles but talk of the Prema which you can get from me by your conduct."

Sai Baba's greatest power, his supreme magic, is to be found in his all consuming Love. Love is the eternal principle. It is through love that he wants to reform and reconcile mankind and it is through his love that he is striving to call forth the divine in man. His love ever flows in all directions alike for the poor and the rich, the wicked and the good. Sai Baba oftener than not moves among the poor and the helpless bringing them succour and solace. He is ceaselessly calling the wretched and the wicked who are groaning under the dead weight of misery, pain and disease. He neither wants nor accepts any thing from any one. He always asks the people to make him a gift of their misery, their sufferings, their doubt and their distress and take from him Ananda, the elixir of the life eternal. The call is irresistible and so tens of thousands rush to his feet for peace which no earthly 'magician' can offer and which can be given as a free gift in abundance only by an Avatar.

The Avatar is always the same, the Satchidananda, the Eternal, our God reborn. But with each return he reveals himself a little more fully commensurate with the time-spirit. Sai Baba is the Avatar of this era of science and technology and so he has manifested his supra-worldly power in unusual ways to carry conviction with the people of this age steeped in gross materialism, utter disbelief and scepticism. It is in keeping with the time spirit that he has appeared as the supra-mental Light that baffles the combined intelligence of the whole world.

Last but not the least, no Avatar from Krishna to Rama-Krishna ever gave any thought for the transformation of the body, to make the body divine. It is believed by not a few that such a divine transformation of the body has ostensibly materialised in the person of Sri Sai Baba of Puttaparthi. Hitherto the Divine principle appeared as Avatars in human form with all the shortcomings and limitations of the human physical body, but this time Sai Baba, the Avatar of the age, has assumed a divine body. Sai Baba, has declared, "I have come with this body, and you can see that there is no difference between this body and any other human body. But yet illness has never affected this body. It cannot any time." Sai Baba has further observed, "This body will ever be free from illness and pain; disease can never affect it. This is the real truth." More surprise was yet in store. On October 31, 1961 Sai Baba said that years later his work-load would increase so incredibly that it would no longer be possible for him to travel by motorcar, train or aeroplane and he would have to travel through the sky. "I will have to move across the sky. Yes, this too will happen, believe me." This startling statement coming, as it did from Sai Baba, may appear to men of science a grotesque fantasy but their intellectual pride maybe rudely shocked. But one who has received light from above, one who has once felt the glory of God within, can no longer allow himself to believe that intellect is sovereign and omnipotent, and accept reason alone as the supreme guide. Whenever man has seen the effulgence of the soul, and is no more deluded by science, and feels convinced that there is a higher power, there is an unfailing oracle far beyond the ken of human intellect, reason and science.

Nevertheless, doubters will doubt, unbelievers will raise a hue and cry and dignitaries proud of their lore will fret and fume but one who has chanced to hear the voice of the eternal in the stillness of his heart, will accept Sai Baba with tears of joy rolling down his cheeks, and doubt not for a moment that the highest light, the supreme Truth and wisdom has appeared on earth in a divine body and in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "The descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here will be the final scene of the earth evolution."

— *Kalidas Mukherj, Barnpur*

The Four Divine Steps

God sleeps in rocks; He dreams in herbs, plants and trees; He is in the waking state in animals; and He knows that He is in the waking state in man. As a super-man, He regains His Omnipotence.

Thus the 'Sat' aspect (Existence-principle) of God is in everything-even in insentient articles, while the 'Chit' aspect (consciousness) is found only in sentient beings. Or 'Sat' aspect is more

universal and pervading (omnipresent) than the 'Chit' aspect (omniscience). This is equally true in the case of an individual also (micro-aspect), in whose case the 'conditioned consciousness' is superficial being evident only in the upper layers of his personality like body, mind and intellect. But the 'being' (existence-principle) ('Sat') pervades all layers reaching to the very core—the 'Atma.' When this limited consciousness becomes coextensive as the 'Sat' aspect, or when it reaches the 'Atma', the individual becomes a realised soul, the Jiva-Atma merges with the Paramatma. The divinity so far latent in the inner core becomes patent.

In the case of an ordinary man the divinity sleeps; in the case of sadhakas and heroes it tries to waken; and in the case of an Incarnation it is in the fully blossomed state. When 'omniscience' and 'omnipresence' merge together, the Jivatma regains its 'omnipotence'. Manava can thus become 'Madhava' by this process of making his consciousness merge with (or coincide with) his very being (Sat).

But this is not an easy path for an ordinary human being. The 'Jnana Marga' is prescribed only for those who have evolved to that stage. Others have, to resort to other paths like 'Bhakti' or 'karma' margas or paths. 'Nishkama Karma' helps to purify our mind, and to cultivate devotion to God (Bhakti). When work is done in a worshipful attitude, Jnana (knowledge) reveals itself in our heart.

When an Avatar lives with us, we have every opportunity to follow the above path. He propagates 'truth' and his very life itself is a practice of (achar) righteousness (dharma). By His divine grace we come closer and closer to divinity—each of our forward steps brings God nearer to us by ten steps.

Bhagavan Baba is the Avatar of this age (Kaliyuga) and He has made it very clear during His recent Birthday Discourse how He helps us in attaining this self-realisation (Atma Sakshatkara).

His first step is 'Chamatkara'—attracting the Jivatmas by the so-called miracles. Really for Bhagavan they are not miracles, but only creations (He being the creator of all this Universe). He uses them as His visiting cards and out of awe and wonder we are attracted to Him. Once we are close to Him, He begins the second process, namely 'Samskara', that is, he makes us cultured, purifying our heart, so that seeds of devotion germinate and grow there in the sunlight and water of His 'Prema'. Only we have to surrender our 'ego' at His Lotus Feet. We begin to taste the real sweetness of His 'Prema' only when we extend this Prema to others, our fellow—beings. Here we reach the third step of His divine path, namely 'Seva' (Service) or, as He calls it, 'Paropakara'. Through service (which may be 'atura Seva'—service to the distressed) or 'Narayana Seva', or to put it in general terms ('Manava Seva'—service to man) our mind gets sublimated, and real Bhakti—love to God—culminates in attaining 'Jnana' (wisdom) and 'Sakshatkara' (self-realisation), which is His fourth or the final step.

The above four steps through which Bhagavan takes the devotees, roughly correspond to the four stages in a man's life—the four 'ashrams'—Brahmacharya, Grihasta, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa. When He attracts us through 'chamatkar' we begin to move towards Him—'Brahman'—and thus become Brahmacharis, the first stage in the life of man. The second process of 'Samskara' resembles the 'Grihasta' life which affords opportunities for righteous living. Through

'Darshan' 'Sparshan' and 'Sambhashan', our heart gets purified and the association with the 'Sai' families helps us to develop the 'Dharmic' values in life. 'Paropakara', the third step is similar to 'Vanaprastha'. Here the outward meaning alone will appear paradoxical, as Vanaprastha implies life far away from activities, while 'Paropakara' requires real service in society. Here the essential point is 'renunciation' which is common to Seva activities as well as the Vanaprastha's life. Real Seva requires renunciation of much of our desires and comforts in life. The last step of 'Sakshatkara' corresponds to real 'Sanyasa', as both imply realisation of the Atma.

Again, when we approach Bhagavan through His 'chamatkar', we are in search of 'Sathya', (Sathyanarayana); when Bhagavan 'transforms' us (Samskara) we realise what is 'Dharma'. Paropakara—real selfless service—imparts 'Shanti', and 'Sakshatkara' fills us with 'Prema'—Love towards God and all beings in the world. Thus we, Sai devotees, are continuously being drawn towards 'Him' and through this evolution, towards the ultimate goal of self-realisation. The Avatar has come for this purpose.

We, the devotees of Bhagavan, have to qualify ourselves for going through the above four steps by observing and strictly adhering to the principles of the four 'Purusharthas' in human life—'Dharma', 'Artha', 'Kama' and 'Moksha'. A righteous (Dharmic) way of living will accelerate the attraction (chamatkar) by Swami. We may even say that Swami is attracted by the observance of dharma by His devotees. The only 'Artha' (wealth) that we should try to acquire is the 'transformation' (Samskara) at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. There is no higher 'Samskara' than this, which makes us proper instruments in His hands to do real service (Paropakara). We must keep only this desire (Kama) in our minds to do selfless service to others who are all sparks of the same divinity (Bhagavan). We have to reduce our desires and by this process of 'Mohakshaya', we easily reach Moksha (Sakshatkara) with the divine grace of Bhagavan. Thus Swami's four divine steps are also closely related to the four Purusharthas in human life. 'Artha' should be earned in a 'Dharmic' way, and our 'Kama' should only be for 'Moksha'.

Devotees who are members of the Sai family are enabled to reach the ultimate destination of self-realisation by travelling in this divine vehicle of four wheels—chamatkar, Samskara, Paropakara and Sakshatkara of which Swami is the Sanathana Sarathi.

He takes the devotees through the Fourfold path of Self-confidence (born of an intensity of devotion, which makes a Devotee march towards his Goal (chamatkar creates the devotion), Self-satisfaction (as he puts this goal, first before everything) due to Samskara (the transformation) Self-sacrifice (spending all his energies for its fulfillment—Paropakara, being self-sacrificing) and lastly, Self-realisation (being one with the Goal—Sakshatkara).

Thus the four Divine steps also indicate the Four Paths recommended and pursued by the devotees.

—Prof. M. Krishnan Kutty Menon

The Master's Voice

There is nothing ornate or decorative in the venue. Often, it is a thatched shed and sometimes, it is a stuffy room in some house. There are no beautiful carvings on stonewalls, no mandaps, pillared corridors or sky-high gopurams. The bare walls have a few pictures hung here and there. There is no illumination perhaps, except what an earthen lamp can produce and provide. There are no vessels before the pictures, full of tasty fruits or sweets, likely to be distributed to all as 'Prasad'.

The congregation consists of ordinary men and women, toilers and workers, farmers and factory hands, with furrowed faces and rough palms. They come into the place straight from the kitchen or the field or the factory or office. They have no external mark of devotion, except a Vibhuti dot on their brows and a smile to greet all they encounter. They silently sit on the floor, without the slightest murmur. They seem to be Happy that they could come in time and take their seats facing the central picture. They do not seek to know who the persons sitting next to them are-rich or poor, Hindu or Muslim; it is enough for them that they are good persons seeking to find God. Masters sit in the same row, rubbing shoulders with their servants; students and teachers sit close together and offer their hearts in unison. The learned sit along with the illiterate, the men apart from women.

The Bhajan starts simple sweet rhythmic music fills the room. There is no attempt to show off, to indulge in acrobatics, to drown the words in drums. The songs do not parade punditry; they are garlands of translucent pearls, each pearl a meaningful appellation of God. The waves that vibrate in the room when the Bhajans are sung fill every one with inexpressible Bliss.

When you leave the room at last, something delightful courses through your veins like a cool jet of fragrant air. A comforting balm envelops you and remains with you as a precious possession for days, until renewed at another Bhajan session. A melody titillates within your mind till sleep suppresses its appeal late in the night. What is it that, in moments of despondency and despair, hate and envy, anger and lust, nudges you gently from within and turns your emotion into the path of purity, humility and Love?

Dear Brother! know that it is the Master's Voice.

—*P. Rajagopalan, Trivandrum*

Why Bal Vikas?

Truth is the supreme principle acknowledged by all religions. Even sceptics have to decide in their lives what is right and what is wrong. The rules and regulations, the laws and limits of society are all referred to as Dharma; this Dharma is based on Truth. That is the only strong foundation. Nahi sathyaath paro dharma; there is no right conduct higher than Truth.

The Four Pillars of the Sathya Sai Mission are Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love; Truth includes the other three. All these four can be manifested only in a human being. Man is born with his mind as a clean state, a pure heart. The child is, therefore, regarded as Bal Bhagavan;

(Child-God). It speaks the truth only. The debtor may ask the child to tell the creditor at the door that Daddy is not at home. But, the child will tell him, "Daddy asked me to tell you that he is not at home." It is the parent who teaches untruth to the child.

When one child meets another, love springs in the heart of each. They approach each other and start playing together. Ram pushes Rahim and he falls down. May be Rahim is bruised. The parents hear the wail and they drag the children into their homes. But, within an hour, Ram and Rahim are found playing together again. The children are full of love; they fill the environment with that Love. The child is the embodiment of innocence and love; it disburses love freely to all. It quarrels in the morning, but, forgets in the evening. Its sorrow is short-lived; its smile lives long. Tranquility is its nature, not turmoil.

The child is taught that certain things and acts are bad or good by the parents, the teachers and the friends. Human nature tends to copy. The first lessons on morality—self-control and right action are learnt in the lap of the mother. She teaches him the do's and the don'ts, and the nature of the outer world. Whatever the caste or creed, the child is fostered by two things that are very valuable: (1) Sat-siksha: Right Education and (2) Sat-sang: Right Company. Even if he is illiterate and has no chance of getting sat-siksha, sat-sang can transform him into a straight, trustworthy person useful to himself and others.

Truth, Love and Peace are in the very nature of man; Righteousness comes after. A child grows into a good person or a bad person, during the first years. That is why Bhagavan has instituted Bal Vikas all over the world. The Child has Divinity in its core and it has to be encouraged to blossom. They are buds of fragrant flowers which have to be affectionately tended.

The beauty and fragrance of these flowers will then fill the four corners of the world and bring a rewarding prize for the parents and for society.

—*Mohammad Amin, Indore*

Hrishikesh

Catherine Murray

It is difficult to adjust to the idea of the Infinite in Space—to be able to see, to hear, and, luckily, to touch Him. We can never know God in His Allness, but we have been given a gift of grace to meditate on His physical Presence. I invite you to ponder with me on one small feature of our Beloved Bhagavan—His hair.

Why did Bhagavan choose this type of hair?

The first clue came with a random reading of Mac Donnell's SANSKRIT DICTIONARY of the word root HRISH to which *Hrishya* is given as "bristle, stand erect", then I looked down the column at *Hrishikesa* where the meaning is given "having his hair erect, especially of Vishnu-Krishna."

Bhagavan writes in the Gita Vahini that "Krishna as Hrishikesa is the Presiding Deity of all the senses." I thought that I had missed the Devanagari script and there were two different words. Swami Sivananda renders the word in his translation of the Bhagavad-Gita as "Lord of the Senses" as does Swami Prabhupada. It was in checking Eknath Easwaran's THE BHAGAVAD-GITA FOR DAILY LIVING that everything began to fall into place. He writes:

"One of the glorious names for Sri Krishna, used here and elsewhere through the Gita to remind us of the complete unending joy lying within us, is Hrishikesh, "he whose hair stands on end with joy!" How perfect for Bhagavan! What a beautiful description of His hair!

Swami Chinmayananda in his commentary on the Bhagavad-Gita has this to say:

"Hrshikesa is the name of the Lord and it has often been described as meaning the 'Lord of the Senses'. But this is according to an old derivation Hrisika + Isa = 'Lord of the Senses'. But the word, Hrisika is an obscure one Keshha = 'Having strong upright hair'. This may not fit in with the orthodox description of Krishna on the charioteer's seat, but it need not be understood that Krishna had a close crop for the war; it maybe interpreted that due to the heavy breeze on the open plains of Kurukshetra the flowing hairs of the Lord got blown up and furred."

Would it not be sensible to think of it in terms of Bhagavan's hair?

We must consider that Bhagavan Himself uses the term, "Presiding Deity of all the senses" for Hrshikesa. He is not wrong; he cannot err; He is Truth Absolute. In fact, He is so True that whatever He says can be considered from any viewpoint and still be completely true. Therefore, we may consider this meaning but at the same time prepare ourselves to accept more whenever He divulges these meanings to us. To understand the appropriateness of this meaning, it is necessary to know that it was first used in the Gita in Chapter I, stanza 15. It was not until Chapter XI, stanzas 41-42 that Arjuna says:

Whatever I have presumptuously said from carelessness or love, addressing Thee as O Krishna, O Yadava, O Friend, regarding Thee merely as a friend, unknowing of Thy greatness.

In whatever way I may have insulted Thee for the sake of fun, while at play, reposing, sitting or at meals, when alone (with Thee), O Achyuta, or in company—that I implore Thee, immeasurable one, to forgive.”

In other words, at the beginning of the Gita we may assume that Arjuna was still thinking of Krishna more as a friend and relative rather than his Lord. Therefore, I think it would not be presumptuous to think that Arjuna probably was leaning more to the word describing His hair rather than calling Him "Lord of the Senses".

Rama also had hair like Bhagavan's. In reading the *SRI RAMACHARITAMANASA* (because Sai Baba of Shirdi had recommended it), I found Rama's hair described like a "swarm of bees". Tulsidas, a great poet, had come upon the perfect simile to describe Bhagavan Baba's hair.

Our greatly beloved Elsie Cowan relates a story about Baba telling some young men that they would have to cut their hair. They protested because Bhagavan did not cut his. He handed them some scissors and told them to cut His hair, but they were unable to get close to His head. It was as though His hair was a source of power. Another time, Elsie told me, someone remarked that His hair was turning gray (you will find pictures where his hair has considerable gray). He gently patted His hair and said, "No more gray." And it had turned back to its original dark brown.

In thinking back over His hair (and He tells us to meditate and ponder the physical characteristics of the Avatar), I feel that He has always had this type hair no matter which body He takes. There is no proof for this except the facts as given here. As for me, I am filled with gratitude for the beautiful thoughts I have had when being allowed to gather these flowers of thought into this small garland. I bow to You, Lord of the Ecstasy—filled Hair.

Man and the Universe

Millions are born and millions die; they are not consulted when they are ushered in nor are they informed when they are bundled out. They do not understand the vast weird universe into which they are cast, nor do they know the mystery that they themselves are. The hopes they set their minds upon turn to ashes, or, their victories, like snow upon the desert's flaming face last a minute or two and then, are gone.

But, man is blessed with a thirst from which he cannot escape—his life is an enigma which he yearns to solve. He is part of nature and subject to its laws, and, finds himself unable to change them. He is set apart, though also a part. He is homeless, though chained to a home, which he has to share with others. He visualises his life slipping by and death waiting round the corner. His life is a struggle between success and failure, sorrow and joy, good and evil; he cannot rid himself of the thralldom of these dualities. It is his inescapable destiny to fight and foot forward. He cannot rid himself of his mind, which acts as a great handicap in his march. He is his own grand mystery, his own brave guide, his own formidable foe. He is discontented and perplexed,

rebellious at the sorry state of things; eager to shatter it into bits and anxious to remould it to his heart's desire. He is up against the transitoriness of all human achievements and the all-too-brief span of his own stay on earth. "What is the purpose of all this? Whither am I marching? Whence did I begin? Why should I strive?" —these questions haunt him, and deprive him of peace. The law of cause and effect appeals to him, as the likeliest explanation. He develops faith in it and tries to discover the laws governing the physical world around him, so that he can dominate it, instead of being dominated by it. But, though he has collected a vast quantity of information about the world where he lives, the elements that make it up and the laws that govern them, and though he has dominated the world to such an extent that he has landed on the moon and peeped into the stars he has not succeeded in solving his own mystery—the why and wherefore of the thirst that torments him. "The moving finger writes; and, having written, moves on; nor all thy wit and piety can allure it back, or cancel half a line, or wash a word!"

Man has become aware that all things that affect his senses, that he can count, measure or calculate, are subject to change; they are continuously transformed, or deformed; they are modified, absorbed or differentiated, or disintegrated. Recently, man has discovered that atoms originate and decay, they fade away into 'immateriality', and are, very likely, only "derivatives of Consciousness"! "The concept of substance has disappeared from Fundamental Physics." There is no more matter and spirit, there is only spirit!

Sri Sathya Sai has declared, "The entire Cosmos is a conglomeration of ever-active, alert waves of energy, derived from the Primal Source of all Energy, the Parashakti—the Supreme Sovereign Energy Principle, which is God." So, further experiments are beyond the scope of Physics; they can only be in the realm of Meta-physics, of the Manifestation of Parashakti, through the Consciousness in man. Of course, the World is relatively real, and so can be treated as such, and no more. It is not absolutely real.

Sri Sathya Sai says, "From Brahman originated Yathna or Energy." He has denoted Energy as Divine Yathna, in the Gita Vahini. In the Rig Veda, Mandal X Sutra 120, it is said, "But, motionless did that vibrate, all in His Glory; first Desire arose, the primal seed of mind. Creation then became. The Glory, the Self-sustaining Principle below—and Creative Energy above." So, substance is a fancy projected by the mind into the external world, its content being 'the stuff of our consciousness', as Eddington says.

So, everything is an idea, an image, a thought; as such, it proceeds from, exists in and merges in the mind. The physical world is potentially inherent in the subject, as 'fragrance in the flower and flavour in the fruit', to use Bhagavan's words. Baba says, "As dream images and thoughts arise in the mind and subside in the mind, so the objects too arise from and subside in the subject. While it lasts, the dream has all the characteristic of Reality. Our personal lives too seem real and rational, because' the eyes of the Jiva or Individual are not open enough to pierce the veil of illusion. The dream is real, while it lasts; so is the world. But, when we awake, both cease to be true. The world exists so long as thought persists. When thought disappears into the abyss of silence, the world merges in the Ocean of Being-Awareness-Bliss."

"When there is nothing that is not Brahman", asks Bhagavan, "how can you be different? There is no second, beside Brahman, outside Brahma. There is no plurality; there is One and One only. You are the shining flower. What is there on earth and sky that you are not?"

Therefore, Bhagavan declares that the study of the objective world can be complete only when you study the subjective world and discover that there is no distinction between mind and matter, and that matter is but a projection of mind. When you become aware of yourself, truly and fundamentally, you become aware of the One without a Second.

—*S. D. Khera*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Rama continuing his discourse to the assembly said, "Listen, O, People of my Kingdom! I wish to tell you one very important Truth, often not clearly grasped by you. Do not attribute any distinction between Siva and Kesava. Believe that God is One. The Name and the Form are distinct, but, the Divyatma (the Universal Absolute Entity) is the same. That Divyatma is in everyone with equal potency." Hearing these nectarine teachings from the lips of Rama, the citizens bowed their heads in reverential homage. One of them came forward to express their gratitude. He said, "Lord! We are attached to you more than even to our own lives. Our bodies are healthy and hardy because of you. Our homes are resonant with joy and happiness, because of you. It is all due to your grace. You have rid us of sorrow and drawn us near you. Maharaja! Who else can teach us so lovingly as you do? Our own fathers and mothers seek from us the fulfillment of their selfish desires; that is all. Of what use are we for you? But yet, you train us for attaining the Bliss of Heaven. This gives us full contentment. You and your excellent followers have done magnificent service to the world, by destroying the demonic race. We can never acquire a Lord, a Friend, a Father, a Mother, as kind and considerate as You." The people expressed their joy and the sense of enlightenment plentifully before Rama. Rama brightened at their loyalty and eagerness to learn more and more about spiritual matters. The citizens took leave of Rama and returned to their homes. They reminded themselves of the valuable truths they had been taught.

In the City of Ayodhya, every house had a flower garden attached to it. The residents tended the garden with love and care. It was perpetual spring in Ayodhya, for, the plants were heavy with fruits and fragrant with blooms throughout the year. Clusters of bees hovered over the blossoms and their murmur could be heard all over. A cool breeze, heavy with the scent of flowers greeted every one. Children of the City had many species of birds as pets; their songs, twitters and chirps mingled to make charming music to the ear.

The wealth and prosperity of the citizens under the benign reign of Rama cannot be adequately described by even a thousand thousand-tongued Seshas. This was the result of the righteousness (Dharma) which Rama fostered and guarded. Rama celebrated many an Ashwamedha Sacrifice.

Millions and Millions of Brahmins were granted generous gifts and they were made happy and contented. Rama, the Promoter of Vedic Rites and Ceremonials and the Guardian of the Codes of Dharma, (but yet, above and beyond all obligations and attributes—Gunatita), as well as Sita, replete with all auspicious attributes and intent on helping all who craved to fulfill their beneficial obligations—were both vigilant in their task of keeping themselves and their subjects on the Path of Dharma. Physical illness, mental anxiety and moral downfall were all totally absent, when Rama ruled. People had deep love and affection to each other. Every one stuck gladly to the duties and rights sanctioned by the Vedas to the community and the profession. Austerity, charity, ritual sacrifices and spiritual studies continued unabated and even enthusiastically all over the land. Sinful thoughts never peeped into the minds of people, even in their dreams. Women, men, old persons, children—all were at all times revelling in thoughts of Rama. There was no calamity or natural catastrophe evident anywhere. During the Rama age, there were no poor, no grief-stricken, no one humbled or crestfallen, no one cruel or hateful, no one ugly or ghastly to behold. Every one had all the marks of charm. No one hurt another with his pride and pomp. No one envied another. All were versed in Atmic wisdom; all were eager to practise and protect Dharma, all were compassionate and intent on serving others. Each one was eager to extol the good qualities of another; no one gave room for egoism in his heart.

The entire Globe, with its seven Dwipas bordered by the Oceans, was under the shade of the single Umbrella of Rama's sovereignty. Over this entire region, Rama was the sole undisputed Lord. In this imperial domain, people enjoyed mutual love and mutual help; there was no trace of faction or fight; apart-ness or the big stick were not evident at all. Of course, distinction came to the surface in dance and the arts. The stick was evident in the hands of ascetics and monks. Fighting was to be seen only when used against the senses by Sadhakas; Attachment (raga, also meaning, tunes) could be noticed as raga only in music. When no one had any enemy, how could 'killing' be done? But, people killed the vagaries of the mind, instead and won victories over their own lower natures.

The City and environs shone with incomparably attractive walls, lakes and tanks. O the pure waters! O the beautiful landing places! Their sublime charm drew admiration from sages and seers. They blamed themselves for being so attracted. The lakes and tanks had lotus of many colour blossoming on their surface. Many birds were singing on the trees growing thick on their banks. Parrots, peacocks, and others clustered on the branches and made merry. The City was more splendid than even Heaven and people were wonder-struck at its uniqueness.

One day, Vasishta entered the Palace in order to see Rama, the Grantor of prosperity of all types, in all fields. Rama received him in true traditional style, washing his feet and offering sanctified water as drink. He raised his folded palms and said, "O Ocean of Compassion! I have a request to make. I have been watching most delightfully your 'play as man'. I am beset with a big doubt, now. Your potency is limitless. Even the Vedas do not know fully your Nature. Lord! How can I describe you, or decipher you? This profession of Family Preceptor or Priest is rather derogatory, The Vedas, Sastras and Puranas declare that priesthood is inferior in status, since it is a mean occupation. He has to officiate at all the ceremonies in his master's household, both auspicious and inauspicious. Therefore, it is contaminated. First, I did not agree at all to enter this profession; but, Brahma saw me and understood my plight. He told me, "Son! You do not know what lies in the future. Accept the profession, without demur. You stand to gain

enormously in the coming years. The Parabrahma will incarnate in the Raghu dynasty.” Hearing this, I bowed my head to this profession and became the Family Priest of the Raghu dynasty. I have now, as a result of that decision, attained that Supreme Principle, which can be won only by means of countless years of Japa, Tapa, Meditation and Yoga, besides the performance of many Yagas and Yajnas, without putting myself into the hardship, involved in these. All those good Karmas have you as the goal to be won, and I have won you. What better path have I to adopt than what I have done?

What better work have I to adopt than the one I have chosen? Lord of Lords! Japa, Tapa, Yajnas, Yagas, Vows, Rites, and Ritual rules have been laid down in the Vedas. Through the cultivation of wisdom, compassion towards living beings, and virtuous conduct, your Presence and Grace can be attained. Lord! I am praying for a boon. Grant me that in your infinite mercy. Let Grace shower on me from the corner of your compassion-filled eye. Let my devotion for you be undiminished, however many lives I have to live hereafter; this is the boon I crave for.” Later Vasishta returned to his residence, taking leave of Rama.

The subjects of the kingdom spent their time in singing the thrice-holy captivating story of their Ruler, Rama. One might have achieved success in Yoga or performed many ritual Vows, but, if one has no love in his heart, he could not get Darshan of Rama. The wise man, the ascetic, the hero, the poet, the scholar, the accomplished, no one of these were afflicted, in Rama's empire, with greed. No one strayed into wrong urged by pride of wealth. The intoxication of authority did not render any one deaf. Where is the young man who suffered from the fever of Youth? Or, where can be found the man who lost his fame, through yielding to the pull of selfishness? Where is the man who is tainted by enmity? Where is the man suffering from the paralysis of grief? Where is the man bitten by the serpent, anxiety? There was none such, Rama himself, standing above and beyond these, as an example for all to emulate. He is the Atmaswarup, God Himself.

The redoubtable armies of Maya are roaming all over this world. The soldiers are the passions, lust, greed etc. Pride, unbelief etc are the commanding officers. But, the same Maya is the bond slave of Raghunatha, Rama. She is 'un-real', but, yet, unless you have the Grace of Rama, you cannot escape from capture and bondage. The Grace flowing from the corner of his eye alone can liberate you from her grip. Maya possesses all moveable and immoveable things in the universe; no one can be free from her hold; She imitates the earthly glory of the Lord and like a skilled actress, she enacts her role with lust, greed and others as supporting cast. Rama, however, as the embodiments of Satchidanandamurthi, as the Personification of the Deep Blue that characterises the Sea and Sky, the Phenomenon that has no Birth, as the Paramatma Itself has no trace of Maya in Him

In the City of Ayodhya, every day was a new Festival, every Festival was marked out with new entertainment. Each day, Rama gave away riches as charity. It was laid down that no one should blame another or scorn another. No bad word should be uttered, in every home, there were daily readings of the Vedas and the Puranas. No community of people looked on another or considered another as inferior. Each carried on its traditional occupations and respected the norms laid down. Therefore, compassion and affection towards the subjects grew quick and large in Rama's heart. Observing the devotion and dedication with which wives in Rama's kingdom

served their husbands, even the Gods grew envious of men. The husbands too shone as persons deserving such service; no one brought a single tear from the eyes of those wedded to them. Husband and wife had the feeling that each was half the body of the other and so, they got on as one, desiring each other's best interests and devoted to its realisation. In Rama's time, no one attempted to have recourse to falsehood under any circumstance. Boys and Girls honoured the commands and directions of parents and preceptors. Every one was as happy as the Lord of Gods in Heaven, Indra. Grain and riches were as plentiful in every home as in the palace of the God of Wealth, Kubera. The Chakora birds were glad as if they were looking on at the Moon in Autumn, Sharatkal. Women watched Rama from behind the doors of their enclosed apartments and were delighted. Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna were thrilled continuously in mind, filling their eyes with the Divine Charm of Sri Rama.

The entire world was filled with full splendour while it was being ruled by Rama. There was no trace or mention of 'sin'. The monks and ascetics wandered about fearless in the wildest woods. The mutual affection between the King and his subjects grew more and more from day to day. The earth shone with love and light. The forests were shimmering in perpetual green. Birds and beasts had foregone their instinctive hatred for one another. Not even an iota of hatred was to be found anywhere, nor was there even a whisper indicating its existence. All were bound by the thickest of comradeships. Every individual evinced great enthusiasm in describing the excellences and achievements of Rama.

One day, Rama was on his throne, in the Audience Hall, along with his brothers. A Brahmin entered the Hall in great distress. He spoke many harsh words and pleaded angrily for redress. "Alas!" he cried, "the fame of the Solar Dynasty has ended today. Nobody remembers the glory of the great kings of the past—Sibi, Raghu, Dilipa, Sagara; for, such inequities would not have happened when those Kings were ruling. Will a son ever die during the life-time of the father? Can such a disaster happen if the ruler is good? But, this day, I saw this thing happen." Rama, who is omnipresent, was able to know what had taken place; he was affected by the words spoken by the Brahmin. He probed within himself the reason for the death and assured his mind that it had not occurred as a result of any administrative fault. He was aware that it was the consequence of evil thoughts and so, he set about prescribing limits and regulations which would prevent such thoughts from arising in people's minds. Rama paid great attention even to such small matters and designed measures to prevent their recurrence. He laid aside all concern about himself and sought to realise the goal he had set before himself, viz. the happiness of his people. He cared for his subjects as if they were as dear to him as his own body. The people too valued the affection and happiness of the King; he was to them as dear as the heart. The Ruler never worked against the wishes of the people. They too, did not overstep even the width of a grain the orders given by Rama. The Ramarajya of those days was resplendent thus for many years. Rama was Narayana Himself. So, his reign redounded to the glory of the earth and its history. Indeed, Truth and Righteousness are the real guardians of mankind.

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

Dharma has no prejudice or partiality it is imbued with truth and justice. So, man has to adhere to Dharma; he has to see that he never goes against it. It is wrong to deviate from it. The path of

Dharma requires that man must give up hatred against others and cultivate mutual concord and amity. Through concord and amity, the world will grow, day by day into a place of happiness. If these are well established, the world will be free from disquiet, indiscipline, disorder and injustice.

—Baba

Sai Family News

Service to Visitors:

A Public Relations Office has been started at Prasanthi Nilayam, to give visitors information re: rules and guidelines, programmes of Bhajan, Nagarsankirtan, Discourses etc, and timings and facilities of communication and transport etc. Information can also be had of books and journals, and the activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in India and abroad. Guidance will be given to foreign visitors about the special regulations applicable to them. Enquires by post will also be replied to when they are accompanied by a self-addressed envelop or card. The Office is situated in the First Room of the Poornachandra Auditorium, opposite the Canteen. It will normally be open from 8-30 a.m. till 6 p.m., with an interval between 12 noon and 3 p.m.

South Africa

The Merebank Sathya Sai Prayer Group served the Aryan Benevolent Home which suffered from a fire-breakout; a few children from the Home were brought home by the devotees for stay during the Christmas and New Year Holidays.

Australia

The Adyar Bookshop, Sydney, run by the Theosophical Society carries stocks of Books by and about Sathya Sai Baba and they are in good demand. In February last, the Film "Sai Baba—His Life is His Message" made by Richard Bock, California, was exhibited at Sydney at the Theosophical Society's Theatre to a very appreciative audience. Howard Murphet introduced the Film and gave a talk on Sathya Sai Baba, reading extracts from the manuscript of his recently completed book, "Sai Avatars". Howard and Irene Murphet are guiding an earnest group of devotees at Balmain, Sydney, in the study of Baba's Life and Teachings and in the Sadhana of Bhajan and Meditation.

Bombay

The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti has decided to hold in the month of May, 77, a "Vocational Guidance Week" to help youth take up useful avocations and eke out better livelihood, with a greater sense of purpose and deeper self-respect.

The students of the Sri Sathya Sai Technical School have announced their willingness to undertake the servicing of household appliances, on approval of estimates and on a priority basis. This is part of the scheme to "earn while you learn".

America

Five more Centers have been recently accredited by the Sri Sathya Sai Central Committee of America: Fresno, California; Metropolitan Chicago; Frankfort, Kentucky; Flushing, New York; and Vancouver, B. C., Canada.

Japan

A Sathya Sai Bhajan Mandali has been formed at Higashi, Osaka, by a group of devotees. The 'Mainichi Daily Mews', Osaka, published on Jan. 21, a letter from, the Organiser, on the Mission and Message of Baba. He cures, consoles, advises, teaches, as did Christ, as did Krishna. He says, "I have come to give you what you want so that you may one day, start wanting what I have come to give you, namely, eternal peace and everlasting joy."

Tamil Nadu

Sathya Sai Seva Samitis, Tamil Nadu, celebrate their Annual Days with the completion of some project in the towns or villages where they serve the people, projects that will be of lasting benefit to all. One, important project is the building or repair, of roads. Podanur was the pioneer in this; field; now, Tirupur has followed. Recently, a half km length of road within the Municipality under the Railway Over-bridge was repaired and brought to perfect condition, by Seva Dal members and volunteers, during four hours of intense Seva, with the help of the Municipal authorities and engineers. Hosur Samiti also followed suit and there they not only reconditioned a long bit of road leading to the town but, also, helped solve the acute water famine, by deepening and re-conditioning two wells long neglected in the town.

Kerala

An Orchestral Bhajan Party of children belonging to all faiths and religions formed by the Kaloor Sathya Sai Bhajan Mandali has drawn the goodwill of the public and the attention of the people to the Universal Message of Bhagavan.

Children's Laughter—The Cure

In February, 1973, the eminent Orthopaedic surgeon at the Medical College Hospital, Trivandrum, pronounced that, since all known antibiotics had failed to arrest the pus formation on the left knee of my wife, the knee-cap had to be removed by an immediate surgical operation. But, my wife said. "No. Never. Take me to Puttaparthi." In March, I took her to Baba. He was at Whitefield. He produced Vibhuti and gave it to my wife, and she applied it on the wound. The exudation of pus was arrested. The wound dried up.

Due to mosquito bite, perhaps, the wound started again and pus was again formed. Other specifics were tried in despair and the knee became worse. Also, two carbuncles appeared on the left foot. The severe pain incapacitated her. She was confined to bed. I was at my wit's end. The doctors were at a loss to decide on the future course of treatment.

At this juncture, on 15th July a Sathya Sai devotee came to my house, for, we knew each other at Agartala, where I was stationed some years previous. He heard our lamentable tale and saw my wife's plight. But, he put courage into us. He said, "It is true your condition is pathetic. But, let us look at it from another angle. You are unable to move about and you are confined to bed. Why not take this as a Prasad of Baba, a gift of Grace? It must have a purpose, a spiritual

purpose. Why not start a Bal Vikas class round this bed? That will give you joy and peace, and perhaps, cure you also. You can tell the children stories and teach them Gita lying down on the bed.”

My wife took this as a bidding from Baba Himself. The Bal Vikas was started with six children who came in from adjacent houses. The sick room was full of laughter and sunshine. Lovely little kids responded to the love she poured on them. She discovered that she was becoming better and better with every passing day. The children were delighted at the way she instructed and inspired them. The carbuncles disappeared; the knee improved. Within six months, she became her old self, attending to her household duties without seeking any help. Bal Vikas every Sunday; Bhajan, every Thursday. Other days, she spends anticipating and preparing and planning, happily and without intermission. She had found the cure in joyous Seva.

—*T.S.L.V. Sarma, Trivandrum*

Even if you cannot love others, do not hate them, or feel envy towards them. Do not misunderstand their motives and scandalise them; if you only know, their motives may be as noble as yours, or their action might be due to ignorance, rather than wickedness or mischief. Pardon the other man's faults, but deal harshly with yours.

—**Baba**

The Rama Era

The New Year, according to the Lunar Calendar, observed as authoritative by the Telugu, Kannada and Marathi speaking peoples of India began on the 20th day of Match, 77. The year named Nala gave place to the year, Pingala.

Bhagavan was at Brindavan, Whitefield that day and so, thousands of devotees from Bangalore and the surrounding area gathered for Darshan. The students of the Sri Sathya Sai College were immensely happy that they could have the Lord in their midst on the festival day. Since the day was a Sunday, Nagarsankirtan groups from Badugodi, Belthur, and other villages joined the devotees and the students in choral singing during the early hours of the day and in moving towards the Residence of Bhagavan to earn the reward of the much-coveted Darshan.

Bhagavan came amongst the devotees at about 9, and He gave Darshan to the vast gathering. At noon, a large number of people were fed with festive fare. The students of the College and the Seva Dal from Bangalore Samiti were enthusiastic volunteers.

In the evening, a Public Meeting was held at the OM shed round the Tree. Dr. M B Sundara Rao spoke of two customary rites observed in the Kannada area, as part of the celebrations of the New Year Day: The mother in every home gave every child a mixture of sweet and bitter—jaggery and neem flowers—symbolic of the dual fare of joy and grief that Time offers man. This is the first custom. Another is the Reading of the Panchangam (Calendar) calculated according to

traditional astrology, with its prognostications for the coming year. Dr. Sundara Rao said that the Five Angas of astrology may or may not influence one's fortune but, the Five Angas (Senses) of the human body certainly do.

Dr. V K Gokak then spoke on the significance of the Yugadi Festival. Quoting a few lines from a poem by Dr. D R Bendre, announcing that Yugas come again and again; each Yuga brings new joy again and again to the new year it ushers in, he said, "Life should not become a repetitive process, marking time where it stays. It must mark a new illumination, bring about a new era in the individual's life, an awakening into a higher consciousness. He described the Vedic analogy of the two birds on the branch of the same tree, one intent on eating the fruits and the other, watching it, as a witness. Yugadi must lead us to the path of the Witness awareness, he declared. He was certain that prayers on this behalf would be heard by Bhagavan and that He would shower this illumination on all who seek it."

Bhagavan began His Discourse, with the Declaration about His Identity:

*Sarva jiva dharam santham,
Sarva nama dharam Sivam
Sachidananda rupam Advaitam
Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*

The support of all beings, the Supreme Peace, known by all Names, the Supreme Auspiciousness; the One without a Second, the Being-Awareness-Bliss; (Truth, Prosperity, Beauty).

Bhagavan said, "Riches melt away, only when you spend them; but, the span of years you can live on earth is shortened every moment, whether you like it or not, whether you are conscious of it or not. Therefore, you must feel an urgency in the great tasks of life. Buddhi or Intelligence is a special gift that has been offered to man. This has been given him so that he might know about himself; but, unfortunately, it is now used by him to know 'others'. When man has been given a mirror to look at his own face and set right its blemishes, he is foolishly holding it before other people's faces!

There are certain fundamental duties that man has to accomplish, through his Intelligence. Three of these are referred to in the scriptures as Rna, or Debt. Man has to discharge three debts, as a consequence of his human birth and earthly career. The first one is the Deva Rna, the Debt to be repaid, to the gods. Every organ of the human body, every function in fact, is dominated and controlled and motivated by a Divine Power, or God. Therefore as a grateful repayment for the debt man owes to these gods, he has to use the organs, the limbs, the functions and the skills for the benefit of other men and for the welfare of the community. The second category of Debt is called Rishi Rna the Debt owed by man to the sages, seers and ancient lawgivers. Long before the birth of this generation, a beneficent code of morals and a precious collection of guidelines for the realm of the spirit have been preserved and handed down as heritage, through the efforts of self-less seers and sages. Each generation draws inspiration and instruction from the previous ones, especially, from the pathfinders, the pioneers, and bridge builders in the regions of ethics, law, mysticism, sociology and religion. These persons promote concord and progress; they remove social conflict; their footprints mark out the lines of individual and social development.

So, an enormous debt of gratitude has to be repaid to them. They have handed down a precious quantity of knowledge about nature, and about consciousness, and also about means and methods of testing and enlarging that knowledge. But, today, man is neglecting this heritage and even discarding it as invalid and superfluous. This is suicidal. Man has to preserve this knowledge and foster it, revere it and use it. That is the way to repay the debt to the Rishis.

The Festivals in the religious calendar like this Yugadi are instances in point. The Rishis have laid down these days as Holy Days and it is your duty to become aware of the meaning and significance of the festivals, why they have been so designated. You can infer from what is generally done in every home when this Festival starts the real purpose intended by the Rishis. This day, people take ceremonial baths, wear new clothes, tie across their door sills new fresh green-leaf festoons, they have their houses whitewashed and painted anew; they draw novel designs on the floors and make them charming to behold. All these are reminders of the prime purpose, namely, entertain fresh ideas and give up the old faded ones; install Ananda in the mind; recoup courage and confidence; strengthen hope and faith.

Yugadis come and go; Nala gives place to Pingala; milestones are crossed fast and plentifully; but, the journey does not progress. You are still immersed in the outdated and the moth-eaten beliefs and fancies. Observe the right mores laid down by the Rishis with an awareness of the deeper plans they had in view; follow the Sastras and perform the daily and seasonal rites, rituals, fasts and vows and vigils recommended by them always laying emphasis on the inner meaning and significance and the spiritual aspect of the celebration. That is the best repayment you can make.

The third Rna is the Pitr-rna, or the Debt repayable to the ancestors and especially to the parents. This debt also is universal, that is to say, men in all lands and all climes have to acknowledge it. For, all are born of parents to whom gratitude is due for endowing the body, this most precious instrument for self-realisation and fulfillment. Adore the parents, make them happy, give them contentment and joy by paying loving attention and bestowing affectionate care. Another duty is the propagation of the line through children of pure character, high virtues and noble endeavour.

Dasaratha, the Emperor of Ayodhya, desired to pay back his Rna to the Pitrs and so he had to perform the Putrakameshti Yaga, the Vedic Sacrifice that can bless the aspirant with sons. This is the Vasanta Season of the year. This season comprises two months—the Madhu and the Madhava; the Mesha and the Rshabha. The Mesha is the most glory-filled month, and is as the zenith for the entire year. It was in the Vasanta season that Dasaratha released the sacrificial Horse for free wandering over the Continent along its unhinderable course, and it was in the same month that it returned unopposed to Ayodhya. The Putrakameshti Yaga was also commenced in Vasanta, and the four sons—Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna—were born in Vasanta. That is the reason why the Yugadi (the Telugu New Year's Day) is acclaimed as the Inaugural Day of the Vasanta Navaratri (the Nine Nights of Vasanta) culminating with the Rama Navami, the day on which Rama was born.

Yuga means an Era. This day is called not Samvatsara-adi, the New Year Day, but, Yuga Adi, the First Day of a New Era. The Era indicated is the Dharma Yuga or the Rama Yuga who is

identified as the Very Embodiment of Dharma: Ramo vigrahavan Dharmah. The prime duty therefore of every one who shares in this Celebration is to adhere to Dharma, to support Dharma and to foster Dharma.

Rama demonstrated in His Avataric career that Sathya (truth) and Dharma (righteousness) are the finest and the most fundamental virtues that man can earn and benefit by. Sathya and Dharma are as the two wheels of a cart, the two wings of the bird. Without wheels, how can the cart move forward? Without wings how can the bird rise high? Rama was known and is adored as the Person who never strayed away from the spoken word. He was known and is adored as the Embodiment of Dharma, Ramo vigrahavan dharmah, says the Ramayana. This expresses fully the Rama principle.

It is mostly a question of the final goal that man sets before himself in life. The goal has to be the Realisation of the Unity of the self with the Paramatma, or the Overself. Or else, why should this self take this human form? If mere 'living' or even 'happy living' was the goal, the 'self' could well have been encased in the forms of birds or worms or beasts. The very fact that man is equipped with memory, mind, intelligence, ability to discriminate, to anticipate the future, desire to detach oneself from the senses etc, is an indication that he is destined for some higher goal. In spite of this, if man craves for a lesser consummation, he is a Paapi, (sinner), it has to be said. He who, on the other hand, persists in spite of temptations and obstacles in the path that leads to self-fulfillment and self-realisation, is a Gopi, for, the Gopis of Brindavan were the most inspiring examples of such souls.

The most effective discipline that man can adopt to attain this lofty goal is the control and conquest of the five senses. Avoid the errors and evils that the eye, the ear, the tongue, the mind and the hand are prone to commit. These are called the Panchadoshas (the Five Vices). The eye seeks the vile and the vulgar. Notwithstanding the imminent danger to one's own life and limb, the cyclist, the scooter-rider and the man at the wheel in the car long to stare at the obscene posters advertising some filthy film. The eye must be held in check, so that it may not ruin the mind as well as the body of man. The ear craves for scandal and salacious stuff. It does not persuade you to attend discourses that can really help your spiritual development. Even if you chance to attend any such, the ear dissuades you by giving you a headache. But, when some one holds forth against some one else and pours abuse, the two ears attain maximum concentration! The tongue has a double function and so is doubly dangerous, unless held in check. It speaks and it tastes food. By the food it craves for, it can arouse passion or modify and calm: it. And, speech! It is well-nigh impossible to lead the tongue on towards the path of Japa and Dhyana however sweet the Name of the Lord is. Surdas pleads with the tongue to call out the Names—Govinda, Damodara, Madhava. When the eye, ear and tongue are under control and usable for self-improvement, the mind and the hand also can easily be held in check. Thus, when man divinises himself, there is no need to inquire where God dwells. He dwells in the heart of such men, clearly shining in His innate splendour of Wisdom and Power and Love.

The tongue brings damage to man in four ways: falsehood, scandal-mongering, faultfinding and loose talk. Rama spoke sweet and soft, when occasion demanded and even then, just enough for the purpose on hand.

This Vasanta month, trees are shedding leaves and putting on new tender and bright coloured greens. They shine with new beauty. Rama was called so, for, he pleased all with his charm. You have to celebrate this Festival likewise. Give joy to all. Prema or Love is the means to achieve this ideal. Love can bring even God nearer to you. How then can it fail where man is involved? Krishna could not be bound by any other means. That is the reason why Sai has declared: Start the day with Love; spend the day with Love; fill the Day with Love; end the day with Love.

—*From Divine Discourse: Yugadi, 20-3-77*

The Victory of Victories

The spiritual path is the path of detachment, of sense control, of rigorous mind training. Parvati sought to win Siva first by the glamour of physical charm; she had the stratagems of the God of Love, Manmatha, to support her allurements. But, Siva reduced the God of Love into ashes and rejected her advances. Thereafter she entered into an arduous period of ascetic austerities, and through them she was able to win His Grace to such an extent that she became the left half of Siva's sacred body. "Man must first decide on the path that he should traverse, after vigorous self-examination and continuous discrimination. Moksha or Liberation means the removal of the bonds of ignorance that clouds the Truth and creates a mirage of untruth. In fact living is only another name for the process of achieving alternate misery and happiness, hunger and satiation, illness and health, wish and fulfillment. Man reaches out to a new desire, once one is realised. He is ever struggling and ever unhappy. For, he does not seek the eternal, the lasting, the source and the substance. He is content with the transient, the trivial and the temporary.

Use the body as a vehicle for reaching liberation through Truth. It has four wheels-Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, and your duty now is to see that the chariot moves along the road to the goal. It will move on that road only if it has 'light luggage', viz., less desires, less worries, less fears. Desires, worries and fears are multiplied since man thinks he is the body with all its appurtenances and not the *owner* of the body. Work, worship, wisdom—Karma, Bhakti and Jnana—these are the three paths to God. But, through Kama (Desire), Karma is warped; through Lobha or Greed, Bhakti is vitiated, and through Krodha or Anger, Jnana or Wisdom is befogged. Through Prema one can easily limit desire, defeat the urges of greed and suppress anger.

Learn lessons from the insignificant ant! When an ant spots a lump of sugar, it does not hide the fact and seek to consume it all alone! It moves round to collect its friends and kinsmen, for it loves to share with others the feast it has come upon. The crow—a bird that is despised and often out-casted—when it discovers a little heap of food caws and caws repeatedly, until its kith and kin gather at the place; it does not eat alone and stealthily. For, what is shared is more tasty; what is held back is bitter stuff. Life is short and, life is full of misery. So, use all the chances you can, to make yourselves happy by making others happy. If others are miserable, how can you be really happy?

"The greatness of man as an animal consists in the fact that by conscious effort it is possible to remove the evil in him; in the case of other animals, however much they may be subjected to training and education, their cruel instincts will only lie low, ready to spring up at the slightest provocation. Sivaratri declares that, by means of spending one full day in fast and one full night in vigil—as symbolic of fasting the senses all the years of life and sleeplessly watching over their antics and preventing them from inflicting harm—darkness can be turned into Light, Savam can be sublimated into Sivam."

Why should this creature, Man, endowed with extra sensitiveness to share sorrow and joy with others, be born in this changing world of time and space? Nothing that is born can escape death; nothing that is built can withstand disintegration. Why then should man be sent into this vanishing stage of fleeting experiences? There is a purpose behind all the activities of the Divine. Man has to manifest the Divine in him and lead and guide all living beings in that adventure. He has to liberate himself by his efforts and liberate all life by his example. Self-examination must lead him to self-confidence; that will give him self-satisfaction; this satisfaction derived from the self alone will induce him to take delight in self-sacrifice; and, when this sacrifice removes all ego-alloys through the crucible of pain-pleasure, man achieves Self-realisation. He becomes free, secure in his own Source. This is what is called Moksha, Mukti, Liberation or Release. He is liberated from littleness into vastness, bondage to boundless Bliss.

The ego-alloy enters man only when he is misled by the apparent diversity, to posit multiplicity in Creation. The Reality which is misconstrued in the dull dusk of Ajnana (Primeval Ignorance) is God. To see through the fog, that projects the many where there is only One, is the purpose of all spiritual Sadhana. If, even after years of Sadhana, by whichever religion prescribed man sees differences, distinctions, and diversities, we can conclude that the Sadhaka has a long way to go before he can fulfill the aim of this human existence.

When the One is known, there can be no fear. For, how can One fear the One? There can also be no desire, for, when there is no second, how can the desire to possess arise? There can also be no envy, hatred, greed, pride or any of the evil passions that torment man and allow him no peace. The awareness of the One ensures unshaken Tranquility, Prasanthi. The One (call it God, or Paramatma, Brahma or the Universal Absolute) is all Love, all Knowledge, all Wisdom, all Sweetness. Raso vai sah, says the Upanishad. He is Sweetness. How then can there be any bitterness in Him or in Man's Real Nature, for, Man is manifested by Him, from Him, and for Him.

A goat cannot be born out of a tigress. What emanates from God must be perforce Divine. Hence the appellation, Amritasya putrah for men, in the Upanishad. Men are the Children of Immortality and so, the Atma in them that has come from the Paramatma is immortal. Sparks emanating from the flames of fire have the same incendiary quality; they cannot be different. 'The body is a temple of God; the body has been organised for the sake of the God who decided to install Himself therein. Until man realises the God within and finds out for himself that He is the Mystery that was evading him while he wandered about in the wilderness of the world, man has to attend assiduously to the upkeep of the body.

He can earn that awareness only by leashing the wayward mind and directing it inward towards that achievement. The Sivaratri is a reminder to all mankind of the goal of mind-control. The Moon is the Presiding Deity of the Mind, according to the sages and even modern science has discovered a subtle relationship between the vagaries of the mind and the phases of the moon. In the dark half of the month, the moon is seen less and less as the days move forward, and symbolically, it may be inferred that the mind too is undergoing a process of decline. This day is the 14th night, and there is very little left of the moon to influence the earth or the mind of man. A spurt of spiritual effort—vigil and Bhajan and fast—done this Ratri or Night or period of Ignorance will result in the extinction of the Mind, and therewith, the conquest of all the tendencies and attitudes which it has entangled man in. The Ratri can be sublimated into the heavenly splendour of Siva.

Strive; that is your duty. Yearn; that is your task. Struggle; that is your assignment. If only you do these, sincerely and steadily, God cannot long keep back the reward of Realisation. The river strives, yearns, struggles to merge with the sea from which it came. It has that consummation ever alert in its consciousness. It attempts to make itself pure and pellucid, soft and sweet, so that it may be welcomed by its Lord. It overcomes every obstacle of terrain in order to journey safe and successfully towards its goal. Man must utilise all the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and material endowments that God has granted him so that he may journey to the Goal of the Ocean of Grace.

Do not be misled by belief in the existence of two entities, this world and the next, or here and hereafter. Realise the hereafter here itself; this world is interwoven with the next. There is no truth in the disparity between the secular and the spiritual, the godly and the materialistic, the heavenly and the earthly, in all the worlds, it is His ukase that runs. Not even a blade of grass can quiver without His Will guiding the wind and agitating its position. The bulb of life is illumined by the current coming from the Power House, Kaivalya, (working according to His Laws) drawn through the cable of Love. When that Prema or Love is tainted by selfishness, it cannot illumine at all. Self is love-less-ness; Love is selflessness. Self gets and forgets; love gives and forgives. Love can never entertain the idea of revenge, for, it sees all others as one-self. When the tongue is hurt by the teeth, do you take vengeance against the wrongdoer? No, for they both belong to you and are integral parts of your beings. So, too, when some other person insult you or inflicts pain, allow wisdom to have mastery over you; discover the background; do not rush to conclusions; be all sympathy and sweetness. Have Love as your Guide.

Of course, it is a difficult task, but, not beyond the capacity of man. A task that can be finished without struggle and sustained effort is not something to be proud of. It is the difficult one that provides the challenge and brings forth the best and highest in man. Enter upon it with ardour and faith; that will be sweeter. Once victory is achieved in this task, the rest will be added unto you.

—*From Divine Discourse, Sivaratri, 1977*

Tyaga and Seva

—Address given by Justice Sri. P. N. Bhagawati, Supreme Court, India

I am deeply grateful to the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti for giving me an opportunity to deliver the Valedictory address at this function. Indeed I consider it a privilege to have been invited on this occasion since we are all assembled here to pay our homage to Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba. It is difficult for me to express my feelings on this occasion as Baba has always been extremely kind and compassionate to me and I have been fortunate enough to receive countless blessings from Him. My heart wells up with joy and happiness and I feel overwhelmed by a feeling of devotion as I stand before you. You are all great devotees of Baba and it is with a sense of trepidation that I speak before you for I regard myself as no more than a humble seeker of truth guided by the divine message of Baba. Baba has always emphasised the universality of Indian culture and exhorted us time and again that sacrifice and service are the two basic essentials of this great culture which must dictate and inspire all our actions. Therefore, it is about Indian culture that I propose to speak to you.

There is no doubt that ours is the most ancient culture and civilization. Other cultures like the Babylonian or the Egyptian or the Graeco-Roman flourished in the past and disappeared. Swallowed in the oblivion of the past, they are now a part of ancient history. We study them only with a view to enriching our knowledge from the experience of the past. But Indian culture is still a living culture—a vital force in the life of nearly a seventh of the human race. How this culture arose nearly 5000 years ago, how it developed and was enriched in subsequent centuries and how finally it has come down to us as a rich human legacy is a fascinating story.

We have no means of knowledge as to where, at what date, we can find the beginning of Indian culture. It is shrouded in the antiquity of the past. But there is no doubt that when this culture made its debut on the stage of human history, it disclosed a state of social evolution long past the primitive stage and poised for a mighty advance on the plane of the mind and thought. The first record of the Indian people—the Rigveda, gives us the picture of a people who had already settled down to a life of stability and security and who were endowed with love of life, capacity for work and a gift for poetry and literature. The vastness of the country, the fertility of its soil, copious rainfall, mighty rivers, rolling pasture lands and sparseness of the population gave them economic abundance and they had leisure to turn their mental energies in other pursuits. With their undoubted mental gifts, they bent their mental energies to the conquest of the world of matter and enjoyment of its fruits. Great contributions were made by the Indian people in the field of mathematics and astronomy. The concept of zero was one of the greatest contributions made by India to the science of numbers. They also made lasting contributions to politics, economics, science and philosophy. But, their dynamic and restless minds could not remain content with an easy and pleasant life. Their minds began to experience deep stirrings and questionings. They started inquiring into the nature of the universe and the meaning of human existence. They forged ahead to wider horizons of thought and deeper levels of experience.

Towards the end of the Vedic period, Indian history entered its most creative period through the Upanishads which so far as the subsequent history of India is concerned was also the most decisive and pervasive. In the Upanishads, the mental life of man reached the highest summit of

the most subtle philosophic speculation. It turned inward to the inner field of human experience, the within of nature as revealed in man as revealed in his consciousness. The Upanishads disclose the rational bent and speculative daring of these early Indian thinkers. These intrepid thinkers were unhampered by the tyranny of religious dogmas or political authority. They sought truth with a single-minded devotion and having discovered it they declared it in the famous four aphorisms of the Upanishads.

They also declared that spirituality is not a matter of discussion or disquisition but is a matter of experience or realisation. They pointed out that mere brilliant discussion of things of the spirit is like a painted flame which looks brilliant indeed but cannot impart the warmth we light the fire for. The Upanishads are the supreme work of the human mind. It is a significant fact that the highest self-expression of its genius, its sublimest poetry, its greatest creation of thought and world should not be a literary or poetic masterpiece of the ordinary kind, but a large flood of spiritual revelation of such direct and profound character. It is evidence of a rare and unusual turn of the spirit. The Upanishads gave permanent orientation to Indian culture, the life force which has sustained it for the last 5000 Years.

The essence of a culture is revealed in the type of man in whom that culture finds its highest excellence manifested. A culture is worldly if worldly success is what its most admired hero reflects. If there is any truth in calling Indian culture spiritual, it derives from the fact that the most admired hero of the Indian people has been and still is the man of God. The ideal man of India is not the magnanimous man of Greece or the valiant Knight of medieval Europe but the free man of spirit who has renounced all worldly desires and attachments and realised the true self. In any assembly of men in this country, the first place is always given to the man of God. The respect and veneration which we give to the spiritually enlightened epitomises the essence of our culture. It is India's pride that she has clung to this ideal all these thousands of years and produced in every generation and every part of its vast ancient land from the time of the Rishis of the Upanishads to Vyasa and Valmiki, Buddha and Mahavir, Sankara and Vallabha, Chaitanya and Surdas and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, men who successfully achieved and realised this ideal.

Time and again, it is this spirituality which has regenerated and revitalised our people. When the grand old tree of our culture appeared to have decayed and withered, denuded of leaves and flowers, the sap of spirituality running within its core has again infused life in it and made it bloom and flower. After the Upanishadic period, there came a period of decadence of values but as if in answer to the call of yearning humanity, a great spiritual giant was born, who revived and resuscitated our Indian culture. Maharshi Vyasa rearranged and reorganised the Vedas, gave us 18 Puranas the Mahabharata and Srimad Bhagavad, and ushered in the renaissance of Indian culture. The period of Maharshi Vyasa was one of the glorious periods of Indian history, when Indian culture again attained its great and dizzy heights. But the historic cycle went on turning and following the decadent and degenerate Brahminism, came Buddha whom Edwin Arnold has described as 'Light of Asia'. Buddha gave a new orientation to Indian culture and came to be recognised as an Avatar. But in course of time Buddhism also became decadent; it was divided into schools and sub-schools which became involved in pedantry and pedagogism, forgetting the real essence of Buddhism. The result was an eclipse of Indian culture, when Indian culture appeared to have lost its vitality. But this eclipse was temporary because soon there came a

young Nambudri Brahmin from the Southernmost tip of India, Adi Sankaracharya, a great spiritual giant and perhaps the greatest intellectual genius the world has ever known. He wrote his famous Sankara Bhashya on the Brahma Sutras at the age of 16 and having accomplished his mission he departed from this world at the age of 32. Sankaracharya moved from one corner of India to another and preached the Vedanta of the Upanishads and once again rehabilitated Indian culture. This was followed by other great Acharyas from the South, namely, Ramanujacharya, Madhwacharya and Vallabhacharya who preached their respective philosophical theories of Vedanta.

It went on in this manner from one turn of the cycle to another until there came the British Rule when India once again fell into stupor. But there was something vital in Indian culture which could not die, there was a fire which could not be extinguished and it produced the great Ramakrishna Parmahansa, the saint of Dakshineswar. And what a wonderful phenomenon he was! Here was a man who did not know how to read or write and yet, look at the words of wisdom which flowed from his lips and which are recorded by Mahendra Nath Gupta. By worldly standards, an uneducated man, he attracted towards him the finest intellects in the country. Narendra came to him doubting and sceptical, never to return again; one touch of the Master transformed him into Vivekananda. Ramakrishna affected all with his spirituality. His is a living example how a Rishi sitting in a remote corner of the earth can radiate wide his spirituality throughout the length and breadth of the country and influence the lives of others. Ramakrishna was a spiritual giant. If you happen to see a photograph of his, look into his eyes. What immeasurable and unfathomable depths you find in those eyes. There is something in his eyes which is inexpressible, something indefinable but which goes straight to the heart, They give you a glimpse of the vast limitless inexhaustible ocean of spirituality which lies behind them. The message which Ramakrishna gave was carried to the world by Vivekananda and Vivekananda initiated the spiritual regeneration of India.

Closely following upon Ramakrishna and Vivekananda came a frail little man in whom was accumulated the spiritual energy of an entire race and who was one day to shake the foundations of the British Empire. The nineteen-twenties saw the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi. He saw God in the hearts of the dumb millions of India and brought spirituality into the struggle for freedom. No one felt more deeply than he the dumb and mute agony of the people of this country and none gave more poignant and sincere expression to it. There was a strange magnetism in the incalculable personality of this frail man which overpowered all who came into contact with him. The greatest intellectual giants of this country sat at his feet, ready to carry out his slightest command and when he died, the entire nation wept for him. The Mahatma evoked all this love and respect because of the deep spiritual values abiding in him. His life epitomised all that is finest in Indian Culture.

We are today fortunate to have Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba amongst us. India is the Punyabhoomi which has given birth to great sages and seers throughout these 5000 years. Rishis, Saints and Avatars are the natural fruits of the Indian soil. There has been no age when they were not born. Blessed are we that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has come to us to spread His message of Love and Devotion, Service and Sacrifice, which form the bedrock of our spiritual culture.

Tyaga indeed forms the very first verse of the Isavasya Upanishad. "Live without attachment; do not covet the belongings of others." (Thena thyakthena bhunjetha; ma grdhah kasyaswith dhanam). The same idea is repeated in the Bhagavad-Gita, where Krishna tells Arjuna, "He who prepares food for himself alone eats it as a thief" (Bhunjanthe thwadham papa ye pachanthi-athmakaranath). Another Upanishad also says the same thing. "Immortality can be gained only by 'giving up'; not by intelligence, or progeny or riches" (NAMEDHAYA NA PRAJAYA DHANENA, thyagaineke amrthathvam anasuh).

But, the question arises, what is the nature of the renunciation which the Upanishads and the Gita extol? Renunciation, according to them, does not mean that you must give up worldly activities and flee into a forest or cave for meditation. It means not 'renunciation of work', but 'renunciation of attachment to the fruits of work'. As the Gita says, "You have the right only to work; not to the fruits thereof " (Karmanyavadhikarasthe ma phaleshu, kadachana).

Our spirituality is not negative in character. It does not reject life. It accepts life and tries to raise its level to the divine; it seeks to realise the divine in the human, the spiritual in the physical. It is full of positive dynamism. That is why the Upanishads address us as 'Children of Immortality' (Amritasya putrah). The Vedas also give expression to the zest and joy of life, declaring, "Let us live a hundred years; let us rejoice a hundred years; let us enjoy a hundred years; let us remain unconquered a hundred years-unconquered, not by enemies, but, by passions and attachments. (Jeevema saradassatham; nandama saradassatham; modama saradassatham; ajeethasyama saradassatham) The second verse of the Isavasya Upanishad also says, "Let me perform my work and live a hundred years (Kurvannaivaiha karmani; jijivisheth satham samah). In the Taittiriya Upanishad also the teacher tells the disciple, not only "Do not transgress Truth; do not transgress Morality." (Sathyannapramadithavyam, Dharmanna pramadithavyam), but also, Do not transgress the bounds of prosperity; Do not transgress the realm of exaltation" (Kusalannapramadithavyam; Bhoothyenna pramadithavyam).

So our spirituality has always believed in accepting life and raising it to higher levels of existence and deeper levels of experience. That is why when we look at the past of India we find her tremendous vitality, her inexhaustible power and joy of life and her prolific creativeness. There is in all our work a teeming super-abundant energy of life. Our spirituality is dynamic and positivistic and it has never stood in the way of vigorous pursuit of life. What it tells us is [that we must do our work and perform our duty but without attachment and with a sense of discrimination and dedication. As Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba says 'Work must become worship'. Then only it will become a source of joy. It will thus be seen that Tyaga is nothing but the renunciation of our little self of our ego and manifestation of the higher self in us and the positive expression of this Tyaga is Seva or Service. Service of man is service of God. Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba has told us that God is not in need of service; what He needs is service of man in whom He resides. Let us therefore all dedicate ourselves to a life of Tyaga and Seva for that way alone we shall be able to realise the grace of Baba and achieve in our own life unconditional dedication in which nothing is asked for and nothing is sought (ahaituki bhakti).

What this Bhakti is, is beautifully illustrated by an incident narrated by Surdas. After Krishna has gone to Mathura he sends Uddhava to Brindavan to enquire about the Gopis. When Uddhava reaches Brindavan, he finds Gopis weeping and crying for Krishna. He tells them this is not

proper. Krishna is omnipresent, Saravavyapi, and Gopis should meditate on Him. But the love-mad Gopis give him this chastening reply

"Uddhava, you are telling us many things giving us words of advice that what we are doing is not proper by worldly standards. But what can we do? Our hearts are overflowing with love for Krishna. But how can an ocean be contained in a pitcher?" Then again the Gopis tell him

"Uddhava, we have not ten or twenty minds. One we had, and it has gone with our Shyama: it is no more with us. How can we meditate on Him?" This is the ahaithuki bhakti which Baba wants us to offer. That alone can bring us bliss and happiness. My friends and co-seekers! Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba has given us a great message. Let us try to follow the path of Dharma which He has shown to us. And let us go forward with His divine and unbounded grace on the path of (Atmopalabधि), Realisation of the Divine in the Human, the Spiritual in the Physical and the Atma in this mind-body complex. May He bless us!

My One Desire

Lord, who shines with the Radiance
of a million suns and a million moons,
Bhagavan, from whose empty flute
spring the Universe's unending tunes
descended in full glory, on Earth now to behold!

We see Your sacred story revealed as You unfold
and the knowledge of your Love that fills my heart
inspires me with each new day to start
again on the never-ending journey toward Your Feet
that no Force in the Cosmos could defeat.

Lord, who in Creation's morn, with loving hands,
did once shape the Earth!
Bhagavan, Who now sounds the horn that will herald Her
to a second birth
implored by saints and sages, and binded by their love—
The Mystery of the Ages, descended from Above!

And the vision of your Beauty floods my being
in moments, sending all my burdens fleeing
eternally radiating from the mountain's peak
fulfilling all my soul could ever seek.

Lord, to Your Lotus Feet of storm-cloud blue
does my heart aspire;
Bhagavan, let the union of my soul with You
be my one desire.
O Buddha of Compassion, O Keeper of the Light,
Within me build Your mansion, within me slay the Night.
And every step I take toward that goal
awakens deeper yearning in my soul
as the flame that brighter grows with every breath
burns out the endless rounds of birth and death.

O Lord, let me love You perfectly
and see Your Face in every entity
and serve You in all Humanity
and realize in all that is, all that could be.
Babaji, Sadgurudev!

You are the sea and I a wave

and that which lies asleep inside
will one day rise up as the tide
that surges forever towards Your shore
to know Your Love once more.

—Anon

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Report

It was the practice for messengers from the Court to travel about through cities and villages, all over the empire, and report personally to the Ruler the information they have gathered during their secret wanderings. Rama listened to these communications, as his predecessors used to do. One day, a messenger who had come on this duty approached Rama with a hesitation that was strange; he prostrated before him, and rising up, stood mute and trembling on one side. Soon, he recovered confidence and courage and addressed Rama thus "Maharaja! Listen to my words! Pardon me for bringing these words to you. A washerman was quarrelling with his wife. He was heard admonishing her, "Fie on you!" he shouted. "Do you take me to be Rama? Get out of my house. How can I accept you? You were living long in another person's house; get out of here!" These words struck the heart of Rama like an arrow. He could not sleep that night.

Towards midnight, he sat upon his bed and thought within himself. "It to now one full Yuga, since I started ruling this land. I have to continue for a few years more." Then, sunk in saddening reverie, that Ocean of Compassion thought, "Alas! I have to forsake Sita. I have to uphold the Vedic Path." He went near Sita and spoke to her pleasantly. He had a smile on his face when he told her, "Janaki! You have not asked any boon from me so far. Yet, I shall grant you a boon. Go to your holy home." That very moment, Sita fell at the Feet of Rama and went to Vaikuntha (Heaven) in her subtle body. No being, anywhere, nothing was aware of this fact. Sita in her gross physical frame was standing before Rama on the Earth.

Sita's Exile

Rama asked the Earth-Sita (Maya Sita) "Pray for a boon" and Sita replied, "Lord! I have a desire to spend some happy days in the hermitages of Munis (ascetics)," She collected and packed many articles of clothing and utensils for the daughters and wives of the ascetics of the hermitages. Rama said, "Be it so" and told her, "Start on your journey tomorrow morning."

Rama woke up early. Servitors and favour seekers were singing praises of his virtues and excellences. The Lotus of His face bloomed. Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna paid homage to him prostrating at his feet. But, Rama did not converse with his brothers. He kept silent. His face was flushed with emotion. His body showed signs of tension. Every limb was shivering with excitement. The three brothers were lost in fear and anxiety, not knowing the reason for his grief.

They shuddered at the sight of Rama's sadness. They could not fathom the feelings that agitated him.

At last, Rama found words to express his wish. Between sighs, he said, "Brothers! Don't say, no. Take Sita into the forest, leave her there and return." On hearing this, they were stunned stiff. They were caught in the flames of despair. Their hearts were scorched. They doubted whether he was serious or was only joking. Shatrughna sobbed aloud. Lakshmana and Bharata stood motionless, tears streaming from their eyes.

No words came on their tongues. Their lips were quivering; their hands were shivering. At last, with folded hands, Shatrughna prayed thus: "Your words have pierced our hearts. Janaki is Lokamata, the Mother of all beings. You live in the hearts of all living beings. You are the Embodiment of Sat-chit-ananda. For what reason has Sita to be discarded now? She is eternally pure, in thought, word and deed, isn't she? O Destroyer of the Rakshasa Race! She is now pregnant and, at this time, in this condition, is it right to forsake her alone?" Shatrughna could not say more; the sorrow surging within him flowed in tears and loud wails.

Rama said, "Brothers! Listen! If you disregard my word, breath cannot survive in this body. May it be well with you Brothers! As I have ordered, take Janaki into the forest this very morning." He continued sitting with his head bent, silent, as if he was sad at the turn of events.

Bharata could not restrain his feelings, when he heard the words, so shocking to the ear. He said, "Lord! I am very low in intelligence. Yet, please give heed to my prayer. Our Solar Dynasty has earned fame and renown in the world. Our father Dasaratha, your mother Kausalya and you yourself—Master of the Three Worlds—have won great fame, Your glory is sung by the Vedas and by the thousand-tongued Sesa. Janaki is the repository of all that is beneficent. Her name will destroy all traces of inauspiciousness; it will confer all things beneficent. She is the highest holiness. By her blessings, women can attain the supreme Goal. How can this Janaki live separate from you and exist happily in the forest? Can she live even for a moment, apart from you? How can fish live without water? She is the embodiment of Wisdom and the personification of all the virtues. She cannot lead a solitary life."

The Command

Rama listened to his words calmly and then replied thus: "O Bharata! You have given utterance to words that are consonant with ordinary ideas of morality. But, the Ruler has to foster Dharma and Welfare, according to the dictates of morality. In carrying out his duty of guarding and guiding his people, he should not cause any crisis or revolution; he has to protect them with great affection." Then, he disclosed the information that the messenger had gathered and communicated to him. He said. "Brothers! Our dynasty has suffered great infamy. Its name has been tarnished. This dynasty had a series of Kings and Emperors each one more famous than the others. Their might and majesty are known all over the world. There is none who won greater renown than they. They were ready to give up their lives, but, they never acted contrary to their plighted word. Our dynasty has no taint attached to it. And, when there was a likelihood of its being tainted, he who hesitated to give up his life was certainly vile. Understand this well."

At this, the brother cried, "Lord! Janaki surely has no trace of taint. She has come out of the blazing fire. Gods or saints will not impute even in dreams the slightest fault in her. Not knowing this, if any one calls her a sinner, he will suffer the torture of hell for billions and billions of years." Bharata could not control his resentment at the very mention of this possibility. At this, Rama became visibly angry and his eyes reddened. Lakshmana noticed it, and unable to withstand it, he hid himself behind Bharata. But, Rama addressed Lakshmana himself directly. "Lakshmana!" he began, "Grasp the implications of what the people are saying; give up the foolish pose of sadness. If you disobey my command and begin arguing with me, you will have to rue it until death. Take Janaki in a chariot and leave her to herself in a deserted place with no human habitation on the bank of the Ganga and then, return." Lakshmana heard the command of the Lord; he prepared himself even for death, if it encounters him, while carrying out that command. He got ready for the journey. Stocking the chariot with provisions and clothing, he made Janaki sit in it and then, drove off.

Rama's faithful consort was elated at the prospect of spending some time in hermitages; she was full of delight and gratitude. But, seeing the crestfallen face of Lakshmana, she was saddened. She became mute and dispirited. Like the cobra that had lost its crest-gem, she suffered unseen, in her depths.

They reached the bank of the Ganga. The forest was frightful indeed; they got terror in their hearts. Seeing Lakshmana fear, Sita was frightened more. Of course, she knew that she was only acting the part and that her real self was not there. Still, to make her role successful before the world, she acted her part well. She wailed, "O Lakshmana! Where have you brought me? There is no hermitage visible here. Do no wild beasts and poisonous snakes roam about this forest? No sign of human habitation can be seen here. Lakshmana! I am getting afraid."

When Sita lamented thus, Lakshmana was overcome with sympathy. He remembered Rama and said within himself, "Rama! What is this you have done!" and, gathering some courage, he looked at Sita, but, a fatal thirst overcame him at that time and he suffered much. Sita was torn with anxiety at his condition and his struggles. Realising that he was determined to leave Sita there and return, the deities of the forest spoke from the sky, "Lakshmana! Leave Janaki here and go back; Sita, the Embodiment of Fortune, shall live."

The Brother Returns

These words from the Unseen planted courage in the heart of Lakshmana. He folded his palms in reverence and prostrated before Sita and said, "Mother! What can I do? I cannot but carry out brother's command. I have no courage to overstep it even to the slightest extent. I am the vilest villain. Brother has ordered me to leave you in this thick jungle and return." Saying so, he turned the chariot back. His looks were fixed on the track he was leaving behind. He could hear the lament of Sita in the distance. "Lakshmana! Are you casting me in the forest and leaving me? Who will protect me here?" She was wailing like any common woman. Her cries pierced the ears of Lakshmana; but, remembering his duty to follow the commands of Rama, he made his heart as hard as rock and drove fast until he reached the City.

Meanwhile, Sita fainted in despair. Of course, it was all play-acting. She recovered consciousness after a little while, sat up and poured out her grief in words. "O Ramchandra! From birth, my life has been filled with sorrow. Alas! Life clings to my body, however much I am invaded by grief." She cried out like this for a long time, bewailing her fate. That moment, the sage Valmiki was passing through the forest on his way to his hermitage from the Ganga where he had gone for his ritual bath. Her words fell on his ears, he was surprised that a woman's voice was calling out for help from the recesses of the forest; he followed the voice to its source, searching all round, and at last, came to her very presence. She recognised him as the sage Valmiki and related to him all that had happened to her. "O Monarch of Monks," she appealed, "I am the daughter of Emperor Janaka; I am the wife of Sri Ramchandra; the whole world knows this; but, I do not know why he has deserted me and cast me away. Can the dictates of destiny be escaped from? Great among Sages! Lakshmana brought me here and left me. He did not tell me why he had to do so."

The Hermitage

Valmiki listened to her tale of woe; he consoled her and comforted her "O Daughter! Your father, the Emperor of Mithila, Janaka, is my friend, my disciple. He has reverence and faith in me. Dear one! Do not worry at all. Feel that my hermitage is your paternal home. All will be well with you. You will certainly rejoin Rama. You will achieve that desire." Taking Sita to be his own daughter, he directed her to have a bath in the Ganga and return. After the cleansing bath, she prostrated before Valmiki, and the sage led her to the hermitage, giving her affectionate assurances. He offered her roots and fruits and pressed her to eat a few. She could not refuse the pleadings of the great elder. Thereafter, Sita spent her days at the hermitage, in constant meditation on Rama and his glory and in sharing peacefully with the pupils and disciples of Valmiki the tasks incidental to the upkeep and maintenance of that spiritual household. The residents of the hermitage as well as Valmiki regaled her with interesting and wondrous stories and entertained her with humorous anecdotes and incidents.

The Palace and The City

Lakshmana reached the City, with his eyes swollen with sorrow, and heart heavy with grief. He related the sad tale to the three mothers. They broke into inconsolable sorrow and sobbed at the calamity that had overtaken Sita. They praised the virtues of Sita and lamented that a lady of such sterling character should be subjected to this disaster. They blamed Rama for harshness. The Capital and the palace were sunk in sorrow; there was no one free from grief. Wailing was the only sound that could be heard. There was no one, who did not ask in sorrow, "Could such a mother be ever punished so?"

Rama heard the wailing and weeping. He retreated into the shrine with Lakshmana as his sole companion and spent the day away from the sight of others. Later, he went to the women's apartments, and consoling the Queens, he counselled them along the path of Jnana. He also explained to the people that the true Ruler considers his people alone as his kith and kin, and treats them alone as his friends. This, he said, is the code of Rama. He said that the Ruler; should

give up his own kith and kin when need arises, since his real kith and kin are the subjects over which he is placed.

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

Sai Devotion in America

Some years ago, after a few Westerners had encountered Sri Sathya Sai Baba, news of Sai started to spread here and there in America. One by one, a few centers were organized. These centers came into being with a very limited background of the Sai teachings and with no guidance whatsoever. It was only natural and to be expected, that procedures and practices developed in these centers which were typical of the American society, customary in America and fully acceptable to the public. Only very recently were we told, much to our surprise, that practices normal to us were contrary to Sai principles.

In 1975, during the Birthday Festival at Prasanthi Nilayam, a decision was taken to organize a unified family of Sathya Sai Baba Centers of America. Standards for conduct of American Centers were given to the newly formed Sri Sathya Sai Central Committee of America, by Bhagavan, and a description of these new standards was mailed out to organizations and individuals in the early part of 1976. In September of the same year, I started to tour the Centers, very uncertain and with considerable anxiety as to what I might find.

On tour, to my very great amazement and to my delight, I found that the Americans had quickly grasped the significance of the new standards for Centers and Members and that, already, almost without exception, the new standards had been put into force. As I talked with devotees in the various cities, they would say, again and again, that they were happy to learn about the practices that were pleasing to Bhagavan, because their first desire was to behave in a way that would please him.

The customary practices so promptly abandoned by Centers and Members represented major changes. For example: One couple had a school for meditation and spiritual living that produced substantial income. But, the income was put aside without hesitation and the instruction was thereafter *free*! A lady President of a Center in another City had a facility that was leased and furnished at personal expense. However, the livelihood of herself and two children depended on her Yoga Classes. When she learned of the new standards, she very sweetly gave up the cherished and honoured office of the Center President and merged the Center with a neighbouring one, to make a unified Sai Organization for the metropolitan area. For many centers there was a sharp drop in new membership applications and loss of income from book and picture sales, because of the cessation of newspaper and other advertising. For many Centers

also, there was a heavy loss in attendance from people who had been coming to meetings to enjoy the interesting discussions of visiting Yogis and Gurus.

To my mind the radical and costly changes in practice, so willingly made as soon as Bhagavan's standards were known, represents genuine devotion in practice-not a devotional *idea*, but, real devotion to Bhagavan in every-day practical life. Moreover, most of these people have never been to India and have not had Sai Darshan.

This was my first experience of Sai devotion throughout America, and to say that I was 'surprised' would be to put it mildly. From where is this deep and vital devotion to Bhagavan arising? He has not been to America and most of his devotees have not been to India! Why do so many of these people, at once and of their own volition, give up personal advantage, once they see the light of Sai Standards and why do others not do so? These and other questions puzzle my mind; there are factors at work here that are too mysterious and too deep for my limited comprehension. One man, recently returned from his first visit to Baba, put it very, well. It was his wife who wanted to go. He was willing to take her but was always making joking remarks to her about her Swami. Now he has stopped joking and he said, "I really don't understand it all, but, I can tell you one thing, Sathya Sai Baba is not like you and me!"

I can put forward a couple of possibilities, but, they may be wide of the mark and no doubt fall short of identifying the basic factors involved, but, at least they have a base of observed facts.

I said that Bhagavan had not been to America. Everyone is sure this is true, but, I wonder if this is the actual fact. Here are some examples of what I mean, things that have happened recently, not alone, by themselves, but always in the circumstance of Sai groups, or a Sai devotee. At a Center in Chula Vista, Bhajans were being sung by assembled devotees. As in most American Centers, there was a chair for Baba by the altar with his picture against the back. The cushion of the chair was, as always, immaculately smooth, with not even the shadow of a wrinkle in the cloth. Yet, when Bhajans were over, every one present (including myself) could clearly observe the cushion of the chair with a very plain depression where some one had been seated. Was Baba with us seated in his chair?

At a Center in Santa Ana, the last song was the Vibhuti bhajan. Then, as usual, there was about 'ten minutes of meditative silence'. During this silence, a chorus of extremely sweet musical voices could be heard singing the Vibhuti bhajan! I opened my eyes and carefully examined my mind, but, the sweet voices continued without stop, until it was time for the meditation to end and for me to give a brief talk. I could see from the faces of the devotees that, very likely, I was not the only one to hear the sweet voices singing. Wherever Bhagavan may be, Bhajans are sung by his devotees. Did the sweet voices singing the Vibhuti bhajan denote Swami's presence there with us?

There is a lady devotee who cares for her aged mother in a Californian town. She brought a present of mother's favorite perfume. Coming into the bedroom a little later, she asked mother,

"Where is the perfume?" The mother replied, "I hid it, because that woman (pointing to a picture of Bhagavan) came and took it and was sprinkling it."

Can we be so sure that Bhagavan is in India and has not visited America? His Divine presence evokes a deep faith in Indians. Can it be that Bhagavan's presence is also here in America and it is that, which is evoking a deep faith in Americans?

Another example of faith arising: A dozen families live on our Hill, in Mexico, which slopes away to the Pacific Ocean about 300 feet below. Most of the people are retired Americans. There are one or two Mexican families. The hill itself is not of solid rock but is a sedimentary ocean-floor uplift, and thus, a mass of sand, boulders, clay, seashells etc. A recent vertical cut for a new highway weakened the hill and, in September 1976, it started to move towards the ocean. Before long, two full houses had fallen and other houses broke in half. Authorities ordered all remaining houses evacuated, because government geologists said that all the houses would be destroyed by the earth movement. At the time of this critical juncture, I was scheduled to depart on the tour of Sathya Sai Baba Centers and would have to leave my wife to face the trouble by herself. Something bad to be done and what else could it be but prayer to Bhagavan?

In our prayer, we asked that Bhagavan save, not only our house, but, the houses of our neighbours as well. When I returned home from tour, I was somewhat nervous since there are no telephones and I had been unable to get any news. I knew we had prayed to Baba but, nevertheless, it is a measure of my weakness that I was anxious for news.

To my relief, all the remaining houses were as before! The geologists were measuring the hill each day and were quite unable to understand why part of the hill was continuing to move, but, where the houses were, the hill was stationary and had not moved even a fraction of an inch. Of course, they did not know about the prayer, nor did they know that we had affixed a beautiful picture of Bhagavan to a window, directly facing the dangerous ocean!

While I was away, the neighbours had found out and they too refused to move from their houses. They knew nothing of Baba except for a few words from us from time to time, but, they knew that we had prayed to Baba for their homes. That was enough. Now, they are asking, "Is Baba coming this month"? The neighbours had Darshan of Baba because of their homes on the hill. They were totally unknowing of Baba, yet faith has arisen in their hearts and minds, now that they see with their own eyes that their houses have not moved.

Americans are, in fact, having the Darshan of Sai in a most subtle mode. Any one may see that Sai devotion is surely there in America.

—John Hislop

Do all acts as offerings to God; do not classify some activities as 'my work', and some others, as 'His work'. All work is His; you are only an instrument. He inspires, He helps, He provides the wherewithal; He executes, He enjoys, He is pleased, He reaps, He sowed, He fed

and fostered. He alone exists, for, all this manifoldness is but He, seen a many-coloured many-faceted glass. Everything is for the attainment of the Supreme Source, to be utilised for that high purpose. Nothing is to be used as itself, for itself. No Padartham (object); all Parartham (objectives). And, the objective is Realising the Reality, that is, Atma God.

—Baba

Sailence

"Silence" is a word included in dictionaries of the English language. According to the lexicographers, it means: "Absence of sound; abstention from sounding; taciturnity; flavourlessness." It is a negative phenomenon, a vacuum where something is not, an exercise in denial, an adventure of with-holding. We abstain from speech when fear benumbs the tongue, when shock puts the brain out of action, when passion overwhelms, and when authority commands. At birth, we swallow a gasp; at death, we hide a groan. We weigh the pros and the cons and when reason tells us that 'silence is golden and speech is gilt' we lapse into silence and pride ourselves on our cleverness. Often, the words we have are trivial currency for the massive transactions in which we are involved and so, we are forced into silence! We speak of the 'silence' of the tomb; dead men tell no tales. We speak of the 'silence' of snow-clad peaks, where a whisper might trail off an avalanche. We speak of the awesome silence on the moon where a whimper commits suicide on the lip. We speak of the 'silence' of the desert, for, we believe that the vast waste is devoid of the murmur of leaves, the chatter of birds, the gurgle of rills, and the inquisitive dialogues of insects. We speak of the silence of the ocean-bed, where no echo can be heard of the roar of waves, or the grunts, squeaks and squeals of aquatic folks. But, when all is said that can be said about "Silence" it is but flavourless, as the dictionary says. It is but a temporary manacle on the mouth, a some-time relief for the ear, a poetic fantasy falsified by facts, a dream of anaemics disgusted with shrieks and shouts.

Let us turn to Sailence! This word is not found in dictionaries. No lexicographer has commented on it. For, it is too ethereal to be swaddled in syllables, too fine and filamental to be voiced about in vocabularies. It is a positive state of mental peace; it is a vibrant experience of individuals; it is a valued treasure; it is far richer and fuller than Silence; it is a reward eagerly sought for; it is a possession highly valued; it is an achievement won by Sadhana.

When the pilgrim leaves behind him the higgie-haggle of the bazaar and enters the temple, when he passes through the pillared halls, the painted corridors and sculptured mantaps, when he picks his way through the dim-lit passages and steps, and stands before the Inner Shrine, he is greeted by the Sailence, in the presence of Embodied Infinity. Sai is all the Gods before whom man bows, kneels or prostrates. He greets with His Grace all pilgrims in all lands in all ages.

When you proceed through any spoke, to take shelter from the gyrations of circumferential existence to the axis, where calm prevails and Sailence reigns, it is Sai, the All-comprehensive Will, Intelligence, Existence, and Bliss that welcomes you and enfolds you in invigorating Love.

Sailence is the home where all children of Sai find rest when, tired of the game of worldly life, they run to the lap of the Mother. It is the home in the region beyond A, U and M, beyond the bounds of wakefulness, dream and sleep. It lies where the Pranava fades into the faintest of fancy. Sailence is the height to which the soul climbs when it yearns to reach the cloud from which it fell on its way to the sea of Grace where it was born.

We get a foretaste of the Bliss that Sailence. Is, when we sit face to face with Sai, communing with Him in the language of the Heart, intent on offering the little i to the parent I that He is. Those who have installed Sai in their hearts can immerse themselves in that effulgent Sailence, even when they are engaged in the tasks of daily life. Like the fishes that come up every few minutes to fill their lungs with life-giving air, they can, through the inner compulsion of Love, dive into that Slient pool in their hearts and draw sustenance and salvation there from. They can assert, "In Sai we live and move and have our being. In Sailence, vice grow and thrive and find our meaning and worth." May that Sailence be the dynamo that activates us into Lamps of Love and Sources of Light.

—N. Kasturi

Do not give any chance for that vile thing, despair, to eat into the vitals of your activity and effort. Despair is a sin against God. When He is in you, why do you lose hope?

That is why the Lord says, "When I am here, why do you fear." Be always joyful, optimistic and courageous.

—Baba

Slake the Thirst

The responsibilities of the Seva Dal are of a high order. It has to lead the members and through them, all mankind, along the path of Sadhana which takes the individual from the position 'I' to the position 'We'. This has given the Seva Dal the importance it deserves. One can realise it only when one delves deep into its significance. You have to sublimate all work as worship and try to fill every moment of your lives with that outlook. Then only can you sanctify and justify your membership in this Organisation.

Through activity, man attains purity of Consciousness, As a matter of fact, man has to welcome activity with this end in view. And, why strive for a pure Consciousness? Imagine a well with polluted and muddy water; the things at the bottom of the well cannot be discovered. When the water is cleansed and made clear, then, the floor can be seen well. So too, within man's heart, deep down in his Consciousness, we have the Atman. But, it can be cognised only when the Consciousness is clarified. Your imaginings, your inferences, your judgments and prejudices,

your passions emotions, your egoist desires, muddy the mind and make it thick with opaque slush. How then can you become aware of the Atman that is at the very base? Through Seva rendered without any desire to one's ego and with only the well-being of others in view, it is possible to cleanse the consciousness and have the Atma revealed.

Therefore, for whose sake are you performing Seva? You are doing Seva for your own sake. You are engaged in Seva in order that you may become aware of the Atma in you, in order that you may discard the allurements of your ego, in order to know yourself, and to get the answer to the question that torments you, namely, "Who am I." You do not serve 'others'; you serve 'Yourselves' you do not serve 'the world'; you serve your own best interests.

You may ask how is it possible to transcend the ego through Seva? By saturating the Seva with Love, work can be transformed into worship. When the work is offered to God, it gets sanctified into Puja. This makes it free from ego. It is also freed from the earthly desire for success and the earthly fear of failure. You feel that when you have done the work as best as you can your Puja is accomplished; now, it is for Him who has accepted the Puja to confer what He considers best. This attitude will make the work 'nish-kama', 'un-attached'. Regular practice of this discipline will render the Consciousness clear and pure. It will promote Chittashuddhi. Without this primary equipment of a Pure Consciousness, how can man ever hope to scale spiritual heights? Almost all the great sages of the past spent the beginning years of their lives in Sadhana that would ensure a Pure Consciousness. However beneficial your career might be, however much you might accumulate the wherewithal of a comfortable or even a luxurious life, to whatever heights of authority you might have climbed through the exercise of your intelligence, your gains are nil. Every activity must be suffused with purity, inherent in the Consciousness.

I shall illustrate this point. Take an ordinary postal envelope. Upon it, in golden ink, write the address of the person in very artistic calligraphy. Insert a beautifully worded letter full of amazing sentiments. Then drop it into a post-box. What happens to it? It will not move even x yard away from that box. Now, take a mere post card, the cheap unimpressive thing. Write the address with no special care. Scribble the news you like to convey. Affix a stamp and drop it into the same box. Watch what happens! The artistically ornamented envelope is inert; this inartistic unreadable document travels a thousand miles towards the person indicated. So too, whatever may be the uniqueness or importance, the furor or attractiveness the Seva that you do can yield no fruit if it is done without a pure Chitta. Krishnamurthy said just now that Swami is coming to your rescue to many ways. He said that you are guarded and saved by Me when you lift huge stones or even when you are caught under them. Your own Shraddha and your own Bhakti are standing guard over you, remember. Your yearning to do Seva and your enthusiasm while doing Seva are rescuing you from harm. God is the Witness; God has no desire to bless nor 'anger' to induce Him to punish. You get blessed and punished as a result of your own feelings and acts. Yad bhaavam thad bhavathi. It happens as you think and behave.

Bad deeds never yield good;
Good deeds never breed bad.
Neem seeds never yield mangoes

Mango seeds never breed neems.

Hence, a person might be an expert in many fields of knowledge or a master of many material skills and accomplishments, but, without inner cleanliness, his brain is a desert waste or a massive stone, with no trace of love, mercy or expansive virtue.

Of the nine steps in spiritual Sadhana leading to the Realisation of the Self, as laid down in the Bhakti Sutras, Dasyam, or the attitude of Seva is quite near the final goal. It is the eighth step. The study of texts, the renouncing of wealth in charity, the repetition of the Name or the chanting of psalms and hymns may be good exercises to sanctify time and to avoid falling into evil ways and ruinous pastimes; but, they seldom purify the Consciousness of man. Instead, they serve mostly to bloat the ego, and instill pride and a competitive craving for superiority. You may be sitting in the Bhajan Hall and loudly singing in chorus; but, your mind may get involved in anxiety about the pair of chappals you have left outside the Hall. Always at the back of the mind, there is the fear of the loss by theft of the chappals; this vitiates the Bhajan and makes it a barren show.

The Sadhana of Seva, is quite distinct. In Seva, you devote all your energy and attention to the task on hand, for it is a dedicated task. You forget the body and ignore its demands. You set aside your individuality and its prestige and perquisites. You pluck your ego by its roots and cast it away. You give up your status, your conceit, your name and form and all that they demand from others. This process makes the Chitta pure. Whatever the task you are performing, renounce your personal individuality and share its travails and troubles, its fruits and benefits with God. You need not bring in God from somewhere outside you; He is in you, all the while. This Truth must be your own discovery, your own treasure, your own strength. This is the grand purpose of the Seva Dal. That is the reason why the Seva Dal is assigned a high place in the Sathya Sai Organisation.

A very pious person was once proceeding from Kasi to Rameshwaram, at the other end of this vast country; he was carrying with him a quantity of holy Ganges water, to be mixed with the sea at Rameshwaram. That would be the consummation of his long and arduous pilgrimage through many a holy place and many a sacred river. While half-way through, he saw by the side of the road a donkey in the last throes of life, since it was too incapacitated to move towards some source of water to slake its thirst. Its dry tongue and lolling eyes indicated the agony of extreme thirst. The pilgrim was so moved by the tragic sight that he poured the precious Ganges water he had with him down the throat of the distraught animal. Moments later, the donkey recovered and could gain enough strength to pull itself out of the grip of death. Seeing this, the companion of the pilgrim asked him, "Master! The sacred waters you brought from Kasi have to be offered to the Ocean at Rameshwaram. Why did you commit this sacrilege of pouring it into the mouth of this despicable animal?" The pilgrim replied, "No. No. I have poured the holy water in the holy Rameshwaram itself; don't you know?" For, any Seva done to a suffering Jivi reaches the Lord Himself and can never be a sacrilege. Seva to the Jiva is Seva to the Deva. Be firm in that belief, whatever you do, to whomsoever is suffering.

I shall tell you another story. You might have heard this from me already but it is worth hearing again and again. Millions come to Kasi as pilgrims. It is said that those who see Kasi will not be born again. One day, at Kailasa, the abode of Siva and Parvati, Parvati asked Siva, " Lord! I have heard it said that all those who visit Kasi, where there is a celebrated shrine for your worship, will attain Kailasa and stay on there in Your Presence. Millions are coming to Kasi, is this place big enough to accommodate all of them?" Siva replied, " All the millions cannot come to Kailasa; I shall design a drama and make clear to you who among the millions can come here. You too have to act a role. Do as I direct you to."

Parvati became an old bag of 80 and Siva a rickety old man of 90. The old woman had the old man on her lap, right at the main entrance of the famous Siva shrine of 'Visweswara' and she implored in piteous tones the pilgrims who passed by, on their way to the temple, "My husband is terribly thirsty. He is about to die of thirst. I cannot leave him and go to the Ganges to bring him water. Will any of you pour little water down his throat and save his life? The pilgrims were coming up from the ghats after ceremonial bath in the holy river; their clothes were wet and clung to their bodies.

Some of them lamented that their peace was disturbed by the sight of this pathetic couple. "We have come to take Darshan of the Lord; and this is what meets our eye. What a bad omen," they said and moved off: Some there were who flatly ignored her cries and lifted their noses in the air. Some said, "Wait. Let us finish the worship inside the temple; then only can we bring the Ganges water for you." No one offered to bring the needed help to the aged patient.

But, a professional robber who was hurrying into the temple to pick a few pockets heard the plaintive voice of the old woman. He halted near them. He asked her, 'Mother! What is the matter?' She replied, "Son! We came to this place to have Darshan of Lord Visweswara of Kasi. My husband could not bear the thirst and he has fainted out of sheer agony. He might survive if some one will bring a little Ganges water and pour it down his throat. I cannot leave him here and go for water. Please help me and earn the merit." The robber was moved into compassion. He had a little Ganges water in the dry hollow gourd he had with him. He knelt down near the dying person on the lap of the old woman, but, the woman stopped him saying, "The moment the Ganges water wets his throat, my husband may die; he is in the last stage of living; so, speak a word of Truth and pour the water. Do not speak a Word of untruth and pour." The robber could not understand what she meant. So, he asked her, "What is it now?" She explained, "Speak within his hearing some good deed that you have done in your life and then, pour the water in his mouth." That created a problem for the robber. He was at his wits' end. He could not quite comply. He said, "Mother! I have, in truth, not done any good deed so far. Listen! This present act, the offering of water to this thirsty man is the very first good deed I am responsible for," and he placed the gourd at the lips of the old man and gave him a mouthful.

Just at that moment, the couple disappeared and in their place stood Siva and Parvati, blessing the robber. Siva said, "Son! Life is to be dedicated for the service of others and not devoted to the exclusive interests of oneself. So, however many wicked deeds you might have done so long, since you just now accepted that 'Service to others is service to God' and offered the Ganges

water irrespective of any desire, not caring for any demand on your time and attention, with Truth on your tongue, We bless you with this Vision. Remember there is no morality higher than Truth; there is no prayer more fruitful than Seva.”

On the royal road to spiritual realisation, there are three stages, as mentioned in the scriptures: Karmajijnasa, Dharmajijnasa and Brahmajijnasa. Jijnasa means 'inquiry'. A person becomes fit to inquire into Brahman and succeed in that 'inquiry' only when his consciousness has been trained and shaped by 'inquiry' into the modes of activity and the mores of conduct—the Karma and the Dharma which clarify and purify. He who discriminates well before engaging in any activity will naturally be righteous in conduct and behaviour.

Good Karma will automatically lead to good Dharma. For example take the homely chutney, the coconut chutney for the meal. It is eaten and relished only after it is ground and got ready, isn't it? When it is eaten, you find out whether salt has been added or not, not before. And, when you discover that the salt isn't enough or that it has not been added, you have to add the needed quantity, isn't it? You will not add salt, before eating a quantity, will you? So, the three stages are: (1) Grinding and getting the chutney ready (2) eating it and (3) adding the needed salt. The preparation is the Karma, the eating is the Dharma and the adding of salt to make it tasty and sustaining, is Brahma; Act, dedicate and adore. That is the way to acquire a pure Consciousness.

An act dedicated as an offering to the God resident in All becomes as sacred as the highest Seva. Devote yourselves to this Seva. Avatars of God are engaged in Seva; that is why Avatars happen. Hence, when you offer Seva to mankind, the Avatar will naturally be pleased and you can win Grace. This great chance you have as members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal. I hope you will make the best use of this chance. I bless you that you may.

—Divine Discourse Brindavan, 6th March, 77

The Hostel at Brindavan

Flags and festoons festival flora, fountains and flood-lights in the Brindavan Campus around the Walter Cowan Block of the Sri Sathya Sai Hostels. It was the Inauguration Day, April 28, 77, Thursday. Students of the College, members of the Staff, Seva Dal volunteers of Bangalore and other cities of the country like Hyderabad toiled for days to brighten and beautify the place for the memorable occasion.

Sri. B. D. Jatti, President of India, arrived exactly at 5 P.M., with Srimati Jatti, and was received at the Entrance by Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. From thence, he was taken in procession to the residence of Bhagavan. A military band played delightful music; the elephant Sai Geetha, magnificently caparisoned, followed the band. Vedic scholars from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka recited hymns of welcome and offered Poorna-Kumbham in the

traditional form. The President and Srimati Jatti, had tea at the residence of Bhagavan, along with other distinguished invitees like the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court and Ministers of the State. Then, the President accompanied by Bhagavan went in procession to the Hostel Building and had it formally opened, unveiling the plaque. The ceremonial lamp was lit by Srimati Jatti. Mrs. Elsie Cowan garlanded the President. Thereafter, the President went round the building and expressed his appreciation of the atmosphere of serenity and simplicity.

Thousands of devotees had gathered in the vast open maidan in front of the new Mantap before the Hostel. The President and Bhagavan passed through the gathering and ascended the Dais of the Mantap at 5-50. Vedasamrat Kameswara Ganapathi recited Vedic Prayers. Col. Joga Rao described briefly some salient points regarding the Hostel Building. It is built at a cost of 20 lakhs of rupees, the entire amount being donated by Bhagavan's devotees from California, USA. —Mrs. Elsie Cowan (Rs. 14 lakhs), and Dr. John Hislop, Mrs. Porter, Mrs. Speed, Mr. Robert Bozzani, Dr. Krystal, and Dr. Goldstein (one lakh of rupees each). Brigadier Bose, formerly Chief Engineer, Southern Command, and later Director, Indian Institute of Technology, Powai and Kharagpur, supervised the construction. It was completed within a short period of 10 months and is now an inspiring architectural gem, combining the best ideals of the ancient and the modern, to produce a Gurukul for the boys. It has three floors and a basement. The basement is to be used for a gymnasium, a yogic centre, tutorial classes, and halls for meditation. The three floors have dormitories, each accommodating eleven boarders, with cots and chairs, slide in tables, racks and wall recesses. It provides for 400 boarders and also a few teachers. He said that the students of the hosts I had achieved remarkable academic successes all these years, and read out the names of consistent rank-holders at the University Examinations. More than fifty students who had gained First Classes were also introduced to the gathering.

Then Sri Kamal Sahani, a boarder, made a short speech. "Bhagavan declares that all are divine and this truth is impressed on us, by the temple-like architecture of the new Hostel.

"The name of the Block reminds us of the unique miracle which revived Walter Cowan at Madras; he died, and Baba gave him a second life. The memory of that incident inspires us to believe that we, the boarders, too are being endowed with 'a new life' by Bhagavan here." Sri Kamal Sahani said that the old hostel building was a line of garages, reshaped into living quarters and it was significant for the reason that the boarders were being reconditioned, repaired and overhauled into new personalities by the routine and by the influence of Bhagavan. He said that words cannot communicate the gratitude the boys feel, and that the best he could do was to pronounce just five words, "We just love you, Swami."

Nityananda Menon, another boarder, also spoke on the Hostel and how it was remoulding and reforming the boarders. He spoke of the goal placed before them and revealed that it was no less than the ultimate realisation of the Self. He said that each of them had to prepare himself to be the messenger of Bhagavan's message, wherever he may spend his days. He said that Bhagavan involves Himself intimately with every boarder; though living away from home, each of them has in Him a Father and a Mother, a Friend and a Master. He also declared that the impact of

Bhagavan on their character and progress as well as on their spiritual Sadhana was permanent and deep.

Dr. Vinayaka Krishna Gokak welcomed the President and others in a short speech delivered in Kannada. He said that Sri Jatti had risen through his sterling character and steady righteousness from the status of a common man through the rungs of a Ministership in a small State, Jamkhandi (now no longer on the map), a Deputy Ministership of the Bombay Province, Ministership and Chief Ministership of the State of Karnataka, the Lt. Governorship of Pondicherry, the Governorship of Orissa State, the Vice-Presidentship of India to the Presidentship, the highest office that a citizen can hold. He said that it was the impact of Bhagavan's Love that had drawn him hither and persuaded him to agree to inaugurate the Hostel. He described the Hostel as a Miniature India, for, parents from all over India had admitted their children in the Sri Sathya Sai College, for, they knew that here, they would grow under the beneficent influence of His guidance and Grace. He is the friend, philosopher, guide and God, for each one of them. He spoke of the comprehensive educational programme that Bhagavan has initiated beginning from Bal Vikas Classes, right on to Pre-Seva Dal and Seva Dal, Mahila Vibhag, and Seva Samiti, besides direct academic institutions with a marked spiritual slant as this College and the Colleges for Women at Anantapur, Bhopal and Jaipur. Baba has also established, he said, High Schools and Technical Schools, with the same ends in view. He pointed out that all these institutions are pioneers in the great big Sai Revolution that is happening all over the world. The fact that this Hostel was built out of Donations from Bhagavan's devotees in the U. S. A is proof of the impact His Message of Love and Service has created in far off lands.

The President then delivered his address. "I deem it a great privilege," he said, "to be here with you all, this evening, and inaugurate the Hostel Building of the Sri Sathya Sai College, in the august presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I am grateful to you all for the warm and affectionate welcome accorded to me.

"As you are all aware, the Arts and Science College to which this Hostel has been attached, was established in 1969, by Bhagavan Baba. It is gratifying to note that the teachers and students in this College aim at developing themselves intellectually, morally and spiritually. Bhagavan Baba's personality and teachings have enabled the College discharge its mission to fuse modern knowledge with the moral and spiritual tradition of India.

I am glad to note that the students of this College have won distinctions and ranks in the University Examinations. This proud record is due to the fact that the College is not a prototype of existing educational institutions. Here students are given opportunities to learn farming with modern machines, dairy techniques, animal husbandry, canteen organisation, elocution, bhajan singing, and teaching, social service in villages and undergo training in all aspects of Seva Dal work. In other words, the College helps in the development of the complete personality. It is therefore not surprising that the College has attracted students not only from all parts of India but also from abroad.

It is gratifying to note that in this College, education is imparted in an atmosphere of dedication and devotion to the great ideal summed up in the motto, "dharmo rakshati rakshitah satyannasthi paro dharmah". Dharma protects those who adhere to it; there is no Dharma higher than truth.

Baba's life, work and mission aim at Dharmasthapana, resuscitation of Dharma, re-establishment of the supremacy of ethical and spiritual values embracing all aspects of life, from the cradle to the grave—proper upbringing of children, revival of the sanctity of marriage, and of family life, of scriptural studies, of classical mores, of prayers, of simple living and high thinking, of piety and virtue, irrespective of class, creed, religion or nationality.

There has been, I am sorry to say, an erosion of these ancient values in modern society leading to a deterioration in the quality of life. Bhagavan Baba has, by his teachings and example, shown how a human being can raise himself to a higher level of life. He has taught us that the issue between right and wrong is a decisive one. God works on the side of the right. Love and mercy are ultimately more powerful than hatred and cruelty. Dharma can conquer adharma; truth will conquer falsehood. When most of us live lost, bewildered and tormented lives without any consistent purpose or pattern binding our activities, Baba calls upon us to integrate our personalities and develop unity of outlook and purpose. Educational institutions like the Colleges established by the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust play an important role in instilling our ancient values in their alumni through properly designed programmes of teaching and research. These values which the students have imbibed will spread to the society as a whole and lay the basis for the transformation of our society

I have no doubt that, under the inspiring guidance of Bhagavan Baba these institutions will fulfil their objectives of placing at the service of the nation successive generations of students imbued with the ideals of Discipline, Devotion and Duty." The President then said a few words in Kannada " All human efforts succeed only with the Grace of the Lord. That is the supreme need. For, as Sri Basavanna has declared, 'When You pour Your Grace, dry stumps sprout; the barren, yield; poison confers Immortality'. The present social evils of intolerance, injustice and falsehood have to be cured by means of love, compassion and service. With the blessings of Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba, I am sure the cure will be speedily effected."

The President said, "I would therefore conclude by wishing the educational institutions established by the Trust, progress and fulfillment."

Mrs. Elsie Cowan then spoke. "It has been a wonderful day for me. I am happy it has been such a beautiful day. I wish I had the words to express how much joy it has given my heart. India has become my home. Baba told me years ago, "This is your home," pointing to Prasanthi Nilayam. He has a home in America also. The students that are here have a wonderful time, for they are educated and loved at the same time. Intelligence and Love, when both are achieved together, bring wisdom. I am indeed very happy that the President of India and his wife are present here today and have inaugurated this Hostel Building."

Bhagavan in his discourse, emphasised that the unfoldment of virtues and the realisation of the Self are the only valid goals of life. Education is not worth the name if it does not result in the awareness of one's reality and the recognition that it is the reality of all beings. A man is to be valued on the basis of his character, not on consideration of authority or economic status. Outward pomp and power cannot last long. The Kauravas had everything they desired but they wreaked vengeance on the Pandavas and it recoiled on them to their total destruction and eternal disgrace. Ravana too had vast learning and enormous resources of divine boons but, he frittered them away by his one single vice. Progress depends upon character, renunciation, and virtue, but, since man is addicted to lust greed and envy, he is fast declining into a state worse than the animal. Educational institutions ought to be temples of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning. But the Goddess of Riches, Lakshmi has usurped them. The heritage of India is invaluable and has to be preserved and passed on to the children of this land. The whole world is eager to benefit by it. Einstein was a great admirer of that heritage and had declared his appreciation of the Bhagavad-Gita, as the source of inspiration. Now, we are leading very artificial lives, divorced from the roots of our own culture.

The Youth of this country must get themselves imbued with the ideals of this culture and be prepared to shed their lives in putting those ideals into practice. The ideals of service and simple living, Satsang and sadhana have to be adopted by youth and then only can this country rise again as the teacher and guide of humanity. Go into every village and serve the helpless the ignorant and the poor, inspired by the awareness of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

Sri Jatti is a person who has before him the ideal of spiritual progress and he is ever anxious to promote and protect the ancient culture of India so essential for the welfare and prosperity of the world. It is indeed the good fortune of the students that the Hostel Building was inaugurated by him this day. He has always believed that whatever happens is the will of God.”

—*Ed.*

The Indisputable

My first experience of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's extra-ordinary compassion and powers was in 1962-63. The relative of a well-known newspaper owner was being treated at the famous Hospital at Vellore, Tamil Nadu. As an Ayurvedic Physician who had known the patient for many years, I visited him at the Hospital; I tried to supplement the treatment he was receiving. Both his kidneys had failed and he was under dialysis treatment. There was no hope of saving him; the disease had reached its irrecoverable stage. When Baba was approached, He gave him Vibhuti. It surprised me that, very soon, the patient had quite recovered!

As a physician, I value these `miracles' of Baba very much. They bring unexpected and impossible results in human physiology. I myself have benefited much from them. After the

Darshan of Baba, which I have been able to secure many times during these years, listening to His speeches, reading books by Him and on Him, taking part in the Summer Courses on Indian Culture and Spirituality organised under His auspices as a Lecturer on Ayurveda and Yoga, I must say that I have become better and more efficient as a physician, able to examine more deeply into the roots of disease and able to study more fruitfully the abnormalities and aberrations of the minds of my patients.

I have heard the discourses of Bhagavan and learnt many intricate subjects through his simple exposition and marvellous style. In each discourse, there will be always something new-new ideas, new parables, new explanations. One day, I was sitting in the front row and listening attentively to His speech. My mind was beset with a few doubts regarding what He was analysing and declaring. All of a sudden, Baba looked at me and, in only three sentences, He cleared the very doubts that had risen in my mind. Those were my personal doubts; they had risen in my mind alone. But, He became aware of them and promptly solved them.

Through His Grace, and by constantly remembering It, I have got mental peace and cheerfulness under all conditions. He inspires me to do good works and prevents me from wrong thoughts, words and actions. Under His inspiration and guidance, I have been prompted to introduce our ancient culture and time-tested traditions to international medical and astrological conferences.

Baba arranges every year in May-June, a Summer Camp at Bangalore, for College Students from all over India and even outside India, where they are taught the essential principles of Indian Culture and Spirituality. It is real Gurukula education there, for, Baba is the Guru who feeds, fosters and guides the campers, who may be over 500 in number. The campers—boys and girls—have to follow a rigorous routine from 4 A. M. till 9 P. M. They have to recite the Pranava, perform Bhajans not only in camp, but, also in groups along the streets of the villages around 'Brindavan', join classes in Yoga and Vedic Recitation, and engage themselves on Sundays in some project of Social Service. Baba takes loving care of the campers and the lecturers. I was called to lecture on Ayurveda during the camp and I was overwhelmed by His Divine Love seen in every act and movement of His. At the end of the month when the Camp is over, the students start weeping, for they have no inclination to return home. I have heard students telling Baba, "Baba! We have never got this Love, affection and understanding during these sixteen or twenty years. How can we leave you and go?" But, Baba tells them, "I am always with you, wherever you go" and He persuades them softly and sweetly to return and serve their parents and their villages.

As a physician, I have come across many miracles when desperate cases have survived and come back to normalcy, contrary to all expectations. Faith and Divine Grace can I know, work wonders. Baba's Vibhuti has cured many such cases. If any one treats these lightly as magic, well, the world is a Magician's handiwork and in it there is nothing that is not touched by His magic touch. Magic is a word we use for anything we cannot understand; if it is beyond our powers or skills or comprehension, we call it magic. So, the gravitational force is magic, for, no one can say, why it works or how it came about. Electricity is something that we can use but we

do not know why it behaves so. No scientist has proved till today what gravitation is, and even the best of them have different theories as explanations. Baba's miracles show that the world is created by the Divine Will, the strong Desire of the Divine to become manifold.

Baba is a great example to all—His simple life, His busy schedule of service and sacrifice, His ever-present joy and enthusiasm, His sweetness and compassion, His constructive plans for the uplift of mankind, from the child to the aged. He has set up no distinct sect or cult; as a matter of fact, He condemns those who establish temples or places of worship for Him and appeals to all to discourage such vanities. I am impressed by these qualities as well as the indisputably Divine Wisdom and Love that he embodies.

—*Dr. Chandrasekhar Thakur, Jamnagar*

Two Further Steps

Breath is essential for life; Faith is essential for good life. The child has faith in the mother; the wife has faith in the husband; the student has faith in the teacher. Without faith, life is fraught with fear and anxiety. No one can have peace without faith in others. You have faith in the pilot, the driver, the captain. People go on pilgrimages to holy places spending enormous amounts of money and spending a number, of days, state they have faith in the sacredness of those spots and in the Deity that is installed there. They return from the pilgrimage with hearts lighter and minds more plated, satisfied that they have fulfilled a vow or done something worthwhile.

The Sadhana you do, the Bhajan, Namaskirtan, Nagarsankirtan, Seva items etc have Faith as their very basis. For, who will engage himself in Sadhana, with no faith in its efficacy? No one will swallow medicine, unless he knows he is ill and that the medicine will cure him. Faith alone can give steadiness. A steady eye and an unwavering mind are essential for progress; the vision on which the efforts are directed should not be changed from day to day. And, the effort must be not only directed to the achievement of the goal, it must also be adequate to the task undertaken. If the aim is high but the effort is low, how can victory be secured?

There are, as you have heard, nine steps on the path of Devotion or Bhakti. The first of them is Shravanam, Listening. Now, this Listening process has become an itch, a disease. People rush from one discourse to another; they gather at lecture-halls and listen to expositions of Puranic and Epic texts. The exponents and lecturers too have learnt lower and lower levels of exposition, so that they can attract more and more and win popularity. But, people do not practise even a fraction of what they lecture, listen to and appreciate.

The Listening process is not followed by recapitulation and review in silence (Manana), so that passion and prejudice are eliminated, and the hard core of the lesson implanted in the memory. Then, we have the third stage: Nididhyasana—the practice in daily life of the valuable guidelines

listened to. The three—Shravana, Manana and Nididhyasana are like (1) the cooking and getting the dishes ready in the kitchen (2) the serving of the feast on the plates and the eating and (3) the digestion of the food eaten and its assimilation by the body. The three have to be gone through if progress has to be made in the spiritual field. Arjuna heard the Gita (Shravanam); Krishna asked him to review and re-consider what He had told him (Vimarsyethadaseshena Yatheccchasi thatha kuru) and after doing it, he said, karishye vachanam thava (I shall act according to the advice I heard from you Nididhyasana).

Listening is a passive process; it is the least important of the three steps. The brain might be filled with quotations. It is packed with information needed to pass examinations. Cramming is the order of the day. Of course, books have to be read and discourses listened to. But, the aim should be, Service to Society, Peace and Prosperity for Mankind, Development of Self-confidence. Demonstrating by thought word and deed the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God.

Is there among men this day this feeling of brotherhood? Do you feel that all are your kith and kin, that the same Atma is in every one? Look into the files in any court. You will find that most cases are between brothers, because there is no bond of brotherhood between them; there is no love, not even tolerance. Greed is the over-riding passion. When man has no love, tolerance, compassion, and the spirit of renunciation, he is a beast and not a man.

Samathwam yogamuchyathe, says the Gita. Sameness, to feel the same with all, is junction with God. So long as you feel that another is different from you and distinct, so long, you cannot have Yoga, or union with God. For, God is in all and when you consider another as different, you are feeling God as different. Examine your faults and failures, rather than the wrongs and defects of others; try to find out the causes for the faults and failures that haunt you and repent for them, resolving to get rid of them.

A father had two sons, who were perpetually quarrelling with each other. When he died, they had to divide the properties, moveable and immoveable equally among themselves half for one and the other half to the other, They divided the land and the house in two equal halves; they broke mirrors, fans, shelves, vessels and grinding stones in twos and shared the halves. When it came to the cow they were prepared to cut it also in two, but; the neighbour saved them from the sin; he purchased it for a sum of money which they divided among themselves. Factionalism and hatred lead man to sin.

Love alone is the panacea. That will promote unity and peace. Where are you to get this Love from? You need not seek Love from outside yourself. It is in you as a perennial spring. The glow-worm goes about its business in the dusk and in the dark, with the help of its own inherent glow. Become aware of the Love that you have within you—since the Premaswarupa is there—and spread it to all around you. That will give you Infinite Bliss.

—Discourse to Students: Brindavan 12-2-76

A Summer Camp

The Fifth Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality, held under the auspices of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, for students of the Colleges of India, in the immediate Presence and under the Divine Guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Brindavan, Kadugodi; Bangalore Dt., was inaugurated by Bhagavan Himself at 9-30 A. M., on the 19th May 77, at the Auditorium of the Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Kadugodi. Batches of students, selected by the Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisations of different states by means of an essay writing test, from each state in India (boys and girls, accompanied by Group Teachers selected for guiding them during the Camp) began arriving from the morning of the 18th so that the Brindavan Complex was lively with over 600 eager, enthusiastic young persons, ready to benefit by the month-long stay in the Presence and by the lectures and discourses planned by the Organisers. Each state had also selected a few observers from among scholars and devotees of that state who were thirsty to quaff the instruction and inspiration offered during the Course and to share in the camp life. Over 200 persons (men and women) joined the camp under this category. A sizeable number of keen learners belonging to overseas countries were also included as Observers.

The student campers were accommodated in the Walter Cowan Block, and other buildings at Brindavan while the Observers were lodged in the rooms behind the main College Building, (shortly to be formally inaugurated), where the Classes are being temporarily held. The sessions of the Summer Camp are being held at the magnificently equipped, artistic, and spacious Auditorium, which was completed just in time for this very purpose.

At 8-45 A. M., on Thursday, the 19th, the participants were led from Brindavan in procession to the Auditorium. The Sri Sathya Sai Boys' College Band led the section of men students and the men-observers while the Band of the Sri Sathya Sai Women's College, Anantapur led the section of the girl students and the Women Observers. Immediately behind them, was the beautifully caparisoned elephant Sai Geetha, followed by Vedic Scholars from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka reciting hymns in praise of the Goddess of Learning. Bhagavan graciously gave Darshan to the multitudes that had ranged themselves on the sides of the road, from the car that followed close behind. After Him, the Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, the State Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, the Speakers invited to deliver discourses and a large number of devotees accompanied Bhagavan.

The proceedings of the Inauguration Function began with Vedic Recitation. Dr. V. K. Gokak, M. A., D. Litt., Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Bangalore welcomed the large and distinguished gathering. Speaking on the Summer Course, he said, that these Courses held every year under the guidance of Bhagavan and in conformity with the educational ideals propounded by Him have set the pattern for similar Orientation Programmes sponsored by other organisations and institutions. It may be thought that since students from all the states of India are participating in the Camp that this camp is held to further the process of national integration. But, Dr. Gokak said, "This is only an important side product of the camp. Everywhere in Bhagavan's Presence, integration happens in a deep and lasting manner, for there is a unifying inspiration and a liberating Love emanating from Him. This results in the integration of all creeds and races, of World Integration, in fact."

The main aim of the Camp and the discourses was the remedying of the cultural bankruptcy of the Indian student. As a matter of fact, when Indian students go abroad, and when questions are asked of them about India and its culture, they feel helpless. Our students learn the value of Indian Culture only when they go out to the United States or Europe. In every other country, the College Curriculum includes, as in the U. S. A. a course on the Culture of that Country. A course on American Culture is a must in the Universities in U. S. A. But, no single Indian University has organised a Course of this kind. And, according to Dr. Gokak, our culture is a unique one, it is not only ancient but very much alive and current. He said that we have disinherited ourselves of this precious heritage and become rootless. The purpose of the Camp he said was to fill this gap in our educational equipment, to see that the branches do not wither away for want of the cultural and spiritual sap. The history of India is now being taught in a fragmented form, without emphasis on national values. The Camp will help the students to bring to bear on every single issue the impact of national relevance and the context of Indian Culture and History. The participants will get a total view of Indian Culture, with emphasis on religion, philosophy, arts, literature and Yoga.

A special feature of this Camp this year, Dr. Gokak announced, is a week-long Seminar on the Ramayana. That great epic has had tremendous impact on the Culture of India since ages and also on the lives of people in different parts of the world especially in Central and S. E. Asia. The Ramayana has been moulded and reshaped in the various linguistic areas of India according to the genius of the seers and poets of those areas and Dr. Gokak said that a fascinating series of discourses, has been arranged from distinguished savants from all over India.

The Camp Dr. Gokak said, will ensure that the participants will live for a few weeks in a purer environment, relishing the beauties of a hard and simple life. They will not be stirring out of the precincts of Brindavan and so they can escape the atmosphere of poison and pollution that prevails generally in cities and towns. Beginning with the tea or coffee in the morning, and the newspaper that caters to sensationalism and sub-humanism, students are now exposed to the degrading influence of films (even the posters, as Baba says, are dangerous on account of their blatant appeal to the lower instincts). These students will be kept away from the impurities of the environment; they can breathe the sanctifying air of Brindavan. They can live in the midst of eternity, as children of the same Mother, India. The atmosphere will also promote reverence towards elders and teachers, a virtue that is almost absent in society today. Above all, the students will be in the Presence of Bhagavan, the prime Architect of this Course. Thousands and millions of persons from all parts of the world are racing round at least to earn a glimpse of Him and to secure the chance of sitting at His Feet for at least a minute. But, the participating students will have Bhagavan with them for one whole month, teaching and guiding, in their classes, while at prayer, during play, or at breakfast, lunch or dinner. It is indeed a stirring experience, to be with the Avatar. It will be like living in the Presence of the Himalayas, sublime, elevating and purifying.

Dr. Gokak told the students that they are in a workshop, as Baba characterised the Camp once. It is a laboratory of souls, it is the presence of Living Truth. He concluded with the exhortation, "Make the best use of this opportunity. You are the India of tomorrow. Turn your faces towards the Sun so that you can avoid chasing your shadows."

At 10 A. M., Bhagavan lit the Lamp to announce that the Seminar on the Ramayana and the Summer Camp were duly inaugurated.

Bhagavan began His Inaugural Discourse with the recitation of the famous verse in Sanskrit which declares that when God incarnated as Rama, the Vedas, which describe the glory of God, also incarnated as the Ramayana. He sang also a Telugu poem on the Name of Rama, as the sweetest nectar for mankind. These set the tone for the Divine Dissertation that followed.

"Millions of people have imbibed the Ramayana in their own distinct languages and saved themselves. For, the Ramayana is a wonder-filled and holy story that cleanses the heart and vouchsafes the Vision of Eternal Truth. The renderings of the immortal story may be in poetry or prose or in the Champu style which favours both—but, they delight the readers and direct them to the path which leads to self-realisation. Valmiki, the renowned sage has earned the gratitude of mankind, for his sacred epic in Sanskrit, the Ramayana, which has served as the Ocean of Nectarine Delight to every subsequent writer and poet, student and sadhak. In the depths of that Ocean is found by the devotees of the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati, huge hoards of pearls embedded in the shells of poetic beauty. Bathing in that Holy Sea makes the individual pure and perfect.

Valmiki has depicted Rama, from His birth to the culmination of the Grand Purpose of the Incarnation, namely, the Destruction of Ravana, without the slightest exaggeration, paying attention to meticulous accuracy. For, he had vowed before composing the epic that he would exclude from it his own fantasies and fictions. As a result, though he was convinced that Rama was the Divine Itself in all Its Fullness, Valmiki dared not omit instances and incidents where Rama expresses in words and actions, common human weaknesses. Nevertheless, he uses these occasions to emphasise the moral ideals which one has to learn from them.

Vedvyasa has also composed a Ramayana, where the Divine aspect is placed in the forefront, instead of the human. It is called the Adhyatma Ramayana. The special features of these two Ramayanans can be made plain by a small example. Suppose a person named Yellayya plays the role of Rama in a drama based on the Ramayana. The spectators will appreciate his acting, singing and rendering of the dialogue and tell among themselves, "Rama said this, Rama did that, Rama sang so." but, the people behind the curtains and in the green room will tell each other, "Yellayya sang well; Yellayya acted well; Yellayya played his role quite nicely"! Vedvyasa wrote of Rama as He appeared to the Sages and Rishis behind the curtain; Valmiki wrote of Him as He appeared to those in front. The Incarnation is taken on by the Lord for playing a role, and so, naturally there will be two sides to the story, one inseparable from the other.

Valmiki has taken care to reveal also the Divinity of Rama expressly and by implication frequently in the Ramayana, when Rama demonstrated perfect equanimity and composure when he was asked to go on a fourteen years' exile even while he was about to be crowned Emperor; this is a Divine trait. But, when after meeting his mother with the news of exile, he proceeded to the apartments of Sita, he did not have the same composure; he reverted to human emotions, according to Valmiki.

In the Ramayana, ideals which can be and have to be followed by every individual in his role as son, brother, wife, friend etc are depicted most effectively. When the heart is filled with the nectarine drug of Ramakatharasa, one's emotions, impulses and feelings will be so corrected that one will become the most loving son, the most considerate husband, the most loyal wife, the thickest of friends, the best of masters and the closest of brothers. At the present time the whole world is sunk in fear, misery and discontent as a result of the decline in these ideals of family and social life. The Ramayana will plant in the hearts of its readers and listeners the seeds of love, reverence and fraternity and it will tend the saplings to grow into big trees, yielding sweet fruits of peace, plenty and prosperity.”

Bhagavan called upon the students and others to use the precious chance of the Seminar on the Ramayana, arranged as part of the Summer Course, and imbibe the lessons there from for a better, happier and more satisfying life.

Dr. Ramaraju, Professor of Telugu in the Osmania University, the Convenor, gave a brief summary of the week-long programme of the Seminar. He said that distinguished lecturers from each of the 14 language areas of India will speak on the Ramayanas in those languages, and many others will deal with the Valmiki Ramayana and its excellences. There will be an analytical appreciation of each one of the seven Kandas of the Valmiki Ramayana.

The lecturers will cover other interesting sections of Ramayana lore, its influence on other forms of literature, art, music etc. Other speeches will be on the influence of the Ramayana in foreign lands and their culture.

Dr. Divakarla Venkatavadhanulu, M. A., Ph. D. then spoke on Valmiki, the Adikavi, and His immortal Work. This was followed by a learned and comprehensive review by Dr. Raghavan, the renowned Sanskrit scholar, of the colourful career of the Rama Story in South, South-Eastern. and Central Asia, as well as in the Philippines, Japan, China and Korea. The review took the listeners from Sri Lanka, on a pleasant rewarding pilgrimage covering half the world, pursuing the fortunes of the Rama Story in mythology, art and architecture.

Sri Nakul Sen, I. C. S (Retd.) then offered the grateful homage of the vast gathering at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan for all that He is doing to resurrect the Divinity in man and elevating him to the level of his real Reality. He said that the Ramayana was Baba's own story retold from age to age. It taught man how to divinise himself through the effective experience of life's toils and tragedies, its beauty and splendour. He said that Bhagavan has to be experienced rather than explained, for, scientists who attempt to explain are bound by the limits of Nature, which is eight-fold in character, as mentioned in the Gita. The Five Elements, Mind, Intelligence and the Ego are all parts and modifications of Nature or Prakriti and the truths of the Higher Principle are beyond the capacities of the scientist. There is a far richer, deeper, complex, multifaceted world inside man, and this is the field explored and known by the sages of India. Bhagavan is the architect of that world and we pray to Him to make us worthy of that knowledge glimpsed by the seers of ancient India.

During the evening sessions of the First Day of the Summer Camp, Brahmasri Pundit Kooganti Seetharamacharlu spoke in Sanskrit on the Glory of the Ramayana. He said that the Ramayana strictly followed Vedic Injunctions, in the descriptions of the Yajnas and Yagas mentioned therein. He also described the Ramayana as the unique Saga of Saranagati, that is to say, it taught the high spiritual efficacy of the attitude of surrender to the Divine. After him, Brahmasri Ramabhatla Lakshminarayana Sastri listed in Telugu the excellences and beauties of the Balakanda of the Ramayana of Valmiki. He also emphasised the inner meaning of the Viswamitra episode and the significance of Rama's marriage with Sita, as a symbol of the eternal association of the Purusha and Prakriti. Dr. Kulasekhara Rao of the Osmania University then gave a fascinating resume of the various literary works in the Telugu language dealing with the story of Rama.

At 5 P. M., Sri Venu Mukund, the Vina Artist settled in England since some years, played a few songs before the gathering. Then, Bhagavan blessed the campers and others who had filled the Auditorium and assembled on the open grounds around it, with the first of His evening discourses. He had declared in the morning that He would be dealing with the Ramayana itself, highlighting the special qualities, and achievements of each character, besides bringing out the relevance of each for the youth of the country today.

Bhagavan said that the Ramayana teaches man to encounter obstacles and disappointments with confidence and courage. It describes a series of successes achieved by confidence won by faith in Rama and Ramnaam. Faith such as that which Hanuman had when he jumped across the sea, relying on the efficacy of the Name is very essential for success. Troubles, anxieties, calamities and conflicts, are natural and cannot be avoided; what is needed is Faith in God, which can confer strength of body and steadiness of mind, clear vision and calm deliberation. Life is a series of ups and downs. The body, the mind, the emotions, the feelings, all are subject to this limitation. Imagine a life that is perpetually smooth, with no obstacle or trouble. It would be dreary and drab, devoid of colour and interest. Without the foil of grief, Ananda cannot shine. If there is no danger from the destiny of death, even the mother may not feel affection and tenderness towards her child. Man must stand firm on the rock of determination and face the dual attack of fortune, good as well as bad. The bad will always pour scorn on the good; the unhappy will envy the happy; this is the way of the world. The waters of the lake breed frogs as well as lotuses. The lotus attracts, the frog repels. The Ocean of Milk, yielded when churned, both Amrita (the Divine Nectar that grants Immortality) and Halahala (the Bitterest Poison that destroys all Life). The study of the Ramayana enables one to understand the vagaries of the mind, and the possibility of winning the Grace of God which can overcome those vagaries and liberate from its coils.

The sages knew that Rama was God Himself in Human Form. Viswamitra told Dasaratha while demanding that he should send the boy Rama with him, that he and Vasishta knew the Reality of the young Prince, though his own father was ignorant of it. Only those who have attained the Highest Wisdom can cognise the embodiment of that Wisdom, God. That wisdom can be earned by profound detachment and deep faith. If the house of faith is built on loose foundations, it will be swept away by the first gale of doubt or disappointment. Viswamitra could by himself have guarded his ritual against the sacrilegious expeditions of the demons. But, he brought Rama from Ayodhya for the purpose, so that He could be initiated into His Mission, and

inaugurate His Avataric Career with the marriage with Sita, according to Plan. The sage Sarabhanga was invited to Heaven by the Lord of all the Gods; but, he refused that unique offer, so that he might have the good fortune of having Rama Darshan. He knew that Rama was God come as man. Daivam maanusha roopena, God in the Form of Man.... that is the reverence with which one must learn to approach any man. This is the highest Sadhana.

The Ramayana can instill in the mind the extraordinary spiritual power of the Name Rama. Tulsidas has dwelt most elaborately on this aspect. The recitation of that Name soaked in Divine Grace, Power and Compassion and Glory can confer strength, courage and heroism, in the physical, mental, moral and spiritual fields of activity. Three forces cause the calamity of 'birth' to human souls: sin, anguish and ignorance. The name 'Rama' destroys all three forces and saves man from the fall. It consists of three parts—R, A, and Ma R connotes the Sun, whose rays destroy darkness, that is to say, ignorance. A is the symbol, indicating Fire (Agni), and this fire burns all the sins and liberates man from the dire consequences. Ma, the last part of the Name denotes the Moon, the cool comforting rays of which allay the agony and restore equanimity. All these three forces are really signs of human weakness and when the might and majesty of Rama are constantly and consistently meditated upon, man too gets the strength to overcome them.

People ask why should the Ramayana, an epic composed centuries ago be studied today. In matters concerning the spirit of man, there can be no divisions like ancient and modern. Nothing can be outdated in the realm of the spirit. It deals with eternal values, valid at all times.

The ideals depicted through the Ramayana have to be lived again so that India may once again attain Ramarajya. Ramarajya can be built only on Dharma. And Dharma is universal and eternal. It demands co-ordination and a co-operation between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers are like the heart of the body and the ruled are the limbs. Both have to be true, pure, rooted in renunciation and the ideal of service.”

The Seminar on the Ramayana continued until the 26th, when the further Programme of Lectures designed for the Summer Camp started.

—Ed.

Children's Day

One of the most appropriate and satisfying decisions taken during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, by the World Council of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations was the announcement that the Day on which the Mother of the Avatar of the Age attained the Supreme, May 6th, was to be celebrated as Children's Day by the Samitis and other Units of the Organisation throughout the World. This has induced the Units to arrange even week-long programmes during which the children of the Bal Vikas classes run by the Mahila Vibhag section of the Samitis are persuaded (1) to visit Rescue Homes, Orphanages, Remand Homes for Delinquent Children and share in acts of social service, (2) to collect and distribute clothes and food to the indigent, (3) to tend sick children in the Children's Wards of Hospitals, and (4) to engage themselves in Bhajan,

Nagarsankirtan and other spiritual activities, competitions in Elocution, Drawing, and Singing devotional songs.

Anantapur District has won the Grace of Bhagavan, so that the Units of the Organisation in that District are able to bring the children of their Bal Vikas Classes to the Divine Presence itself and take part in the celebrations of the Holy Day at Prasanthi Nilayam itself. This year, over 200 children and their Gurus arrived at the Nilayam on the evening of the 5th May itself. At 7 A.M. they joined the students of the Srimati Easwaramma High School, the Procession that went round the Mandir singing Bhajans. Bhagavan granted Darshan and blessed them. Then, they proceeded to the Samadhi of the Parents and continuing the bhajan, awaited the arrival of Bhagavan. He reached the place about 8-30; He placed garlands on the tombs. Then, He moved among the vast gathering of devotees, conferring His compassionate glance on each. When the gathering adjourned to the Poornachandra Auditorium, immediately after, Bhagavan gave the children Notebooks with the portrait of the Mother, as well as Sweets.

In the evening, the devotees gathered at 5 P.M. at the Auditorium. A group of children sang the Prayer Songs, and one child spoke on the benefits derived from the Bal Vikas Class which he had joined a few months previously. The District President of Anantapur gave a resume of the spiritual activities, the Seva and the Sadhana and the Studies carried on by the members of the Units. Smt. N. Lakshmiddevamma, the District Convenor of the Mahila Vibhag, spoke on Mother Easwaramma. She described briefly her maternal solicitude for the devotees who gathered at the Nilayam, a solicitude which was available for every one in distress, without any distinction. She spoke on the atmosphere of joy and enthusiasm that pervaded her personality under all circumstances. Her heart melted in sympathy with the sorrows of all and blossomed in exultation when any one had a piece of good fortune. She listened patiently to all appeals for her best wishes and she even made bold to communicate to Bhagavan the appeals for help that many in extreme distress made to her. She also spoke of the affection and regard that Bhagavan had towards her. She said that He took the parents with Him to Badri, Benares and other holy places so that they may be rendered happy. She concluded by pointing out that She was the ideal mother, whom all burdened with families and household problems should emulate, for she preserved her calm confidence and courage through faith in Bhagavan.

Bhagavan, in His Discourse, gave invaluable advice to the parents, elders and Gurus who have the unique responsibility of bringing up the children as the preservers and promoters of the precious treasure of Indian Culture. "I hope and believe that these children will lead ideal lives and become the guides of India in the future. They have to imbibe the lasting values of the culture of India, which are revered and appreciated all over the world. The great lessons of reverence, humility and courage taught in the Vedas and Epics of this country have been ignored; the foundations of family life and social solidarity have been undermined. The Bal Vikas movement must help revive these values and rebuild our greatness. The animal need not learn to control and regulate its senses. But, if man had to justify his birth in that species (pasu), he must aspire to be Divine (Pashupati) and this cannot be attained except by rigorous control of the senses. He can do it by conscious effort; that is the reason, man is hailed as the crown of creation, the first among, animals. Animals cannot overstep their innate character. A tiger can never adopt vegetarianism, it cannot shed its savagery. But, man can, through education,

training, good company, and conscious effort. So, the gurus have to help the children in this process of sublimation. They should take it as their most worthy endeavour.

The Gurus must place before them the ideal of a life lighted up by Love and brightened by Seva. Let them consider catering to the tongue and other senses as inferior to the aspirations of the spirit. It is better to live like a Hamsa for a minute or two rather than as a crow, living long on offal, shooed off by every one, disturbing peace by the raucous sound of its call. Tell them the lessons one can learn from the tongue. It is able cleverly to move about amidst the sharp rows of teeth without getting injured by their bite. They too must learn to live safe amidst all the troubles and disasters that confront them. The tongue never keeps any article for itself; if good, it sends them into the stomach; if bad, it vomits them out. The children must be taught this lesson of discrimination. It is also a lesson in detachment. The tongue again is always within the cavity of the mouth. It does not wander outside its home. This is a call for the children to be ever in good company. Thus you can discover lessons in a number of places and situations trees, birds, the sky, the river etc.

Children are simple-minded, innocent and pure hearted, They are like tender creepers, seeking knowledge and joy, with their tendrils grasping at kindness and goodness. It is indeed a holy sadhana for the Gurus to direct these children into the paths of love and light. The Sathya Sai Organisation is like a palm with five fingers—the Samiti (the thumb), the Mahila Vibhag (the fore finger), the Seva Dal (the middle finger), the Bhajan Mandali (the ring finger) and the Bal Vikas (the little finger). All belong to the hand and all should help and support one another. They should all have one single aim, one path, and one-pointed steadiness in the pursuit of the common ideal.

The first lesson the children should learn is reverence to parents. They must earn a good name at home, as obedient, humble, energetic, reliable, disciplined. Then, only can they be relied upon to be so, outside the home.

Then, they must be directed to follow the ideals of the great saints and heroes described in the scriptures of all religions. Like the drill instructors in schools, who stand before the ranks of students and move their hands and legs just as they want the pupils to do, the Gurus must practise the virtues which they expect the pupils to cultivate. Mere telling them is not enough; if it is not accompanied by the Guru's practice, it may even be positively harmful. They must be taught to be truthful, because falsehood is a sign of cowardice. Parents must be vigilant that they do not set bad examples on this score or encourage falsehood themselves, by their example or counsel.

They must be instructed to practise silence and curb talkativeness. Mere random talk breeds unrest and quarrels and wounds others. Soft sweet and short—these are the ideals to be emphasised.

And, they must be led into the knowledge of God as the reality of themselves and of the Universe. They are body, mind and spirit; as body; they have to learn to work hard, to consider work as noble and praiseworthy, in contrast to idleness or aimless wandering. As mind, they

have to develop pure, ennobling thoughts and feelings. As spirit, they have to know that the highest Ananda is derivable from Bhajan and Dhyana on God.

There are many Festivals celebrated by the Organisation all over the country, but, I consider this Children's Day on May 6 every year, most important, because it seeks to bring to the notice of all, the prime duty of guiding children from manhood to Divinity."

After the Discourse, Bhagavan stayed on till 8-30 p.m. to witness the items of drama, and dance, provided by the children. He blessed the children and the Gurus and directed them to advance along the spiritual path with greater and greater enthusiasm and success.

Vocational Guidance

Theoreticians and specialists on education and manpower management continue to unload their ponderous rhetoric on the young educated unemployed. Perhaps there is some relevance in the reiteration of these ideals. Less spectacularly (and much more pragmatically) some enterprising groups give down-to-earth advice on vocations suited to individuals. This is what was tried, for the first time on such a big scale in Bombay, at an Exhibition sponsored by the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, assisted by the State government's institute of vocational guidance and selection.

Apart from numerous information posters on careers and courses, films, free IQ tests (these are not particularly useful, though) and sample courses, the eight lectures by experts from the Indian Institute of Technology, Powai, earn-while-you-learn schemes and job opportunities in computer courses must have been of special benefit to the moderately educated youths. What is even more note-worthy is that some industrial establishments participated in the Exhibition, passing on precise information on apprentice training schemes.

The response from the bewildered youth looking for jobs has been so heartening that Organisers have decided to take the Exhibition to the suburbs. Such practical work, it would seem, is at least as important as, if not more than, theories and idealist sloganeering.

From 'The Times of India'

God's Love

The purpose of Puja, Bhajan and Namasankirtan is to purify the heart that is sullied by the slime of worldly desires. In our hearts, thus purified, the love for the ephemeral dwindles and the love for the eternal spreads its sway. But why should one cultivate this love for the eternal i. e., Love for God? Because by no other means can one gain the peace and contentment of living so much craved by man through life-long toiling.

The activities meant to promote love for God are commendable, for they provide armour against the evil influences. But these activities alone cannot earn us the grace of God. We deserve the grace of God by becoming worthy of God's love.

God gets immensely pleased when we act up to his commands. In this context Baba tells us the story of a man who had two sons. One of them was extremely eloquent in singing the praise of his father, but never abided his commands. The other son never uttered a word of praise for the father, but silently acted up to the father's will and command. It was quite natural that the father loved the latter and showered his grace on him.

What are His commands? The scriptures of all lands contain the commandments of God. They teach us our duties for securing the summum bonum of life. Baba teaches us the gist of all scriptures in the form of five great commandments.

He says, "(1) Tend your parents with love, reverence and gratitude. (2) Speak the truth and act righteously. (3) Whenever you have a few moments to spare, repeat the name of God with the Form in your mind (4) Never talk ill of others nor try to discover faults in others. (5) Love all and do not cause pain to others in any form."

He, who obeys these commands, becomes extremely dear to Him. The Merciful God seeks him constantly, guards him and guides him on the pilgrimage path of life. When the world threatens to demolish him and he is overwhelmed with grief, the Compassionate One wipes his tears and soothes his soul. When the world piles applause upon him and he is confounded, again the Ocean-of- Mercy confers upon him the required light of wisdom. Thus, at every step of his life, he remains the recipient of God's grace.

When man lives up to his commands, the Lord even goes to the extent of expressing His gratitude for doing so. Mrs. Tarkhad, who was a close devotee of Shirdi Sai, was once taken aback when Baba expressed his deep gratitude in a tone, so moved and so choked with emotion, for He was fed sumptuously by her that day. She did not serve any food to Baba that day and felt discontent thinking that Baba made fun of her plight, since she was not capable of feeding Him sumptuously. But when Baba reminded her of feeding roti to a hungry dog that noon, tears of joy inundated her eyes, understanding the significance of Baba's words. Even a small act of kindness receives great regard from Him and is recorded in His diary in bold and golden letters.

Simply doing Bhajan and Namasmarana but not obeying His commands cannot fetch us the bliss we aspire for. He, who does that, is like one who feels contented is learning the alphabets and desiring not to enjoy the thrill of lofty thoughts embedded in the pages of great texts. Learning the alphabets is essential but in the process of learning the end for which this is meant must not be forgotten.

Then the question arises that once we are capable of leading a divine life well regulated in tune with His commands, is there still any need of Bhajan and Kirtan? The fact is that His name is ambrosia, and that as we grow up in spiritual age, its sweetness becomes tastier to us. We, in fact, cannot afford to forego this tastiest of dishes that life can bestow upon us.

The Lord says, "O, Narada! I dwell not in Vaikuntha, nor in the hearts of sages; there I dwell, where my devotees sing of me." He dwells where His names are sung and where He dwells, there dawns the prosperity of the Heavens. The wholesome rapture and purity that the recitation of His names provides can never be had from any other avocation. Therefore even the saints and sages who reached the pinnacle of spiritual heights continued singing His names. And the world should follow the foot-prints of these spiritual giants.

It is for our pleasure that we sing the names of the Lord. Our praise does not exult Him, nor does our censure depress Him. But our adherence to His commandments conduces to His pleasure. For one who seeks liberation from the shackles of misery and grief, is there more beneficial an act than doing, something that pleases the Lord?

God's Love is the greatest and the most enriching treasure that man can aspire to garner. Baba exhorts us to earn this treasure and be rich. Love for God tills; weeds and irrigates the field of human heart overgrown with the weeds of worldly desires; but it is the God's love that brings about the rich harvest of spiritual excellence that turns the mendicant into a monarch.

—*D. Sahu*

Hide and Seek

We landed in Madras, but, He was nowhere to be spied—
That slice of Orange Robe amidst the crowd—
We suspected that the fellow who tipped us off had lied
And, we scolded him in words, harsh and loud.

But, he knelt and begged our pardon—
Said he couldn't take the blame;
That Swami's plans and movements
Were a 'hide and seek' game.

He sent us off to Whitefield
To enquire for Swami there
But, warned us, this could also be,
A 'hit and miss' affair.

We caught the train to Bangalore.
From there, to Whitefield hied—
Then we heard He'd left for Ooty
And we very nearly died.

We waited with the monkeys
Outside His Whitefield House;
We waited like a patient cat

Watching the hole of a mouse.

"He'll be back in a couple of days," they said,
"Or a week or two at most."
"He was seen in Bangalore yesterday"
"Or, may be, it was the Holy Ghost."

After waiting a week, we set out for Ooty
And got there, late, the next day;
We were greeted by someone snooty
Who said, "Swami is in Bombay"!

Disappointed, frustrated and down at heart
We sat and bewailed our fate;
When a lady kind said, Swami was back,
And we could see Him at the gate.

But all we saw was a dome of hair
That filled the back of the car
And a radiant smile as He raised His Hand
To us who had come so far.

He'd gone off on some sudden mission—
Nobody quite knew where;
But would definitely be on the 21st
At Puttaparthi for a Festival there.

We headed for Andhra's rocky wilds
By train, pony-cart and bus;
And, while the wheels were turning round
My mind was churning thus

"Even if You stood before me now
A foot away in space,
I'm so annoyed, I would not deign
To look upon Your Face."

But, at Puttaparthi, our fate was the same;
And our luck, we did deplore
As we saw the white car drive out of the gate
And head for God-knows-where.

I stormed and fumed, I fretted and cried,
And wished I'd stayed at home and sighed,
"I'll wait for you in my little room—
"Resplendent Lord of Parthi, please come soon."

He came to me, soon, in a Vision,
With a Love greater than mine;
I could scarcely bear to look at Him,
His gaze was so Divine.

"Through how many ages in vain,"
He said, "Have I chased after this heart!
But, now it is mine, O Dearest One,
Can anything keep it apart?" —**Anon**

Lessons of the Ramayana

—From Discourses by Bhagavan

The Vedas, Sastras, Ithihasas, Puranas and other scriptural texts having set out to explore the realm of the Divine have all accepted failure and said that they could only say, "Not this", "Not this." God is beyond the categories of human intelligence and imagination, language and thought; so, it is as inscrutable to day, as it was yesterday and as it will be in the future. No assertion can be made that it is this or thus or such. That is why the Sages declared that it could only be experienced; it cannot be described. Those who hold forth on Its Nature and Characteristics from platforms and write fat books on it are thereby revealing that they have not experienced the Supreme. The Sages were rid of any trace of ego. So, they knew the Truth and when Rama moved about in the Dandaka Forest, they approached Him in groups and related to Him their plight. They showed him the heaps of bones of ascetics killed by the Rakshasas and told Him sad tales of their agony—Rama could not listen calmly to their woes; He realised that it was His Avataric Mission that had brought Him into the midst of the recluses. He solemnly declared that He would destroy the vile brood of demons. Sita could not quietly look on; she was a woman of extra-ordinary acumen. 'She entreated Rama to desist and told him that it was not proper to destroy some one against whom you have personally no cause for hatred. But Rama said that he and his word can never be parted; there can be no Himalayas without snow, no sea without waves, no moon without moonlight. With that, he entered upon his mission of `protection of the good and destruction of the evil-minded'.

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Rama entered that Ashram of Sage Agastya and asked him where he could put up a little cottage to spend some little time. Agastya knew that some preliminaries have to be gone through in order to consummate the destruction of Ravana and his horde of demons. So, he indicated a place about 16 miles off, so that the Golden Deer can run about and Rama pursued it for Sita's sake and Ravana made his appearance to carry Sita off and thus, by that very heinous act, diminish his chance of survival. He also offered Rama certain valuable Divine weapons, like the

Varuna Bow, which he had preserved long to be given for the sacred purpose of saving the sages from persecution.

Rama prepared himself for coming events by allowing Maricha to escape unhurt from the hermitage of Viswamitra which he had threatened to destroy. He killed his mother (Tataka) and his brother (Subahu): but, he permitted Maricha to live till another day. Maricha tried to dissuade Ravana from the nefarious plan he had designed, to kidnap Sita from the custody of Rama. Ravana interpreted his unwillingness the result of cowardice of Maricha. But, Surpanakha the sister of Ravana once again described the beauty of Sita and said it was a shame that he was refraining from bringing her to Lanka and adopting her as his consort. So, Ravana went again to Maricha, his uncle, who was engaged in austerities in a mountain cave. Maricha had the rare skill of changing shape and could turn himself into an animal or bird or some other human form. Maricha asserted that he would have no part in this vile scheme.

Ravana grew so angry that he drew his sword to cut the head of Maricha off his trunk. Maricha declared that Rama was 'Vigrahavan Dharmah', the very Embodiment of Dharma and so, he confessed that death at the hands of Rama was to be welcomed far more than death at the hands of his wicked nephew. So he fell in with the plot and converted himself into a gold-spotted deer which attracted Sita's curiosity. Rama went in pursuit of the deer and when at last he shot the fatal arrow, Maricha cried out as instructed. "Ah! Sita", "Ah! Lakshmana" as if Rama was calling out for help in extreme distress. This made Sita compel Lakshmana to leave her and go for Rama's rescue. And, Ravana could entice Sita to come out of the sacred circle which guarded her and carry her off in his chariot by sheer force. When Maricha was allowed to escape with his life, from being killed at the hermitage of Viswamitra, no one except Rama knew what role he had to play later in the drama of the Avatar. This is the way of all Avatars; their ways are inscrutable to people who do not know the entire story.

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Rama shines forth in the Ramayana as the ideal for all roles in society. When Ravana was killed on the battlefield, Rama called upon his brother, the sole survivor in the family, to perform his obsequies. Vibhishana was not pleased at this command; he felt that as a vile, vicious individual, he should not receive the last rites. But, Rama insisted that there must be an end to all hatred and contempt, when the target dies. He said that it is very wrong to carry beyond the grave, passions and prejudices bred while the man was alive.

Rama is described as a person of a few words, as a person: who always received others with a smile and accosted them even before they saluted him. He taught that restraint in speech can develop divine strength in man, and cultivate his memory, besides preserving his honour and fair name. A talkative person will be looked down upon by society; his nervous stability will decline; he will also be gathering enemies as a result of his loose and wild comments on men and matters.

Youth is to learn this lesson from Rama, the lesson of limited speech. Speak little, speak soft and speak sweet: Again there is another virtue in Rama that can be emulated by youth. Rama showed reverence to elder, under all circumstances. He followed the injunctions of the Upanishads in this matter. When Rama and Lakshmana, the two boys, were called into

Dasaratha's Audience Hall to meet Viswamitra prior to being sent with him, they found theft Queen Kausalya, Dasaratha the Emperor, Vasishta the Royal Preceptor and Viswamitra the Sage. Rama immediately prostrated first before his mother (Matru devo bhava), his father (Pitru devo bhava), Vasishta (Acharya deva bhava) and Viswamitra (Atithi devo bhava), in the same order in which the Upanishads wanted it to be done.

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Rama obeyed his father's words very strictly, even earlier than his banishment. When the Yaga for which Viswamitra had taken him and his brother was concluded, Lakshmana did not accede to the suggestion that they should accompany the sage to Mithila. He said that Dasaratha had sent them for the specific purpose of guarding the Yaga from sacrilege by the demons and that, they have to return to Ayodhya without further delay. But Rama pointed out that Dasaratha had asked them to follow Viswamitra and do as he bade them! Rama was not willing to deviate from that order. We have to note also another feature about the virtue of Rama. Dasaratha did not directly, out of his own mouth, ask Rama to go on exile. He could not bring himself to saying that. He was too overpowered to utter those words. What had happened was he had promised two boons years previously and he renewed that promise and assured Kaikeyi, his Queen (the mother of Bharata) that he still stood by that promise. He asked her to ask for those boons and gave word that, whatever they might be, he would unhesitatingly grant them on the spot. She wanted (1) Bharata to be crowned, instead of Rama and (2) Rama to be exiled to the forest for 14 years. It was Kaikeyi that informed Rama of his acceptance of these two requests. Dasaratha was only an agonised listener to her account of what had happened. What Rama did when he got ready to journey to the forest was fulfilling the promise that his father had made about him. But, he did it with absolute sincerity and joyous self-satisfaction.

Sita persuaded Rama to take her with him into exile. She discarded her palace, her regalia, her maids, her jewels, apparel and other luxuries and comforts, and wore tree bark-coverings, slept on grass, and lived on roots and tubers. What a highly renounced life she led in order to be with the Lord! But, alas, when she saw the charming golden deer grazing near the hermitage, she was so overcome by a desire to own it, foster it and caress it that she would not pay heed to wiser counsels, even when they came from Rama himself. And, the consequence was she lost the company of the Lord and was plunged in grief. When craving for worldly and sensual pleasure increases, the fortune of being with the Lord decreases. You cannot have Rama and Kama at the same time!

The Ramayana is a lasting structure of Dharma built on the foundation of Sathya. We praise Rama for his adherence to Truth But we forget that the Raghu dynasty itself was noted for its unwavering observance of the moral code, especially, Truth. Dasaratha adhered to Truth, even though it involved him in his own death. Rama gave word to Sugriva that he would slay Vali and restore his wife back to him. When Vali protested that he should not here been killed on the sly, Rama told him that he only carried out his promise. He had promised that he would make Sugriva secure on his throne and as a Prince living in the forest he had to exterminate vicious beasts. So too, he promised Vibhishana the very first occasion he met him that he would crown him Emperor of Lanka and he fulfilled that promise. As an exile in the forest, he wore the bark—apparel prescribed for recluses and never deviated from the code laid down for ascetics and

forest dwellers. Sugriva begged of him to visit his capital city at least once, but, since the father's unspoken command was that he should live in the forest he refused to move out of the precincts of the jungle. He did not enter any town during the fourteen years, nor did he partake in any meal, other than the produce of the forests. Vibhishana prayed that he should himself crown him, but, since there was yet one more day for the exile to end, he sent Lakshmana instead. His sense of duty, his gratitude for the good he received from others, his compassion towards even those who inflicted injury on him—these are fine examples for humanity to follow. He is called Drdha-vratha, in the Ramayana—a word which means, one who holds fast to the rules and limitations of the vows he has accepted.

You are not thrust by God into an iron cage of Destiny, from which there is no escape. He has granted you Viveka and Vairagya (the Discriminative Faculty and the Capacity to detach yourself from the unpleasant) and also with a sense of Awe and Wonder. You have to use these, in order to liberate yourself from the bonds you have yourself tied round your feet. Though bound thus, you are not entirely incapacitated. On the land that belongs to you, you can grow the food you need or you can idle away the time and allow it to lie fallow. You cause your own ruin or uplift. The tools are in your hands; the skills can be learnt; the shackles can be broken. If you still grovel in slavery, who can save you? Do not blame Fate; Fate is the product of your own Karma, present and previous. Be good, do good and see good—that can make your Fate highly beneficial.

—Baba

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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The Horse Sacrifice

The three mothers were so affected by separation from Sita that they became weaker and weaker with every passing day. It resulted, in their death too, finally. They' manifested through yoga the fire latent in them and allowed the fire to reduce their bodies into ashes. Thus they attained the Highest State of Bliss. The brothers grieved over the loss and performed the funeral rites as laid down in the scriptures; they gave away the sixteen great charities, as prescribed therein. Thereafter, the four brothers—Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna engaged themselves in the administrative problems and assignments set apart for them, in conformity with the wishes of the people and to their full satisfaction.

Meanwhile, Rama announced that he desired to celebrate the Ashwamedha Yaga, (the Horse-Sacrifice) mentioned in the Vedas since the Yaga would ensure the destruction of all varieties of grief. He sent information to Angada and others. He proceeded to the residence of the Royal Preceptor accompanied by his brothers and the ministers of the realm. They fell at the feet of the Guru and the Guru also received them with respect. He inquired about their health and the welfare of the empire, in sweet soft words. He gave them valuable counsel, quoting stories from Puranas and incidents from the epics.

Then, Rama addressed him thus: "Master! I have one wish arisen in my mind. You have to complete it." Then, he fell at the feet of the Guru. Vasishta, the Guru, asked him what that wish was, and Rama replied, "I have decided on a Yaga; the people of Ayodhya will be filled with joy when it takes place; What I desire to perform is the Ashwamedha Yaga. The City can be rendered calm if it is done. The people also are wanting that it should be performed. Bharata hesitated to inform you of this, since he is afraid of your reactions. So, I felt I must myself approach you when you can meet us and communicate to you this wish. We shall abide by your decision and gladly act accordingly." Vasishta listened to these words uttered with such reverence and humility and he rejoiced at the idea. " Rama! Your wish shall be fulfilled. Bharata! Rise and busy yourself in the preparations for the Yaga," he said. This made the brothers and the ministers very happy. They extolled the Preceptor and fell at his feet. Many Brahmins learned in the know-how of the Yaga followed Bharata into the City and Palace.

Sumantra invited leading citizens and called the officials and asked them to decorate the royal roads inside the City as well as the bazaars and shopping centres. He wanted them to erect Mantaps in many places. No sooner said than done; they executed the orders very soon and the City was made ready for the big event. The city was excited and enthused into joyful activity. The elders of the City and the officers reported to Rama that, as he had directed, information had been sent to the chiefs among sages and ascetics, and Vasishta had also been intimated of what was done.

Vasishta advised Rama thus: " Send the news of the Yaga to Emperor Janaka; he will be able to attend the Yaga with his queen and, kinsmen." His advice was couched in persuasive and pleasant words. He also said, " Send invitations to the chief ascetics, Brahmins and Maharshis." When the Guru agreed, Rama took him round Ayodhya, so that he might see the preparations; they were both very pleased at the decorations all over the City.

The official messengers, meanwhile, had visited kingdoms far and near and presented the invitations to the rulers of those lands. One of them proceeded to Mithila, the Capital City of Janaka. Jambavanta, Angada, Sugriva, Nala, Neela and other Vanara leaders arrived. Ascetics and monks came to the City in groups. They were all welcomed and accommodated, with due regard to their spiritual eminence. Viswamitra arrived; Rama honoured him, and offered reverential hospitality. Agastya, the great sage, also reached Ayodhya. He was given proper reception and arrangements were made for his comfortable stay in the Capital. They saw the sanctified Hall where the Yaga was to be held and were delighted

When the citizens of Mithila saw the emissary from Ayodhya, they were very happy. He informed Janaka, the Emperor, of the Yaga that was to be performed by Rama. As soon as he heard the news, Janaka rose from his throne, and resumed his seat. He was thrilled into horriification when he listened to the emissary. His eyes streamed tears of bliss. He enquired whether Rama was well and whether his brothers too were well. He replied that the letter he had brought would satisfy him on all scores and handed over to him the auspicious message. He could not speak more; his throat had become dumb. And, who can describe the condition of the Emperor? All his kinsmen were transported by delight. The City resounded to the shouts of 'Jai'. The Emperor read the Message over and over; he was overwhelmed with joy. He called a

courtier in and ordered him, "Spread this news in cities, towns and villages throughout the empire. Announce it with the play of the ten musical instruments." Then, he called in the Minister and handed him the Message. He received it most respectfully and pressed it on his eyes, before reading it for himself and being thrilled thereby. Bringing to mind the glory of Rama, he shed profuse tears of joy.

In front of every home in the city, the master of the house installed a pot of auspicious significance. The Emperor gave away countless valuables in charity to celebrate his receiving the good news. The City of Janaka was swaying in ecstasy derived from immense gratitude and glory.

Janaka arrived at Ayodhya, after the long journey from Mithila. On the way, he alighted to pay his respects to Sathananda, his Preceptor. He blessed Janaka and directed him to proceed fast to Ayodhya, accompanied by his entourage and army—the latter including all the four fighting forces—chariotry, elephantry, infantry and cavalry. Janaka left behind a section of the army to safeguard the City. He assigned a palanquin for his Guru, Sathananda, and himself sat in another. When the entire party left for Ayodhya, the earth quaked for the weight. Who can count the number of generals, commanders and heroes that the army had in its ranks? The primeval serpent and the tortoise that bear the World on their hoods and backs, were kept low by the weight. Journeying thus, Janaka reached Ayodhya at the end of two days. When he knew that Janaka was approaching the City and had come very near, Rama went forward to receive him and they met with great mutual affection. A magnificent residence surrounded by a vast plain had been set apart for him. It was a charming heavenly residence, right on the bank of the Sarayu river. Rama had deputed his brothers to receive and render hospitality to the Kings of other realms.

Rama fell at the feet of Janaka and rising, sat by his side. Janaka was overwhelmed by the joy that welled from within him. He stroked Rama's head and accosted him softly and sweetly. Rama too replied expressing similar sentiments in felicitous language. He assigned helpers and aides to look after the comforts of Janaka and his entourage. He called in the Minister and Bharata and directed Bharata to be at the service of the Emperor.

Oh! for the Queen!

Meanwhile, Vasishta arrived in the presence of Rama, accompanied by his disciples, ten thousand in number. He said, "Ramchandra! Listen to my words! The Vedas and Sastras, the Puranas all of them without exception proclaim that a Yaga, performed without the duly wedded wife by the side of the celebrant, will be barren of results. Great sages also declare the same. Therefore, arrange to bring Janaki back. She is very necessary during the Yaga."

Rama was surprised at these words spoken by the Chief among Sages. He kept silent, without explaining the truth or untruth of that belief. He said, "Chief among Sages! You have to carry out my wish without causing breach of my vow, and without bringing down the reputation of my dynasty. If Janaki is brought back, reputation is bound to suffer. And, I shall not marry a second time, and have a second wife. At this, Vasishta consulted many famed Sages for a solution. They all held fast to the rule that Janaki must be brought; they said, it was an unavoidable pre-requisite. But, Rama, who is himself the master of all codes of morality, the embodiment of all the forms of God, and the essence of all the Sastras, thought over it for a while and announced

that a golden idol set with gems be made of Sita, and kept in place of Sita. He said that all the Sastras support this view and that there can be no objection to this procedure on any score. The ascetics, sages and scholars versed in all fields of knowledge could not contradict this opinion. They were all surprised at the validity of the solution he offered. They admired his omniscience and acknowledged that he was himself the core of all codes.

The golden Sita was got ready in one single day; it was made more charming and realistic through jewels and garments. Every one who saw it mistook it for the live Sita, it was so realistic. If Sita had seen it, she too would have been struck with wonder. Many believed that Sita had returned, when they came across the idol. They praised the makers with a thousand tongues. Rama sat on the Lion Seat, over a Tiger skin spread over it. The Golden Sita was placed by his side, where the wife had to take her position. The assembly was led to believe that Sita herself was standing there. All present prostrated in gratitude and joy. Vasishta addressed the courtiers and asked them to extend hospitality to the assembled guests according to the rules in practice: Give everyone what they wish for and make every one happy and contented. They seated them in proper lines and on appropriate places, with the help of Bharata who supervised the arrangements. Each one of them congratulated himself on the grandeur of the reception accorded to him and praised the organisers for the care and consideration they showed. The Yaga Hall was guarded on the outside by 5000 warriors and inside the Hall by 5000 masters of Vedic Scholarship. The Yaga began on the second day of the bright half of the Magha month, after Rama initiated himself with the necessary rites.

The Horse

Vasishta directed that the Horse, chosen for the Yaga, be brought in, so that it might be examined by experts, whether it has the auspicious marks prescribed. Lakshmana prostrated before the Guru and hurried to the Stables of the Palace to seek out the Horse and decorate it before leading it into the Hall. A gem-set saddle was placed on its back; it was a horse pure white in complexion. The horses of the Sun would have felt ashamed to stand before it! When it was fully caparisoned, it became so charming that people thought the God of Love and Beauty had a hand in adorning it. It was an impossible task to describe its splendour. It could be said that the horse gave the impression that the Sun-god (Suryanarayanamurthy) had turned into that horse and was prancing proudly by. On its forehead was placed a peacock feather with emerald gems shining in it. Like the stars shining in the sky, that feather shone brilliantly with its scintillating gems. Silk cords that shone like lightning flash was placed round its neck and held by attendants.

It was accompanied by 5000 great warriors—heroes of many a battle, fighters of impregnable mettle—and Lakshmana, all on horseback. When the cavalcade entered the Hall, Viswamitra instructed Rama to worship the sacred sacrificial Horse, which was moving out on its mission of conquest. He gave away the sixteen articles in charity. He performed the ritual purificatory bath. Then, he tied on its brow the gold plate with the inscriptional message to all rulers of the land. This was the writing it carried: "In the City of Ayodhya, there is a Hero; he is the destroyer of enemies. Even the Lord of Gods trembles at sight of him. This horse is his sacrificial animal. The strong may lay hold on it; or, they have to pay him tax and tribute; or, if they cannot do either, flee into the jungles." Rama inscribed thus on that gold plate and tied it to the brow of that horse.

News of Lavana

Meanwhile, Bhargava muni and other sages came to Rama and related to him the atrocities perpetrated by the demon, Lavana. The assembled sages were saddened at the news. Rama called to his presence, Shatrughna; he gave him an arrow-case full of the most powerful weapons. Then he told him, "Use these weapons with the appropriate mantras on the enemy. Go, achieve victory over the rulers of all lands and return triumphant." He blessed his brother thus. Then he wanted Vibhishana to come to him. He fell at Rama's feet. Rama asked him, "Tell me all about this Lavana." At this, Vibhishana described everything about his power and nature just as he knew.

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

Solutions not Problems

I cannot say how happy we all are that Bhagavan has taken you, a thousand young persons from the various Colleges of India into the orbit of His Love and is introducing you to the treasures of Indian Culture and Spirituality, directing your outlook and attitude into constructive channels. You have to learn here a large variety of matters and, in the bargain, unlearn quite a few things also. We are now stuffed with what is called knowledge, most of which is of little potential use. We are not taught our own national ideals and the culture of which we are a part. Bhagavan has included a Seminar on the Ramayana in this Course, because, it is the very basis of Indian Culture from its formative stage, and it is the bedrock of our culture, even today. I am sorry I have to acquire the wealth of our ancient heritage through translations of these great texts in English. I wish you would learn to read the originals themselves.

Bhagavan referred to the invaluable lessons one could learn from the story of Rama as depicted by Valmiki. Rama was told that he was to be crowned as Emperor of Ayodhya and while proceeding to the Coronation Hall he was asked instead to go into the forest as an exile for a period of fourteen years! He was not elated that he was raised to the position of the Ruler nor was he disheartened when he was banished! Ups and downs are the inevitable happenings in life; suffering is a part of life.

The 620 millions who live in this country have to be educated to meet the ups and downs of life gladly and with courage. We have huge human and natural resources and geographic and cultural entity, as the loyalty to the Ramayana reveals. If only we develop the willingness to do hard work, the eagerness to love others and do Seva to them, cultivate discipline and conserve our energies in a spirit of dedication, and cleanse our minds of selfishness, India can achieve once again her valued status among the Nations. Bhagavan has taken up the education of Indian Youth in a great way, precisely because, the qualities of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema are essential today for the uplift of man and mankind.

He lays emphasis on just those foundational matters that are sadly neglected in College education today. Limiting the meaning of secularism to the avoidance of all reference to tradition

and religion, it has made such education produce only split personalities in every walk of life. The myths, classics and epics of India do not find a place in the text-books of our schools. Respect for all religions is the basic teaching of Hinduism. What secularism needs is just this, and not, the studied neglect of religion itself.

The principles of democracy and socialism are imbedded in the Hindu religion, which posited God in every being and even in every thing. Animals and trees were treated with reverence, because they are also repositories of Divinity. We are directed not to harm them, for they are as sacred as any other 'place' where God resides. Treat all men as moving temples of God; basically, the others are as holy and as pure as ourselves for in each, God resides. We have to integrate ourselves by integrating our thoughts, words and deeds. We have also to help and co-operate in the integration of the society wherein we are, identify ourselves with others and develop the ability to sacrifice and not to acquire.

The Upanishads declare that God speaks as thunder—da, da, da, delivering His message to Gods, Demons and Men. The Gods were directed to 'give' (datta), the demons to control their passions (damaya) and men to show compassion to others (daya). It has taken man ten thousand years to rise to his present height among the animals; but, he can relapse in a second to the beast from which he has ascended. Desires and impulses can drag him down.

Do not lay the blame on Karma, when you are confronted by poverty or distress. Our Karma requires us, invites us, to help others to advance. I have always pictured mankind as a long procession. Those in front are happy, healthy, wearing jewels and costly clothes, but, there is a huge portion of the procession coming behind in tattered clothes, dragging themselves forward, tired and hungry. This is not how a procession should be. Love is God; live in Love, says Baba. That Love should be translated into positive and plentiful acts of service. If man does not live for others, but, only for himself, life would be miserable indeed and suicide is what many do to escape that misery. In Sweden, the suicide rate is the highest; but, there, every one is taken care of from birth to death by the Welfare State. But, since many have not realised what to live for, they find suicide the best way out.

Therefore, Bhagavan is implanting in all of us the urge to love and serve, to share and fulfill ourselves. He wants that each of us should so act that we do not become problems; we should become the answers for the problems. To prepare us for this great advance, Bhagavan has gathered you from all the States of India and is keeping you in His Presence for one full month.

—From Speech by Sri T. A. Pai, 20-5-77

Bangaroo

You told me: I am the twinkling star.
May be, but, I shall fain hide my face
When Thy Glory covers the sky
You told me: I am the smiling flower.
May be, but, I shall fain drop my petals
When Thy Feet do come near me.
You told me: I am all that is.
May be, but, I shall fain be a wave
Of the Ocean, whose bosom I love.
You told me: Have no desire.
Maybe, but, I shall fain have one—
When I stand before, call me `Bangaroo'

—T. C. Das

Look at the blossoms in the garden. When the gardener plucks the flowers, the buds exult that tomorrow is their turn to be gathered into his hands and their faces are full of joy when they unfold in that hope. Do they feel any sadness? Do their faces droop? Are they any the less bright? No. The moment they know that it is their turn the next day, they make themselves ready with great excitement. When some one whom you know dies today, you may be afraid that it may be your turn tomorrow but, that should not affect your Sadhana. You must get ready to merge in God any moment when the call comes. Fear of death is the meanest act of cowardice man is capable of.

—Baba

Bharata, The Brother

He who is sunk in ignorance of the reality of things and beings cannot escape grief; he can never enjoy the bliss that is undiminishable and that is ever full. To avoid grief and to earn bliss—these are the twin needs of man. Bharata, the brother of Rama, was the second of the four sons of Dasaratha. He was born a few hours after the eldest son, Rama. But, since all the four sons were born after their mothers consuming portions of the same gift from the Gods on the same day, it will not be proper to assign them the denominations—elder and younger.

His wedding was also celebrated along with the wedding of Rama and other two brothers. Returning from Mithila, Bharata went to his maternal grandfather's kingdom and stayed in the Palace, with his brother Shatrughna, from whom he never liked to part. One day, he received a letter from Ayodhya, written by the Preceptor, Vasishta, and when he held it in his hand, he imagined it to be the invitation to attend the Coronation of Rama, as the Crown Prince. But, immediately, he inferred it must relate to some other event, since his grandfather was not

addressed thereon. It only required him to return to Ayodhya without a moment's delay, along with Shatrughna. Bharata could not guess the nature of the urgency of the call. His fears took many shapes and wove many possible calamities and crises. But, he wondered what he could do to alleviate them or meet them.

When the chariot in which the brothers were seated approached the main gate of the citadel of the Capital City, Ayodhya, he noticed that the green festoons across it had not been renewed for days and that it was allowed to hang dry and dusty. It was a bad omen, he thought. When he passed through the Royal Road that led to the Palace, he found the doors and windows of every house closed; the streets were empty; the gloom of sadness was suffocating. For days, the road was not swept and heaps of dirt hurt the sight; no human voice could be heard, nor could any horse or elephant be seen or heard.

He rushed straight to the palace of his mother, Kaikeyi, the Queen. From her he learnt that his father, Dasaratha, had died of grief, and that the grief was caused by her mother insisting that Bharata should be crowned instead of Rama and that Rama must go into exile and remain in the forest for fourteen years. The news broke his heart; he ran to the Royal Preceptor for consolation and comfort, though he knew that no one could console him over the double disaster he had to encounter. He pleaded with the Guru, "Master! I am innocent. I had no hand in this Conspiracy. I had no part in all this." He fell at the Feet of the aged Teacher and wept for along time, clasping them firmly, asking to be pardoned. Vasishta sat by his side and comforted him with soft advice. He wanted that Bharata must perform the long delayed funeral rites for his deceased father. Bharata said, "No. It is the duty and privilege of the eldest son to perform them. How can I, the younger one, venture on it? I have no mind to remain in this city of sorrow a minute longer; without Rama it is worse than the jungle for me." But, he could not easily set aside, the command of his Preceptor and the requests of his mothers. He had to perform the rites as prescribed in the Vedas, whether he liked it or not.

The very next day, Vasishta had decided to celebrate the Coronation of Bharata as Dasaratha had promised to Kaikeyi, saying that the Empire cannot be without a Ruler for long. But, Bharata said that all the articles and regal paraphernalia collected for the purpose may be taken to the Forest Hermitage where Rama was and that he would try his best to persuade Rama to return and accept the throne. Unable to refuse, Vasishta, the Mothers and others accompanied Bharata. When the proposal was placed before the people of Ayodhya they supported it wholeheartedly and they too joined the group undertaking the journey. Rama was on the Chitrakoota Hill. Bharata and Shatrughna, marched towards that Holy spot, accompanied by sections of the armed forces—chariotry, elephantry, cavalry and infantry.

When he sighted this vast cavalcade moving through the forest, Guha, the faithful devotee of Rama and the chieftain of the fishermen and boatmen on the Ganga, feared that he might be on an expedition to fight against his unarmed brother, now in exile. Even Lakshmana, the loyal brother of Rama who had spontaneously and sincerely opted for exile with Rama, doubted the loyalty of Bharata and feared, for a moment, that his intentions were not quite friendly. But, had Lakshmana known how Bharata reacted to the regal hospitality of the Sage Bharadwaja when Bharata had to encamp one night during his journey in his hermitage, he would not have entertained any doubt at all.

Using the miraculous powers he had attained as a result of his Yogic sadhana Bharadwaja created by his mere will, tents and palaces, cots and beds, thrones and carpets, and loads of riches, foods in gold and silver plates. He offered lavish hospitality to Bharata, Shatrughna and the Queen Mothers, as well as Janaka and his Queen, besides the sages, and the thousands of elders and others who camped around his hermitage. The horses and the elephants were also provided with rich delicious food. But, they were so overcome with grief at separation from Rama and so set upon seeing him as quickly as possible that not one of them, man or animal, partook of any food. "When Rama is living on roots and tubers, how can I consume food sweeter and richer than that?" asked Bharata. He was led to the magnificent Durbar Hall, created by the Rishi's Will and shown the two golden thrones installed in the middle, for him and his brother to give audience to the assembled monks and their pupils. But, Bharata and Shatrughna picked up the fans that were there and, visualising Rama and Sita on the thrones, they fanned them in exemplary humility and devotion. His sense of dedication at the feet of Rama was, if possible, a little greater even than that of Lakshmana. Rama once confessed that it was his rare good fortune to have a brother like Bharata. He had no other activity than the service of Rama; no other thought than the thought of Rama.

At Chitrakoota, Bharata saw Rama reclining on a heap of Kusa grass. Tears welled up from his torn heart. He saw the matted hair on the head; he wailed aloud and fell at Rama's feet. Rama consoled and comforted him; but, Bharata could not be consoled or comforted. "Brother! You must return to Ayodhya, you must agree to be crowned Emperor; until you agree and give your word, I shall not leave the grasp of these feet," he cried. Rama inquired, "Bharata! Are the people of Ayodhya well and happy? Are our parents well and happy?" (Of course, though Rama was the omniscient One, He had to pretend to be only human, unaware of events that happen beyond his 'limited' area of consciousness). Bharata gave him the news that Dasaratha had passed away. Rama said that the parents have to be honoured as the framers of the body and when they pass away, certain rites are prescribed by the ancients in order to offer gratitude to them for the gift and for the sacrifices involved in the gift. He said that elders have to behave correctly so that others might follow the path laid down. Then, he proceeded to the river and offered the prescribed ritualistic articles to the departed father. Next day, Rama gathered the people who had come from Ayodhya as well as the sages and monks, besides the Queens. Bharata pressed his point of view that Rama must return to the City and accept the throne. He also suggested that he might be permitted to undergo the exile, instead of Rama, in the forest for 14 years. He shone forth that day as a truthful, loyal, devoted brother.

Rama told him that mere devotion and loyalty were of no use; they must be disciplined and regulated into proper activity. One cannot fulfill an obligation laid on him by transferring it to another shoulder, he said. At last, Vasishta advised a method by which the problem could be solved. He said that the sandals, worn by Rama on his feet, could be placed on the throne of Ayodhya and the administration of the Empire carried on by Bharata on behalf of Rama, represented by the footwear. Bharata had to accept this; he bore the sandals on his head and bringing them in royal state, he placed them on the throne and himself sat at the foot. For 14 years, he lived as Rama did in the forest, as a hermit, and being constantly engaged in the thought of Rama, he became as 'cloud-blue' as Rama and as splendid as Rama. He slept on grass and ate tubers and roots, as Rama did.

After the destruction of Ravana and his evil clan, Rama gave over the kingdom of Lanka to Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, who had surrendered to him much earlier. He ascended the Pushpaka aerial chariot and returned to Ayodhya, with Sita, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana. Bharata had vowed that, if Rama did not reach Ayodhya, the moment the fourteen-year-exile was over, he would immolate himself. So, Rama sent Hanuman to the City to intimate to Bharata that Rama was on the way and would reach the Capital well in time. On receipt of the information, Bharata was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude. He spread the news throughout the land and every one became alive and alert. The City was decorated in an instant. The populace was carried away in a flood of ecstasy. Bharata fell at the feet of Rama, and realised his dream of 14 years, when Rama, Sita and Lakshmana sat in the Chariot which moved along the streets towards the Royal Palace. Bharata was forced to sit next to Rama, by Rama who loved him intensely and sincerely.

The enormous crowds which had gathered thick on the sides of the streets and on the doors, windows and terraces of the mansions could not distinguish between Rama and Bharata; many took one for the other: they had become so much alike, through undergoing the same experiences, Rama in actuality, Bharata by proxy. The mind has such powerful transforming influence over the body. Lakshmana's dedication was direct; Bharata's was indirect. Lakshmana's worship and adoration were direct; he had the Form before him. Bharata's were indirect; he had to worship the Formless.

The very next day, the Coronation of Rama as the Emperor of Ayodhya was celebrated with untrammelled joy. And, Bharata was crowned Yuvaraja, the Crown Prince. Vasishta was quite happy at this consummation of the people's long cherished desire. Both brothers felt that the happiness of the people was the best reward for their toil and, together, they established the Ramarajya, the era of peace, love and mutual service, which invigorates the memory of even modern India, centuries after the Age passed away into the pages of history. Bharata and the other brothers never let go the Lotus Feet of Rama; they basked in the sunshine of His Smile and sanctified their days and nights, reflecting His Glory.

—*Bhagavan's Discourse: Summer Course Brindavan 28-5-1977*

Can Religion Survive?

The human child cries when it is born; it protests and pleads with God not to cast it on the world. The man cries when he dies, protesting against the call of death, pleading for a few more years of life. This is the lamentable state of many a mortal on earth. To save man from this sad tale of lamentation, sages have sought and discovered remedies. God has limited himself into human frames and descended upon the earth and lived among men. The parents and elders of every generation are infecting the next with bad morals. Elders feel themselves incapacitated to help the children. Pollution in society has become acute and widespread. For most children, the future is: Youth is a blunder, manhood a struggle and old age, a regret. It need not be so. That is

the tragedy. If man diverts his energies to achieve God, even failure is noble. The crime is the low aim, worldly sensual success.

Science, which threatens to overwhelm Religion today, is concerned only with the, how of things, not with the why. So long as questions like, "Why must there be pain and sorrow, why should one be truthful and tolerant, what exactly are truth, goodness and beauty, wherefrom did time begin, whence does space end" haunt man, religion must survive to help man discover the answer. Science can only speculate in the realm of the senses. It has no finality in its judgements. Every new discovery of science opens the door to many new mysteries. Religion discloses the eternal and the infinite, whereas science stops short (and has to stop short) with the measurable and the calculable. The knowledge which religion brings is as infinite as the Truth it preaches, but, science deals only with a part of our lives and experiences.

We believe in the existence of the cause, on seeing merely the effect. X-rays, atoms, electrons, etc are believed in, as a result of the effect produced by them. To an ordinary man, the table appears as such. But, the atomic physicist sees it as a set of electric charges; it loses its illusion of solidity. We cannot say that the physicist is wrong, simply because we have not attempted to go through the sadhana to understand atomic principles. Quite a few spiritual masters have spent more time and more energy than D. Sc's and Ph.D's in delving into the whys and wherefores of things and they have posited a Creator or God, whom we have no right to deny. For the reason that we have not experienced the Divine Presence, how can we say that they have not experienced it?

Intellectuals deride religion because some followers of some religions have behaved most irreligiously. Religion has held aloft the ideals of love, trust, humility, brotherhood, service, self-control etc. Even today, religion is the only lamp that can illumine the dark hearts of man. They ask us to define God, if one exists. But they agree that words are not effective tools to describe everything. A 'point' is defined as an entity with no dimensions. Well. God is beyond all dimensions. Swami Vivekananda said, God is an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere but whose center is everywhere!

The sceptic says that if he is morally right and engaged in social benefaction, he has no need for God. Jesus said, 'He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life, for my sake, will find it'. Note the words, 'for my sake'. Ramakrishna Paramahansa told a questioner that good works have to be prompted by faith in God, to whom they are dedicated as offerings. 'Or else they lose the sweetness of love'.

Baba says, "People laugh cynically at the God-intoxicated man and the God-intoxicated man considers that the worldly man is mad and blind. But, has not the world suffered enough at the hands of mad rulers and blind politicians? Of all types of madness that harass men, God-madness is the least harmful." The religious man is not narrow-minded and selfish. Those who identify themselves with the body are the narrow-minded, those who follow their own whims and fancies, regardless of the trouble caused to others. Religion is concerned with liberating man from bondage; it is not interested in binding man to rules and regulations, unless they help the primal aim. Outer freedom with no inner control is the nature of those who deride the religious life.

The first message that holy men proclaim to us is, 'Peace be unto you'. Religion is our only refuge and comfort in this era of chronic anxiety. Religion can achieve a lot in ensuring mental peace. Prayer gives courage and consolation, and brings down Grace. It is our only resort and comfort. If we take a careful look at the world-stage, we feel that the religious man is happier than the worldly man who has no faith in God or prayer. Fears and anxieties that dominate us today will clear away if we have more faith in God and in ourselves, created in His own image. It lies in our own hands to unfold ourselves more fully into the Infinite Power, Wisdom and Love of which we are a part. Dr. Alexis Carroll has said that the influence of prayer on the human body and mind is evident in 'increased physical buoyancy, greater intellectual vigour, moral stamina, and deeper understanding of the realities underlying human relationships'.

A poor woman appealed to the Sultan of Turkey for compensation for the household goods she lost. The Sultan interrogated her, how she lost them. She replied that she had fallen asleep and robbers came in and stole the goods. The Sultan asked her, why she had fallen asleep. She replied calmly, "I slept because I was sure the Sultan was awake." We suppose that our government is always vigilant and that they would protect us. But, they too are liable to fall asleep. But, God never falls asleep; His protection is ever available.

The problem before man, in every age and in every clime, is, how to uplift himself, how to integrate his senses, his intelligence and his inner urges for fullness, freedom and love. The Grecian said, 'Man I Know thyself'; the Roman said, 'Man I Rule yourself'; the Chinese said, 'Man! better yourself'; the Buddhist said, 'Man! Annihilate yourself'; the Hindu says, 'Man! Unveil yourself'; the Moslem said, 'Man! Submit yourself'; the psychologist says, 'Man! Be yourself'; the psychiatrist says, 'Man! Cure yourself'; but, God says, "Trust Me. Without Me you can do nothing." This means with the bounteous Lord, we can win everything."

—From an Essay by Miss Rajeswari Patel, Student, Sathya Sal College, Anantapur

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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A Demon with a Trident

Vibhishana had a step-mother and she had a daughter named Kumbhinasa; she was given in marriage by Ravana to a Danava (member of demonic clan) named Madhu. Madhu accepted her and in course of time, she gave birth to the demon, Lavana. He underwent severe asceticism and prayed to Lord Siva to bless him with boons. Siva was pleased at his austerities. He gave him a trident, describing its prowess thus: "Lavana! Whoever wields this trident cannot be easily overcome in battle by any one." With the help of that trident, he has been terrorising gods and men, demons and serpents and parading his powers wantonly over the land. He was pursuing all living beings and ill-treating them. No living being was left unconquered by him. Hearing all this from Vibhishana, Rama gave vent to a peal of laughter. Of course, there was nothing he did not know. But, since he was wearing a human vesture, he had to act as if he did not. In the form of Siva He had given him the trident and so, he laughed at the stupidity of the recipient and the evil

use to which he was putting it He blessed Shatrughna with a portion of his Divine Power and sent him on the mission of destroying Lavana the Demon.

Under Rama's orders, 3000 war-drums beat in unison, and the dhan-dhan beat shook the earth. Horses and elephants cried out in fear; the soldiers blew conches and marched behind Shatrughna and surrounded the capital city of Lavana, Lavanasura heard their shouts and war cries. He emerged from the fort with 64,000 soldiers He roared like a lion, eager for the kill. He played several magic tricks to evade defeat and confound the enemy. But his army was shattered to pieces. The sons of Lavana who entered the battle were killed by the son of Shatrughna, named Subahu. They reached the heaven reserved for heroes who die fighting. At last, Shatrughna shot an arrow invoking the name of Rama and that arrow dealt a mortal wound on Lavana. He drew his last breath as a result and ended his vicious career. The gods acclaimed the victory with a chorus of `Jai's, and they showered blessings on Shatrughna.

On with the Horse

Shatrughna moved on with his army and came to the banks of the Yamuna. He prostrated before the holy river, and led his army further. While proceeding thus, venturing in the four directions along different routes and encountering places he happened to reach the hermitage of Valmiki. There, Danaki was living with her twin sons, each redoubtable in splendour, like the Sun.

Those two boys saw the Horse, read the golden plate tied around its brow and, led, it way, to be, bound and kept at the hermitage. Then, they came forward eager to fight back the guardians of the horse, with an arrow-case tied around their waists and bows and arrows in their hands. By that time, the thousands of warriors accompanying the Horse reached the place. They saw the Horse tied to a tree and finding that it was done by those boys, they cooled down. They said, "Sons! Your parents are indeed blessed to have such charming children. Well. Let that horse loose, and go home." But, the little boys replied, "O ye heroes! You have come for battle and not for begging, we believe. When you beg the horse from us, you are tarnishing the fair name of Kshatriya. Hearing this, the guardian soldiers said, "Brave boys! Yes. Do not tarnish the fair name of the Kshatriyas. That is why we ask you to be careful in speech." The boys only laughed at this repartee. They said, "Ah. How brave must be the person who sent this horse under the protection of people like you? If you have no strength to take it from us, you can proceed home."

When the boys, Kusa and Lava spoke so harshly and satirically, the soldiers were provoked to fall upon them, in spite of the fact that they knew they were but tender boys. Lava, shot a succession of arrows at them, quite in a sportive manner, humming tunes within himself and rather carelessly as if engaged in a play. The bodies of the warriors were shot through in so many places that they were rendered meshy. They fell fainting on the ground; some of them ran into the camp of Shatrughna. They cried, "Maharaja! Two boys, evidently children of the hermits have captured our Horse and in the fight that ensued, they have killed a large number of our soldiers." Shatrughna was enraged at this effrontery; he gathered the four sections of his army and marched towards Kusa and Lava.

The Uncle defeated

When he confronted them, and saw their handiwork, on the field, proving their overwhelming prowess, he was shocked into shame. "How can I enter into battle with these two boys?" he hesitated. Shatrughna addressed them thus: "O Ye Children of hermits! Let loose the Horse and go home. You are worthy of worship; it is not right to wage battle with you."

The boys would not yield. They said, "King! What is your name? From which City are you coming? Why are you moving through this forest at the head of an army? What is the reason for your letting this Horse wander about as it likes? Why have you tied this gold plate round its brow? Well. If you have the strength and the courage, remove the plate from its brow, loosen the Horse and take it home." When Lava and Kusa spoke straight and sharp like this, Shatrughna bowed his head in shame and ordered his men to take up arms and march forward. At this, the boys laughed among themselves. "Aha! This King is pretty powerful!" But, listen. Can a lion be frightened when you clap your hands? They too took up the bow and arrow, remembering Guru, the sage, Valmiki. Their arrows shattered the chariot of Shatrughna to pieces. They also entered his body in many places and made it a patchwork of holes. His veteran warriors fainted, and fell. They called each veteran forward and aimed at him so correctly that each of them fell dead. Some cowards ran off the field, even as far as the presence of Rama Himself.

They informed Rama the exploits of the two boys from the hermitage. Of course, he knew that they were not children of the hermitage. But, he did not disclose that fact. He made them believe that what they said was true. He doubted for a moment how any one could battle against the tender boys belonging to the monks. At last, he said, "Fighting cannot be avoided. Take Lakshmana with you and proceed." Those who had fled to him had to return perforce to the same place. Rama also commanded, "Bring those two boys hither. Since they are from the hermitage, they should not be killed; they do not deserve death in any case."

Another Uncle

Lakshmana marched forwards at the head of a fully equipped army, He reached the place where the engagement had already taken place. He saw the heroic warriors who had fainted and fallen. He was surprised at the audacity of the ascetics', boys. He addressed them thus: "Boys, I warn you, save yourself. Flee from this place back to your homes. You are Brahmin boys and it would be harmful for us, if we fight against you. It is against the injunctions of scripture. Get away from before my eyes." Kusa and Lava greeted these words with a peal of laughter. "O Brave Commander! See how your brother has fared; take refuge in your own home soon." Lakshmana heard them and with one look at Shatrughna who had fallen in a faint, he took up his bow and arrow.

But, he doubted whether fighting against the children of monks was right or no. He tried to persuade the boys themselves. "Boys," he said, "You have no reasoning faculty. You are mere boys. There is no profit in fighting against you. Go, bring those who are supporting you in this adventure." Even while Lakshmana was importuning thus, Kusa, without paying the least attention to his suggestion, shot an arrow right against him. The earth shook in terror at the impact of that arrow. That arrow spread all over the sky. Its splendour was such that even the sun was rendered dull. Unable to withstand the valour of Kusa and Lava, Lakshmana grew in anger and fell on them with enormous violence. He placed his chariot before them and began attacking

them with no dread of the consequences. The brothers broke his arrows into pieces; they fought most admirably, with many new stratagems. Lakshmana threw his mace at them and when it hit Kusa, he suffered great pain. He rolled on the ground seeing this, Lava got enraged; he aimed an arrow at the chest of Lakshmana. Though it hit him straight, being a stronger and older hero, he did not fall. Lava jumped on him and they both had a personal duel with fists. The contest was balanced with no one winning; both of them used many holds and evasive tactics. Each of them fought using all his strength. Lava pounded Lakshmana with his thunderbolt hits. Lakshmana bore the brunt with pain and appreciated the little fellow's mettle and skill.

Meanwhile, Lakshmana took Rama's name and aimed an arrow at Kusa. Kusa who had raised himself up fainted and fell again. But, he remembered Valmiki and Sita as he fell and so, he could stand up soon. He recovered his bow and arrow and attacked Lakshmana. He aimed a sharp and fiery arrow at Lakshmana. Though Lakshmana replied with an arrow that he had used against Meghanada, it could not harm the boys. They cut it into pieces, and the pieces fell on the ground. Lakshmana said to himself, "Ah! These calamities are happening to me since Sita was exiled. I can never have peace unless I discard this body." Just then, Kusa fixed on his bow the Brahma arrow that Valmiki had taught him to use. At the prospect of its release, the three worlds shook in fear. He aimed it straight at the heart of Lakshmana and let it go. Lakshmana was hit and he lost consciousness.

Rama had to come

Messengers carried the news to Rama. Bharata was sunk in sorrow; he folded his hands and stood before Rama. " Lord!" He said, "We are experiencing the consequences of the wrong we committed when we exiled Sita." Rama told the brother, "What! Are you adopting these tactics, because you are afraid of fighting in battle? Well, if that is so, I myself can go into the field. Get me the chariot. Adjourn further rites in the yaga; I shall go and find out the antecedents of those boys. Brother! Send word to our former allies and friends. Bring Hanuman to the battlefield." Then, Rama reached the spot where the fighting was going on. Rama was surprised to see the streams of blood. At that very moment, Kusa and Lava, the unbeatable warriors, also came to the place. The Vanaras who accompanied Hanuman to the field were stricken with terror. But, Hanuman addressed the brothers and said, "Boys! The parents who have given birth to such magnificent heroes as you are really blessed." But Kusa, declared, "O Monkey! If you have no strength to meet us in battle, go back! Don't prate too much." At this, Bharata developed much anger. He shouted, to his men well. "Use your weapons!" When he said so, the Vanaras cast upon them trees, rocks and mountain peaks. Lava pulverised all of them by means of a single arrow. In a short time, the forces of Rama were in complete rout. The field was one full flood of blood. All the valiant soldiers lost their lives. At last, even Bharata was felled fainting.

Then, Rama came into the battle area, red with anger, at the head of a large army; he saw the two boys and without letting arrows against them, he got them near him and asked, "Boys! Who are your parents? Where are they living? Which is your native land? What are your names?" In reply, Lava said, "O King! Of what use are these inquiries? You brothers, all four of you, have the same mannerism, I believe. Come, take up bow and arrow, and fight. Why do you bother about parents and native place? This is no parley previous to marriage negotiations and feast. No, this is serious business." But, Rama insisted on continuing. He said, "Boys. Your bodies are so tender. I shall not fight with you, until I know your names and your lineage."

"King. Our mother is the daughter of Emperor Janaka. Janaki is being fostered by the sage Valmiki. We do not know the name of our father nor do we know the lineage to which we belong. Our names are Kusa and Lava. We reside in the forest," they said. Rama pretended to have discovered just then that they were his children, and told them, "Boys! Give fight to the army which is coming behind me." Saying this, he raised Angada, Jambavanta, Hanuman and others from the fainting fit into which they had fallen. He also raised Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna so that they might see the happenings of the future. Then, he addressed the soldiers. "Men of the army. Fight so that fame and status might be protected and strengthened." Then, when the battle was renewed Rama watched with immense delight the heroism of the boys with their bows and arrows and their superior skill and bravery.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be concluded)

Every man should strive so to lead his life that no pain is caused by him to any living being. That is his supreme duty. Also, he must spare a part of his time and energy to follow a schedule of daily prayer, repetition of the Lord's Name, Meditation. One must be as afraid of doing acts harmful to others as he is afraid of touching fire or handling a cobra. One must develop as much desire to serve others and to do good to them as he is now attached to amassing gold and riches.

—Baba

Sai Krishna

This is a story about Krishna.... In a way, the story was not completed until November, 1975.

A number of years ago I was in Bhagavan's car. He was in the rear seat with two persons, one on each side of Him. I was in the front seat, with the driver. We were on our way to Puttaparthi.

Driving in the car with Swami is a fascinating experience. Not only is there the thrill of being close to the Divine Lord Himself, but, sometimes He will give you the opportunity to ask questions. Sometimes, He engages in animated conversation in Telugu with the companions. Sometimes, He indulges in jokes with one or other of them. Sometimes, He remains silent, making the characteristic gesture with His Hand that seems to indicate that He is giving attention to something quite unknown to us. And, very often, He sings Bhajans, with every one in the car joining in the chorus (except me, who has a musical voice, akin to the crow). The net result of all this enthralling activity is that my neck is constantly being twisted in order to see what is going on in the back seat. Swami understands my plight, but, does not advise me to desist; He allows me the liberty to turn round. Of course, I do not stare all the time. I look only so long as I dare and then I resume my posture, turning to the front again. So, my looking at Swami is intermittently back and forth.

At some point in the journey, maybe about half-way, Swami was talking and I turned to look. My breathing stopped and I was transfixed! I could not credit my eyes. His devotees see Swami's Face as beautiful indeed, although the chief impression I receive from His feature is that of Power and Majesty.

What transfixed my movement and stopped my breathing was Swami's Face... The Swami I know was not there! Instead, there was a Face of the most extraordinary beauty, quite different of shape and cast from the features of our beloved Sai. The charm was so great, so poignant that my heart seemed to twist, almost as though it were in pain. Never in life, nor in photos, nor in painting by great artists have I seen a Face of such exquisite beauty. It was beyond imagination and concept, totally out of experience.

And His colour was blue. Not just blue, not the blue with which artists paint Krishna but, a deep blue, like the velvet blue that sometimes can be seen in a dark sky, like a blue that I have at times seen from the deck of a ship thousands of miles from shore on the Pacific Ocean. I do not know how else to describe it.

I could not remove my eyes from Swami. At length, I caught myself and turned away. But, at once, I looked again, and the same beauty surely not of the world, was still there. This continued for at least fifteen minutes. The two men sitting with Swami were beginning to look at me with somewhat puzzled expressions for, my staring was different from what they had become used to.

After a few miles, Vittala Rao (on Swami's left) asked me, "Hislop! What were you staring at Swami like that?"

Instead of answering, I directed a question to Swami, "Swami! What was that blue colour?" Swami replied, "Oh! That? Whenever there is something of unfathomable depth, it appears to be deep blue."

That was the end of the conversation. Naturally the thought had come to mind that maybe this was Lord Krishna, but, neither then, nor at any time in connection with this experience did I ever say the name of Krishna to Swami.

There the matter rested until November 1975. It was before people started to arrive in multitudes for the Birthday. Swami's schedule was still somewhat free and He was taking me with Him in the jeep and so on... and probably, that was why I got invited into the Interview. An army man and his wife had come from Assam. They were devotees, but this was their first time to actually see Swami. Often people wait for months for interview but this family was called as soon as they arrived. I was seated on the verandah of the Mandir and saw them go into Swami's room. No sooner had they entered than Swami motioned to me.

There was the mother and father, the son and daughter. Swami spoke to them most lovingly. He knew everything about their lives and it was very evident that He was an intimate member of that household.

After a while, Swami asked me, "Hislop! Tell them some experiences." I complied and after mentioning some incidents, I told the same story just now related in these pages, but, not even then, did I mention the Krishna name. The man was deeply impressed and words broke from His lips, "Oh! That had to be Lord Krishna"

Swami smiled and said, "Yes, that *was* Krishna; not the Krishna pictured by artists and imagined by writers. I showed Hislop the real Krishna." The man said, "Oh! How I want to see Krishna." Swami smiled again and said, "Wait; wait."

There is a sequel to this story. About a month later, in December, at Brindavan, I was talking with Swami and I brought forward the names of some famous saints and Gurus of the past and Swami said some things about them. Then the idea struck me that, wonderful though it must have been to know those great personages and learn from them, the present day was the first time since Krishna lived that one could have God Himself as Guru. So I started to say, "Swami! In the thousands of years of time, since Krishna...."

Swami interrupted me before I could say another word and exclaimed "Time since Krishna...? *I am Krishna*. Where is *Time*?" I folded my hands and bent low to Him and said, "Well, Swami. This is the best of all times, to be born!"

Swami replied, "Yes; the most fortunate of all times. Even more fortunate to be born now, than during the Krishna Avatar."

Once before, within my hearing, Swami declared Himself as Lord Krishna. This story has been told in detail elsewhere. It happened in Dharmakshetra, at Bombay, and came about as part of the extra-ordinary drama of 'the weeping saris' to which a few of us in the room with Swami were the fascinated witnesses. I had exclaimed that this had to be the re-enactment this very day of the drama of the mountain that had occurred in the Avatars of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. Bhagavan replied, "Yes; it is the self same Rama and the self-same Krishna who is here this very day."

In the light of what has been recited in the preceding pages by me, a direct witness and participant, we need never look back with even the slightest tinge of envy to those fortunate people who lived during those wonderful days of the Krishna Avatar. This very day, and every day that we look at our beloved Sai, we *are*, gazing directly at Sri Krishna.

Let us treasure His Divine presence. In ages to come, the rich experience of our days will be told and retold as the wondrous story of the Sai Avatar.

—*John Hislop*

Targets for Youth

I have seen many educational institutions in this country, but, there is none which is of higher standard than this College, for, here, great attention is paid to the development of character, and a

sense of devotion and dedication. I am sure this great institution will be a huge moral force in India for many generations. I wish to express my appreciation of the work of the Principals and Professors of this and other Colleges run under the guidance of Bhagavan, for their enthusiastic efforts to provide the nation with such a fine body of young men and women. This country has more than a hundred Universities and about 3000 Colleges and Higher Training Institutions, with more than two and half million students entering their portals every year. But, I consider the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Colleges as the greatest asset in the field of education.

I addressed you as Fellow-students, for, I believe the process of education never stops. Formal education in the Colleges provides you only the urge to equip yourselves with more and more knowledge later. Now, let me share with you a few thoughts so that these bright-eyed young men and women can build together the India of our dreams. First and foremost, every one of you must acquire knowledge. In order to govern and be governed well, the citizens must be well equipped with knowledge, and not merely depend on common sense. Knowledge has become today vast, intricate and complicated. If you have the thirst, you can learn more and more about the subject you have chosen to specialise in. There is no end to the process of learning. But, you should avoid the danger of extreme specialisation, knowing more and more about less and less, until you lose even essential general knowledge. Nourish a creative dissatisfaction, an eagerness to possess a well furnished mind; and on that foundation, you can build a fund of satisfying knowledge.

Secondly, I would advise you to cultivate a sense of values. The impact of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is sure to endow you with this virtue. A sense of values is even more important than knowledge. Life will give you what you ask for; therein lies the danger. If you ask for wealth, and strive one-pointedly for it, the world will give you wealth. So also, one can get power, and authority. Like an employer, the world will give the wages you bargain for and nothing more. But there will always be a vacuum inside, which can be filled only by love and service. Inner happiness can come only when we pay heed to the lessons imparted by the sages. The strength of this country lies in its adherence to the higher values of life, which are your daily inspiration here.

Again, emphasis has to be laid on the necessity of Work. Do not try to escape rigorous and useful work. I am reminded of a person who became the Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, through sheer application to work. He had a placard with the words, "Read or Starve," placed prominently before his eyes in his room, and, when during the small hours of the night, sleep threatened to overcome him, he fixed his eyes on that placard and read on. That made him such an eminent jurist that he rose to the highest position a lawyer could hope for in Great Britain. There was Lord Reading, later Viceroy of India, who was also a great lawyer and jurist. He was a very poor boy, whom his mother encouraged with the advice, "Work like a horse and live like a hermit." He used to say that when he came down the stairs of his mansion at 5 A.M., to enter his chambers and prepare for the legal work of the day, he used to meet his son coming up to his room after a dance party that kept him busy so long, and that when he said, "Good morning, Son," he replied, "Good night, Father!" Work, sincere and steadfast, is surely rewarding. This lesson has to be imbibed by every student in the country today.

You must also cultivate the habit of clear thinking. The longer you live in this world, the more you will realise the evil that the absence of this habit breeds in society. There are as many

well-dressed foolish ideas as there are well-dressed fools. Bertrand Russell said that man is a credulous animal, and if he has no good things to believe in, he will believe in bad things. We are lucky because the culture of India has been harping on the need for clear thinking and teaching methods to attain it, since ages. All our scriptures lay great emphasis on clarity of thought. Sankaracharya has a great textbook named Viveka Choodamani on this topic.

Two other virtues have to be cultivated by us: tolerance and moderation. The tradition of India and the basic lesson of Indian Culture is Tolerance. In the United Kingdom, no Roman Catholic can become the Lord Chancellor, a position equal to that of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court here. Nor can he sit on the Throne of England. In Pakistan, no non-Muslim can become the President. But, here, the cultural trait of tolerance is so deep-rooted that a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Hindu can rise to be the Chief Justice or President. We believe that Truth is not the monopoly of any one faith, individual or institution. There can be no fanaticism when this belief is widespread in the minds of the people. George Santayana said that fanaticism is the urge to redouble your efforts, when you have forgotten the aim you have in view. It is a type of mania which blinds man even to the goal he had in view at the beginning. Your aim must be to live in harmony with your fellowmen and promote the common good.

There is another virtue which must be acquired by you-courage. The Gita teaches you to do your duty, with courage, undaunted by failure or opposition. Give up feebleness of mind: that was the lesson Krishna taught to the hesitant Arjuna. No one, however great, should be allowed to make cowards of us. He is the great man, in whose presence, every one feels great. He, in whose presence one feels small, must indeed be small himself. In India, it will not be difficult for us to develop courage, for, all our scriptures and sages harp on this quality as basic for progress here and hereafter.

Your education will be complete only when you have a clear appreciation of our cultural heritage. 3000 years ago, students from all over Asia came to this country to imbibe our culture and learn the secrets of its excellence at the Universities of Nalanda and Takshasila. They learnt here the secrets of happy and purposeful living. The Rulers of this land bowed their heads to sages, seers and men who had dedicated their lives to the promotion of public good. Emperor Janaka proceeded to the forest hermitage of Yajnavalkya to be instructed in spiritualism. Ashoka would not pass a monastery without bowing low to the monks residing inside. This country has always paid homage to the humble and the noble, the sage and the scholar. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is sought after by millions. Enormous gatherings offer homage to him, wherever he goes; the strength of our country lies in this spontaneous realisation of the supremacy of the spirit, over mere material prosperity. The real test of a person is the answer to the question, "What will he be, when he is rid of his wealth, position or power?" True life is the life of the spirit. The rest is all secondary. I have had, in my own professional capacity, opportunities to contact and observe a large number of extremely wealthy men but, I may tell you, that no one of them has enjoyed mental peace. It is only when you work for, others, with devotion and dedication that you can have real peace and joy.

India had in the past and has even today peerless exponents of the life of the spirit. Great thinkers of other cultures and countries have declared that they have found the secret of peace in Indian texts of the past. Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, said that he was very

thankful for having been born in the 19th Century and not earlier, for, he could read the priceless treasures of Indian culture in their German translations. He said he had found solace and strength in the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita. Emerson the great American philosopher and writer said that if he had to take with him into loneliness, only one single book, he would choose a Hindu religious book and naught else. He knew many languages, including Greek, Latin, German and French. But yet, he felt that Hindu books had such saving grace. Sri Aurobindo also believed that it was the historic destiny of India to act as a catalyst between East and West, and to act as a moral force bringing about the integration of human consciousness.

We have no need to go after strange Gods, and spend our days swallowing drugs and consulting psychiatrists. Our heritage of spiritual culture has all the remedies for the ills of this age. Jung, the famous psychiatrist, after practising the healing art for over 60 years (he died at the age of 88) declared, "No one has come to me for treatment all these years who had faith in God." Faith in the Supreme has such a serene and calming effect on the agitated mind of man.

There is a second lesson that the scriptures teach us: the senses are not the only means we have, to acquire knowledge. Bhagavan has been telling us that the ancient Rishis had mastered the process of intuition and that they had the capacity to penetrate into the mysteries of the consciousness and of Nature. Einstein, the greatest of scientists, (for all time, I might add), visualised the Unified Theory that can explain Gravitation, Electricity, Light, Energy etc. But, the Rishis knew and declared that there is fundamentally no distinction between the human body, for example and this table! The distinction between inanimate and animate matter is being fast obliterated. The time has come when physics is being transformed into meta-physics. Jagadish Chandra Bose, delivering his Dedicatory Address when he placed his laboratory at the disposal of the Nation said, that it was not a laboratory, but, a Temple. He probed the border region, between the living and the non-living and found that it is difficult to pronounce anything as inert. I am a believer in re-incarnation, for, it explains many things like precociousness and talents which must have been acquired in previous lives. The Unity of all Creation is the message of India. Can anything smaller satisfy India today? You must struggle to bring about this transformation in the attitude and aspirations of Youth. Truth alone can triumph ultimately. God is ever keeping watch over His own. I want you to remember when you enter the portals of life, that patriotism is not a vain word, that the spirit is not an obscure joke, nor dedication to one's duty an idealistic folly.

—N. A. Palkhiwala (*From Speech during Summer Camp*) Brindavan

The Convocation

It was miniature India, at Brindavan, for one full month. It was Indian Culture and Indian Spirituality that vibrated in the atmosphere. For one full week, the 800 College students (boys and girls) and the 50 College teachers and the 250 educationists who came as Observers listened to the discourses on the Ramayana. Then there were discourses by learned scholars on whatever is worth knowing from the Rig Veda to Vivekananda. Students of the Sri Sathya Sai Colleges at

Bangalore (for boys) Anantapur, Bhopal, Jaipur (for girls)—about 40 of them in all spoke on varied topics concerning the spiritual heritage of India, after prolonged study and assimilation, in clear simple palatable styles... They had an intensive schedule of Pranava recitation, Bhajan and study. They had to prepare summaries of the discourses they listened to; they took part in quiz competitions, elocution competitions and written tests on the subjects dealt with by the lecturers and Bhagavan. Every Sunday, the boy students were taken to the City of Bangalore, where after a mile or two of Nagarsankirtan, they swept clean some of the most unkempt areas with enthusiastic delight. Bhagavan elaborated during His daily evening discourses on the basic messages of the Ramayana and other ancient texts of this land. He spoke on the Atmic reality of each individual, the lesson that Sri Krishna taught to Arjuna, to equip the students with confidence and courage to follow the Master, face the devil, fight to the end and finish the game.

The Convocation of the Course was held on the 19th June, at the imposing new Auditorium of the Sri Sathya Sai College. The students wore the dresses presented to them by Bhagavan (white shirts stitched to measure and white dhotis for the boys and yellow saris for the girls) and marched in procession from Brindavan Campus to the Auditorium, accompanied by Bhagavan, and members of the Central Trust, the Education Foundation, and the State Presidents of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations. The College Band of the Boy's College led the men students and the College Band of the Sathya Sai Women's College at Anantapur, led the women students. Pundits recited hymns and chanted Vedic mantras. Sai Geetha, the elephant, magnificently caparisoned led the procession and lent the event a truly oriental grandeur.

At the auditorium, Bhagavan distributed the Certificates and prizes to the successful candidates and blessed the students with His valedictory message. He said, "The world is transient; it is only a temporary manifestation of multiplicity on the basic truth of the One Permanent Truth. Only man is endowed with the intelligence that can unravel the mystery and grasp the Reality. But, he is fascinated by the pleasures that he can derive through the senses, and by the petty successes he can win over material things. It is like gloating over one's success in making charcoal out of sandalwood. You must learn to delve into the treasures in your own minds. Gems can be secured only in the bowels of the earth; they do not grow on treetops. So too the most precious truths regarding one's own reality and the reality of Creation and of the Creator can be won only through inner inquiry and introspection.

Peace among the nations, among the communities of men, in society and in the family can come only when man has learned and practised the ways of pacifying the passions in his own mind. Sai seeks to establish Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love in the individual, the society and in the world. He depends on the youth, to fulfill this task. The future of Bharat, of Bharatiya culture, and way of life is dependent on you the youth of this country.

You have been living in the holy environment of Brindavan for one month now and imbibing the peace and love that are immanent here. This day, the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality has ended, technically speaking. But, how can that Course end? The course is just beginning for you, since what you have gathered here of the ideals of that Culture, you have to live from tomorrow and get confirmed of their validity and value. You have to carry with you the environment of Peace and Love, the enthusiasm to learn and practise the great lessons that the seers and sages of this land have handed down through the ages, and become worthier sons and

daughters of Bharat. Many great scholars and practitioners of Sadhana have spoken to you and you must bring back to your memory for long what they have advised and taught.

A healthy man does not seek medical advice; it is only the sick who approach a doctor and ply him with questions. You have each of you some pang of thirst, or intimation of hunger, some question that is spurring you, or else you would not have come to this camp, anxious to benefit by it. I know, many of you are now unwilling to return home, to your own towns and villages and colleges. The routine of the camp, the discourses, the company of like-minded young people from distant parts of the country and the Love that fills this atmosphere have inspired you along the spiritual path.

You would much rather stay on than go. But, let me assure you, Swami will ever be with you, wherever you are! A diamond has many facets, from each of which the rays emanate. These facets are situated around a central spot. I am the central spot and you are the facets emanating rays of light and love. You must have known of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal. Dal means, 'petal'. Each of you is a petal of the lotus, emanating from the centre of the lotus, drawing its sustenance from it and adding to its beauty and lustre. I am the centre of the lotus. So, go gladly and with confidence, to your places for your work lies there. Carry the message of the unity of all religions (or rather that there is only one religion) the religion of love, practised by people of various creeds and climes.

Do not crave for leadership, for becoming masters. Practise service; that is the true Karma yoga, where you learn humility and can demolish your egoistic impulses. Never overstep the limitations on conduct laid down by Bharatiya culture. Demonstrate by your behaviour, your relation with others, especially those who are poorer and less fortunate, and your attitude with those who do not agree with you, that you are aware of the basic virtues that Sanathana Dharma has upheld through the ages. Do not forget what you have heard and ignore what you have seen and slip back into your old ways and behaviour. That would mean you have wasted not only the time you spent here, but, this very human life. Be vigilant that you do not get enslaved to the senses that drag you down into ruin. Be keen always to serve the country in whatever way you can. That is the real Yoga, or spiritual Sadhana of Union with the Divine offering all your talents and time for the service of God in man.

You have taken, I know, elaborate notes on whatever has been told you all these days—on the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Upanishads, the Gita, the Bhagavata, the Sastras. I shall give you now three things to remember, the sum and substance of all that you have been told—(1) Never forget God (2) Never believe that the world is real and (3) Never be afraid of death. Also, forget the good you do to others and the evil that they do unto you. If you remember the good deeds you have done, you will be expecting them to return the good to you and you will have to be disappointed. You have done good because it is your nature to do good, not in anticipation of return. Forget the evil done, or else, your heart will be vitiated by the poison of vengeance. You can have no peace, when hate and resentment are living there.

The spiritual path knows no bargaining, though some of its exponents' do indulge in transactions involving bargaining. You must not yield to that temptation. Be good and kind,

sweet and soft, with no expectation of receiving back anything in return. The joy that you derive in service—unselfish service, is its own reward.

I want you to share the Ananda you have derived here with your friends and others when you reach your homes. Contact the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti in your town and be guided by it. And, develop that Ananda by partaking in some item or other of social service. Do your duty as an act of worship to God. Do not come in the way of another's duty or freedom. Do not do unto others what you would not like them to do unto you. Do unto them what you would like them to do unto you—these two are the basic laws of real Love. You are naturally anxious that others should not dishonour or defame you; so, it is your duty to see that you do not in the slightest manner dishonour another or defame him.

People seek others' faults with thousand-eyed care, but, they are blind to their own. Trying to discover the faults and failings of others tarnishes your mind and pollutes it with evil. The heart is a camera and consciousness is the plate. So, when you turn it towards the evil that others do, it becomes evil.

Be humble. Socrates was accosted by an admirer as one who knew all that is to be known. But, he replied, "I know only one truth, that I do not know anything." You might now assert that you know all about Indian culture and spirituality, but, until what you have in your notes gets into your heads and until what is in the head is practised and made a part of your daily behaviour and conduct, you cannot claim to know them.

The sages and seers of ancient India blessed their pupils and exhorted them, "Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava, Acharya devo bhava, Atithi devo bhava, Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara," Revere your mother as God; revere your father as God; revere your teacher as God; revere the guest as god. Speak the Truth; act righteously." Follow these directions and they will guard you against all disasters and dangers. Your life will be smooth and happy. How can God pour Grace on you if you disobey the parents who endowed you with this body by which alone you can realise God? Do not insult them or cause them mental distress.

Animals are called in Sanskrit paw, because they 'pashyati' or 'see only outer objects; their outer eyes do not reveal to them any higher truth. But, man has the inner eye: he can delve into himself and search for his Reality behind the apparent and the outer. You must, by means of meditation, good company and studies, earn the inner eye and get the bliss of self-realisation. That is the hope I have of you and that is the blessing I am now showering on you.

The pashu or cattle go out into the grazing grounds early in the day; they wander about and select the spots where they can get plenty of green grass to eat; they hastily fill their stomachs with as much as they can swallow; then, they return to their shelters in the evening and start the process of ruminating or chewing the cud. That helps them to digest the grass, and store in their udders sweet, health-giving milk. So also, you have grazed in these days the valuable discourses given by learned scholars, experienced administrators, philosophers, yoga practitioners, servants of society with years of sincere work illumining their words of advice, and when you go back home, I would ask you to ruminate on what they have said. Have Manana, think them over, with a view to putting them into practice. Then, the Summer Course would have been really useful."

Through Education

Can education be attained through books? Can books equip any one with the results that we expect from education? Now, millions are subjected to the same uniform system of bookish education, and we find that it has failed to develop the body, mind and behaviour of the pupils. Education must correct and purify the innermost instincts of man, the attitudes of his mind, and help him to recognise his real goal in life. In Ancient India, the Guru-Shishya relationship in the process of education made possible the meeting of two sets of values: devotion, (i) dedication and enlightenment from the Guru or the Preceptor and (ii) discipline, austerity and sense of duty from the Shishya or Pupil. The basic quality imparted through the medium of love and reverence was fearlessness and freedom. Those two great cultural values embedded in the scriptures were imparted and imbibed.

But, as a result of a series of invasions by alien cultures and the final colonisation of India by the British, many cultural institutions were dried up and ancient traditions obliterated. The links with the past were lost; independent thought was discouraged and dismissed; Education broke away from Nature and shut itself inside closed doors. It was framed to suit the needs, not of the people of the land, but of its foreign rulers. Schools became like factories with mechanical curricula and teaching methods. Examinations and the labels of degrees that they could fetch became the be-all and end-all of education. A job became the goal to be striven for. The educated man, cut off from his culture and his society, became frustrated. He proved harmful to the very society to which he belonged.

Even after independence, we have not been able to shake off this colonial imposition. Those who clamoured for restoring our pristine glory, the ancient traditions and way of life, did not have the courage and confidence to frame a new system. They resorted to imitation of what they understood by the words, 'socialism, secularism, democracy, communism, welfare state etc.', which remained mere words, untranslated into systems and traditions.

We wanted some one to re-assert the moral value of our culture and to re-build the foundations for social and economic equality, without which all talk of isms are vapoury. The moment of realisation has now come and Sri Sathya Sai has taken up the task. This month-long Summer Course for more than 1000 students of Colleges from all over India is proof that the Avatar has decided to resurrect this nation through education. We, who adore Him and listen to His Voice reverentially, are a speck in the Ocean of 620 million people. But, we are the pioneers in the march. We have to pass the test: How much are we contributing to the success? How well? How soon?

Can governments succeed? Can curricular reformation affect it? No. They cannot elevate the mind or clarify the impulses. That is the reason why Bhagavan is preparing a corps of teachers and students who are devoted, dedicated and enlightened, students who have been filled with

Love and Wisdom and the Eagerness to spread the Message of Swami to the world and teachers who are happy that they are able to share in this big revolution. Bhagavan said yesterday that there are three types of disciples: one, who shirk their duty and never carry out the orders of the master, two, those who do just what the master asks them to do and no more, and three, those who do, not merely what the words of the message meant, but, what their significance indicates, fulfilling as best as they can the purpose of the Master's Mission. These teachers and students belong to the third group; they endeavour to live lives of truth, peace, duty and love and are eager to serve those who live in fear and anxiety. In factory, school or office, wherever their future careers lay, they will work in the spirit of worship, revering the place of work as a Temple. They have also a sense of belonging, to this country and its ancient culture, a serenity rooted in their study and appreciation of the great texts in which that culture is enshrined, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana etc. They are aware that the past of India was as its future should be, a world of Peace, Love Duty and Truth.

Merging the inner Self in the Divine, which is its reality, man can never be caught unawares and unprepared to meet the reverses and disappointments of life. Bhagavan has redeemed millions from paltriness and guided them to Himself.

—*Ambika Soni*

The Annual Glory

The Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women, Anantapur has maintained this year also its high level of academic distinction, as evidenced by the results of the various University Examinations. In Telugu, Sanskrit and Hindi, 100 percent of passes have been secured in all classes. Subject-wise results are commendable, being 100 percent in most cases and more than 80 to 90 in others. 21 students secured First Class in the Intermediate Examination and 16 in the Degree Examinations.

The Sri Sathya Sai Arts, Science and Commerce College, Kadugodi, has been bagging a record number of First Classes and Ranks, consistently during the last many years. This year, students of this College got the First Rank in the Bangalore University in the I P. U. C.; the 8th and 9th ranks in I B. Com., the 3rd, 9th and 10th ranks in I B. Sc., and the 1st, 3rd and 10th ranks in the cumulative list for III B. Com, besides the unique distinction of securing the 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks in the Final B. Com. degree year examination.

Gifts

Why feel proud when you help another? The wealth or skill or official position or influence that helped you to serve another in his need was a gift of God! Without His grace, you could have no one of them. You offered this gift of God to another gift of God-the poor, the illiterate, the weak, the broken-hearted, the diseased. A person stands knee-deep in the Ganga and uttering some mantras, he takes a handful of the holy water and offers it, as his homage, to the sacred river itself. God's gift is given to God Himself. That is all that you are capable of! That is all that you need do. But, the pity is, you do not do even that! Or when you do it, you do not have that attitude of humility and reverence. So, the gift develops pride in you and resentment in the recipient.

—Baba

Diploma in Sathya Sai Education

A three-tier Moral Education Course was designed at the All-India Conference of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, 1972, comprising (1) Bal Vikas Group I (age 6 to 10) Group II (age 10 to 14) and Group III (age 14 to 17). The aim is to supplement and strengthen the present educational system by filling up the lacuna in character building, by means of a systematic course of instruction and supervised service activities.

Another line of activity in the same direction, under the guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality, for one full month, which is being held every year now, with programmes of Bhajan, Social Service, Lectures by students, Discourses from scholars and from Bhagavan. The State Trusts are having similar Courses for shorter periods, but, on the same model. Besides these, we have the Colleges established by Bhagavan and guided by Him at Whitefield (for Boys) and Anantapur, Bhopal and Jaipur (for Girls).

In order to stimulate the interest of the students in the acquisition of the character and skills emphasised in Sathya Sai Education, the Sathya Sai Central Trust has decided to award the Diploma in Sathya Sai Education to those (1) who have won the three Certificates of the Bal Vikas—Groups I, II and III (the last given by the World Council after an All India Test) and (2) the students of Sathya Sai Colleges (on graduation), who have been granted Certificates at the conclusion of two Summer Courses, one of which can be a Course conducted by the State Trust.

The Diploma in Sathya Sai Education will no doubt enhance the worth and value of the student and will be a desirable complement to his other attainments. The Diploma Holders will shine by their integrity, earnestness, moral stature, discriminating study and active social service as leaders of the young.

—*Ed.*

Sai calls me in the morning
As He lights the skies with love;

Sai calls me in the evening
With flute-like lullabies;

And, I love to hear His foot-steps
Lightly stepping in my heart
As whispers of Ecstasy call
Sai Ram! Sai Rama!

Gather the Riches

While motoring along the coastal road of Kerala, Baba told those with Him "You admire the beauty of the landscape, but, ignore the Painter." Baba has often reminded us that God has left His Foot-prints on every charming spot on the surface of the globe, on every gold-fringed cloud, every scintillating star; but, man does not follow the trail and reach Him.

The glory, the majesty, the delight, the laughter of God is evident in the sky, the moon and its varied curves, the stars that are scattered so profusely and so casually on the dark-blue carpet of space, the gurgling streams, the deep dark forest glades, and the vast expanses of sand. Each has a message to convey, a lesson to teach, a facet of Divinity to reveal. Nature is God, displaying His might and multiplicity. It is the art of the supreme artist, in all its glory.

The land creates loveliness in flowers so that they might speak of His Sundaram aspect. Lilies and forget-me-nots bespeak His beauty. In the fragrance of the rose, He seems to say, "Seek Me." The Oceans announce to us that they can exist without the waves, but, waves cannot exist without them; they teach us, 'Spirit can exist without man, but, man cannot exist without spirit'.

Nature is vivacious; it is thrilling. But, man is blind and deaf; he is intent on material riches. That is why the poet lamented, "What is this life, if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?" While Nature is calling man to explore these ecstatic moments, man confines himself around bridge-tables in smoke-stuffed club-rooms. Though we suppress the higher desires and succumb to the lower ones, God, in His infinite compassion, continues to lay before us the products of His art. The Lord has arranged for us this visit to Earth. But, most of us behave like undesirable guests, who do not look around the host's estate and admire the scenery that he would like us to imbibe. Fortunately, a few among mankind rise above the common level; they perceive the charm; they are inspired by the Divine Call and they respond through melodious music, immortal paintings or heart-warming poems.

The Artist is the servant of God; he merges himself in the beauty of God and God's handiwork; he captures the joy and spreads it on canvas, in verse, in stone, in sound or colour. He goes forth into the realm of rhythm, harmony, and melody and marks paths for others to follow. He _ is a teacher, teaching men to look deeper and wider into the meaning of things until the moral truth is evident.

The feeling of the 'beautiful' is not sensual, nor intellectual; it is a vibration of the heart, a feeling akin to joyfulness, reverence, gratitude, that arises at the contemplation of the intricate mystery of the handiwork of God.

The artistic creations of India reveal the Indian genius for integration. They are windows through which the pure in spirit can get glimpses into the heart of the Eternal. Of the three uses of art, the merely aesthetic the educative and the spiritual; the spiritual is the level reached by the artists of India. Their self-expression has blossomed into the most magnificent conceptions of the Supreme. Spirituality is a word that is expressive of three lines of human aspiration: towards Divine knowledge, Divine Love and Divine Strength. The highest and the most perfect art, while satisfying the physical needs of the aesthetic sense, the laws of formal beauty, the emotional demands of man, and the portrayal of life with all its outward reality, reaches beyond them, and expresses the inner spiritual Truth, the deeper Reality of things, the joy one wins by recognising the Grace of God, and the Divine Energy activating all the manifestations in the phenomenal Creation. This is what Indian Art alone has attempted.

In India, dance is considered as the representation by man of the joy of the Lord, in creating, sustaining and subsuming Creation. The Nataraja is the climax of the Indian conception of the Cosmic Dance. The four hands represent His Omnipresence. The little Drum in one hand symbolises the "Word", which was in the beginning, which became all this. The uplifted hand offers protection to the good and the godly. The flames on the wheel (the Cosmos) is the cosmic energy that permeates the Universe. The fourth hand points to the uplifted foot the place of refuge for all who seek liberation and bliss. The Crescent marks the awakened centre of Intuition, and the Cobra the faculty itself. The Ganga stands for the life-giving, purifying waters that flow from God. He has ear-rings, the one worn by men on his right lobe and the one worn by women on the left lobe; this shows that He is the embodiment of strength and tenderness, justice and mercy, masculine and feminine, the positive and the negative. The Girdle round the waist controls the higher forces of intuition and illumination from lower channels. The Lotus—the matrix of the Universe—untouched by the waters surging around, undefiled by the earth from

which it grows, stands for sublime purity. The encircling, Radiance is His Glory, shining in and through the Universe. His seat is Chidambaram, the heart of the Universe, and of the worshipper, lit with Intelligence. The Skull is the symbol of his power to destroy the Ego, the little I that identifies itself with the perishable Body. Thus, this one Image, carved and sculptured out of rock, enshrines the whole of Indian Thought.

Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy has this to say of the music of India: "Indian music is essentially impersonal; it reflects an emotion and an experience which are deeper, wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears; its joy without exultation. It is pessimistic without any loss of serenity. It is in the deepest sense of the word, all-human." It is Saraswati, the Goddess of Speech, that plays through the veena he holds; it is Narada, the sage, the Son of Brahma, who disseminates the occult secrets of soul and God through the strings of the instruments beholds; it is Krishna calling through the flute the distracted souls to follow Him. The musicians are pupils of God; they learn in Heaven the strains they use, to awaken in man the Divine Consciousness. The Kingdom of God they have established within them and it is the melody of that Kingdom that we hear or see when they sing or dance or paint or sculpt. Yeats has said that Indian Music, though its theory is elaborate and its technique is difficult, is not an art but life itself.

Indian art originated and flourished in Temples, for, they were dedicated to the Divine. Painters, sculptors, singers and dancers, architects and jewellers vied with each other to make the House of God inspiring, educative and beautiful. With the increase in materialism, this Worship through art has declined and art is fast degrading itself into sensuality and caricature. We are fortunate that we are living at the crucial point of time, when there is a turn for the better, as a result of the Sai Revolution in the human sense of values. Day by day, more and more artists are falling in line with the ideals of self-sacrifice and self-realisation promulgated once again by Bhagavan. Baba has been encouraging us to fill our hearts with the vast, the cosmic, the lovely, loving aspects of nature. "Yadbhavam tad bhavathi; you become what you think. Think small, you become small. We are poor because we do not gather the riches that God has strewn all around us."

—From Speech by Pratima Rao, at the Summer Course, 1977

Hanuman

Hanuman had succeeded in coordinating the thought, the word and the act. Therefore, he had the unique distinction of being great in physical strength, mental stability and virtuous character. He shines as an invaluable gem, among the personalities of the Ramayana. He was also a great scholar, who had mastered the six schools of, above all things, grammar! He knew the four Vedas and the six Sastras. The Gita says that a scholar is one who sees the same Divine force motivating every one. Pandithah samadarsinah. Hanuman was a good example of this outlook. He had no pride in him, that he knew so much. He was the very picture of humility, born out of genuine sincerity and wisdom. He realised that the Rama principle, Atmarama, was illumining

every being and he adored it above all else. During their wanderings in the forest in search of clues about Sita, Rama and Lakshmana arrived at the Rshyamuka Mountain, where they rested awhile in a shady glen. They were sad in mind and weak in physique. The King of the Vanaras, Sugriva and his confidante, Hanuman saw them from the top of a neighbouring hill. At first, Sugriva feared that they might be the emissaries of his brother, Vali, who had sworn eternal vengeance upon him. Or, he thought, they may be his spies moving about incognito. So, Hanuman offered to approach them and return with correct information about their identity and intentions. He advised that jumping to conclusions without sufficient correct data is fraught with danger.

He spoke to the brothers, in sweet, gentle pleasing language. Rama was struck by the grammatical accuracy of his sentences. They answered readily all his queries and Hanuman was satisfied with their bona fides. He offered to take them to his Master and Monarch. He grew in size and took them on his shoulders. The Darshan of Rama and Lakshmana removed all his sins; their Sparshan (touch) burnt away all the consequences of his deeds in previous lives and their Sambhashan (conversation) filled his mind with joy. That is the experience of all who welcome the impact of Divinity. As a result, Rama and Sugriva, who had common anxieties and problems, entered into a friendly compact, and both got assured that the problems will be successfully solved through the help rendered by the other.

Hanuman became a messenger of Rama. There are three classes of messengers: those who do not understand the orders of the master or do not care to understand, and who operate to the detriment of the assignment given; those who do only just as much as the order literally contained; and those who grasp the background and significance of the orders and carry them out to the full, until the purpose is achieved. Hanuman belonged to the last and the best category. He never flinched in his efforts, whatever the obstacle; he reported back only after his conscience was satisfied with the result of his assignment. He could delve into the commands of Rama and know what his order meant. As soon as he received the order, he felt a thrust of power inside him and a new confidence that, since he had been so ordered, the strength and intelligence, the audacity and the adventurous spirit needed will be granted by Rama himself. So, he never had any qualms about his capacity or capability. His body and spirit were vitalised by the very fact that Rama asked him to do something. The electric wire has a copper wire inside the plastic coating; both must be of good quality. So too, the body and the spirit within have both to be in good trim. And, Rama's words made them both efficient and active.

The Darshan of Rama conferred on him enormous reinforcement of power, even physical power. Or else, how can we ever imagine that he could jump across a hundred miles of sea? A task that Jambavan, Angada and other Vanara heroes would not dare venture upon, Hanuman accomplished, by the mere recital and remembrance of the Name of Ram.

The youth of India must pay special attention to this feature of Hanuman's life. He never calculated the pros and cons, when Rama asked him to discover the whereabouts of Sita. Can I succeed? Why was I of all people chosen for this mission? Why should I weigh the chances of success or failure, he said to himself; the Rama who chose me will bear the responsibility. He decided to pray and do his best. While on his flight, a hill rose up from the sea and offered him rest and hospitality; he refused to accept the invitation. A demoness rose from the sea and

invited him to fight with her before he proceeded further; he brushed her aside and flew on. He sped through the sky like one of Rama's own arrows; Self-Confidence was the basis of his courage; he erected over it, the walls of self-satisfaction: he constructed over them the roof of self-sacrifice and he dwelt in that house enjoying the bliss of self-Realization.

Here is a fine illustration to show the devotion of Hanuman to Rama. On the completion of the bridge, and on the night before the march across to Lanka, Rama was reclining on the sands of the sea-shore in the cool bright moonlight with Sugriva, Hanuman, Vibhishana, Jambavan, Angada, Nala Neela and others around him. He was lying with his head on the lap of Lakshmana. Suddenly, he threw a question to be answered by those with him, why the moon had a mark on it, what that blue patch indicated. Each one ventured on an answer. Some said, it was the shadow of the Earth, some that it indicated a big hollow or crack on the surface of the moon, and some said it must be a huge heap of soil. Rama asked Hanuman, who was silent for long, what he thought about it. Hanuman said that it was the reflection on the moon of the cloud-blue face of the Rama he adored! He had the unique fortune of visualising Rama in everything he cast his eyes on.

Hanuman is pictured as a monkey and monkeys are by nature, wayward and frolicsome. Monkeyish, has become a byword for fickleness. But, Hanuman did not have any trace of this fickleness. He was of Divine birth; he was distinguished with the Divine qualities mentioned in the Gita. He derived Bliss at the contemplation of the Rama in the heart of every being. He had full mastery of physical and sensual cravings; he was shining in Atmic splendour. He had established his career on the basic foundations of Sathya and Dharma; he held his companions also on the same path, exercising the force of his example on them.

Of the three Gunas, Satwa (the balanced) Raja (the passionate) and Tamas (the dull), the Rajas is the quality to be watched carefully, for, its first progeny is Kama or Lust. Lust destroyed Ravana, who was a great scholar, warrior, emperor and a mighty hero. It can overwhelm and neutralise every good quality in man and reduce him to something worse than a beast. Anger is the second among the progeny of this quality. Anger can seize the treasure chest of Wisdom from your grasp and break into smithereens. It is usually compared with fire, Anala, as it is named in Sanskrit. Anala, means 'not enough'. It always relishes more and more fuel, so that the flames may rise skyward. It seems to enjoy eating up entire forests or cities.

Hanuman had no lust. His anger was not of the 'not-enough' variety. In order to search for Sita, Hanuman had to enter the women's apartments of the palace of Ravana. He had to look into the faces of the sleeping women and compare their features with what Rama had told him of the features of Sita. He was feeling very guilty that he went through this ordeal; so he went to the seashore, and felt awfully depressed. He even contemplated suicide because he was too ashamed to show his face to Rama. But, he consoled himself that it was after all the order of Rama that he was obeying. So, he returned to continue the search. He considered every woman as his own mother. This is a good lesson for Youth today. Hanuman searched where his mother was, not where Sita was. On the occasion of the Coronation of Sri Rama at Ayodhya, presents were given to the Ministers and the distinguished visitors, collaborators and companions of Rama-Vibhishana, Sugriva, Jambavan, Nala, Neela etc. Hanuman was not given any. Observing

this, Sita who had benefited most by his Selflessness and heroism, devotion and dedication, felt pained.

She communicated her feelings to Rama, who was beside her on the Throne. Rama told her that she could give him any present she favoured. So, she took off from her own chest a beautiful pearl garland and placed it in the hands of Hanuman. Immediately, Hanuman took the pearls apart and putting them one by one between his teeth, he bit each pearl and spat it out in disgust! Sita became flushed with anger. She whispered to Rama that Hanuman could not but be a monkey. Rama said, that there must be some deep meaning in what he was doing, for, Hanuman would not indulge in sacrilege, whatever other things he might do. When asked, Hanuman said, "No. I was only examining whether these pearls had the name Rama in them; I could not find any one which had. So, I cast them away." If a thing has no Rama Nama in it, it is to me, as worthless as stone."

At this, Agastya, one of the renowned sages who were assembled in the Hall rose up and challenged Hanuman with the question, "Hanuman! You say that you will not wear or bear, eat or carry anything that does not sound Rama, to the ear and taste the sweetness of that Name. Well, You carry this body about, don't you? Does it sound Ram Ram to you?" Hanuman accepted the challenge. He pulled a single hair from off his wrist and held it to the ear of the sage. Lo, it was reciting Ram, Ram, without interruption. Hanuman's loyalty, his devotion to all that belonged to his master was so deep and so sincere. That is the reason why he achieved victory, whatever the assignment.

After the Coronation Celebrations were over, the brothers, Sita and Rama sat together one day, reminiscing over past events; when some of them expressed a desire to have a larger share of serving Rama, Bharata and Shatrughna were the most eager. So, a list was drawn up of all items of service that could be offered to Rama and the items were allotted those present. Hanuman was not present at the time and when he came in, the others announced with a certain amount of glee, that he had no more chance to serve Rama; everything will now be done by others. Rama also joined in the fun. Hanuman was terribly dejected. He pleaded with them: "Pray, go over the list again. Give me any bit of service, however small that might have been overlooked." They were sure that nothing had been overlooked and so, the list was given into the hands of Hanuman himself. Luckily, he discovered one item that had not been allotted—when some one yawns, there is a rite that has to be gone through right against the yawning mouth, namely, a quick clack of the fingers to produce a snapping sound. Of course, the person who yawns usually does it himself. But, in the case of Rama, Emperor of Ayodhya, it would surely be infra dig, if he does it himself. Hanuman pleaded that he might be given the duty of clacking the fingers whenever Rama yawned. And, the others agreed, for, they thought that the chances of Rama yawning would be very rare indeed. For Hanuman, it was a godsend, however. For, he was ever ready with his fingers steady, watching the face of Rama, waiting for the chance of performing the rite that was his duty!

This too was the Grace of Rama, for, what can happen without his knowledge and his plan? Who can keep the devotee away from the presence of God? Rama demonstrated by this incident that no one can obstruct his wish and stand between his devotee and himself.

Operation Smile

We are all aware of the forceful influence of the Baba Smile. It is the most charming of His multifaceted personality. It is also the most effective instrument that instructs, inspires and reforms. We have all been deeply affected by that smile; to regain it and to bask in its illumination, has been the cherished desire of every one among us.

But, why? What is there in a smile that makes thousands travel half around the globe to catch a glimpse of those twinkling eyes and see the smile spreading along those red lips? That is His secret. But, does He keep it from us? When He stands over your supercilious ego, and flashes a knowing smile at you or pours on that miserable ego His Love and Compassion, something begins to happen. It occurs so suddenly and so charmingly that you are bewildered; your intellect totally misfires, you fail to take stock of it; you feel like burning in a chalice. And, leaving you to the flames that destroy your ego, He walks away to take on another ego-victim.

But, wait. Look within. Is it for this that we hasten all the way to Him hazarding our comforts and money, to get this inner ash? Yes, but, we do not regret it! For, we derive greater comfort in knowing that our formulated existence is breaking down. We begin to crack under the impact of that smile, no doubt, but we begin to see a new horizon, a new blue-print for our lives.

This is how this unique World Teacher transforms us. When we are too much in this world, when the world is too much with us, when our petty selves are overwhelmed by the whirlwinds of desire, when we are angry against God and man, and when we curse this life as a mad man's meaningless song, He begins His Operation, the Operation Smile. Either in person, if we happen to be anywhere near Him, or, through a photograph of His which catches our eye, He corners us with His smile! We get a bang, a pat, a shock, a lightning streak up our spine. We are stopped and persuaded to re-examine our thoughts, words and deeds. Our old ideas refuse to fit into the new design, the mind would fain weave for itself. Something somewhere has gone wrong, we feel. We get ashamed of our past; we become hopeful of our future.

The sunshine of that smile lifts us to a higher level of purity; we realise the utter childishness, the futile foolishness of all our pursuits, complaints, grievances, indulgences and prejudices. That smile prods us to rehabilitate ourselves; it calms our shattered nerves. We begin to sing Bhajans, or, we find a new zest in singing them; we join in the early morning Omkar recitation; we go up to the banyan tree planted by Him, if we are in Prasanthi Nilayam, or to some quiet spot and attempt Dhyana. We look around and at people, with a new confidence, for, we have a far tighter hold on ourselves now. As soon as we receive the smile, we vow to extricate ourselves from some evil habit, like smoking or drinking or gambling.

And, all this has been achieved by a short-lived, sublime, wordless Smile! Have you ever heard or known anything of this magnitude, happening to a person, within such a short time, as

the impact of a smile? But, note. This is but the beginning of the end. Our earlier convictions and beliefs, ideas and ideals, ideologies and theologies assume new colours and new angles; they are now more satisfying to ourselves and to the society we live in. The 'truths' we clasp to our breast lose their glamour; we speak to ourselves with a chuckle, Truth? My dear boy, what do you know of Truth? It is all-encompassing, all-transcending! You are dwelling in the part, and revelling do it; don't claim to have known the 'whole'.

Come. Forget your 'ills' and 'wells' and immerse yourselves in this Smile, which Cuttack reveals to us the Way as well as the Stay. We seem to agree with Jesus, when he says, by Dying, we enter into Life, by giving up, we really attain. Let us hold on to the understanding that the Smile has conferred, as long as possible; let us not allow alien winds to touch your faith. When this knowledge becomes a part of our life, we are a step up in Sadhana. Baba points out the importance of this when He says, "Don't deny your own experience, cherish them, dwell upon them and move on from one experience to another."

That Smile sets us on the path of Sadhana. Everything seems endowed with a new Glory, for, everything is lit by that smile. We hear a Bhajan song from every bird that sweetens the air. We find a new meaning in life. We know we are not to lie here all our life; we have to rise, and march, until all discordant tunes are harmonised in one glorious Orchestra, which celebrates His Majesty.

—B. K. Misra

Affection, attachment, reverence, adoration—these are the flowers; devotion and dedication are the fruits; when, they ripen, they fill themselves with the sweet sustaining juice, called Inana or Wisdom.

—Baba

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

91

Sita Shocked

The Vanara heroes failed to find any means to overpower the boys; so, they spoke to one another that no one in the fourteen worlds could gain victory over them. They could not say or do anything more. They had to keep silent.

Just then Kusa fell upon Rama. The impact forced Rama to faint and fall. Kusa pulled down the decorative ropes and chains on the chariot and the horses of Rama and both brothers bound Hanuman with them. They led Hanuman at the end of the rope and took him home. They also took other Vanaras and a few bears, all with bright coloured clothes and decorations on them. And, the sacrificial Horse was among the possessions they paraded. With these, they approached the mother, Janaki. They prostrated before her and offered the booty acquired as homage to her.

Janaki was amazed at the sight of the Vanaras and others as well as the way in which they were decorated and dressed up. Just then Valmiki the Sage reached the place evidently overcome with anxiety. He described all that had happened. He loosened the bonds on Hanuman, Jambavan and others and bewailed, "Boys! What is this you have done? You have come here after felling to the ground Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna." Sita was shocked at this. She said, "Alas! Dear children! On account of you, the dynasty itself has been tarnished. Don't delay further. Prepare for my sati, that I may ascend the same. I cannot live hereafter." Sita pleaded for quick action. She desired to immolate herself.

The Sage Valmiki consoled her and imparted some courage. Then, he went with Kusa and Lava to the battle-field and he was amazed at what he saw there. He recognised the Chariot and the horses of Rama and finding Rama, He fell at his feet. Rama rose in a trice and sat up. Kusa and Lava were standing opposite to him. Valmiki addressed Rama thus! "Lord! My life has attained fulfillment. O How blessed am I!" Then, he described how Lakshmana had left Sita alone in the forest and how Sita lived in his hermitage, where Kusa and Lava were born. He said, "Lord! Kusa and Lava are your sons. May the Five elements be My witnesses. I declare that Kusa and Lava are your sons."

Hearing these words, Rama embraced the boys and stroked their heads. Through the Grace of Rama, the fallen Vanaras and Warriors rose alive Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna caressed and fondled the boys. Lakshmana hurried to where Sita was, for, Rama directed him to find out from her what she proposed to do about her "vow." Nearing her, Lakshmana fell at her feet. Sita was desirous of fulfilling the "vow", if that was the wish of Rama; so she accompanied Lakshmana to the presence of Rama. Seeing the assembly she made the pronouncement, as the real truth! "O Gods! O Elements Five! I have not dwelt even in my dream on any one other than Rama, in mind, speech, body or deed. O mother! Goddess Earth! Take me into yourself." Immediately, the Earth sundered where she stood, with great rumbling and from the trench so formed, there arose a Divine Lion-Throne, with the Goddess Earth seated therein. As she came to the surface, She held out Her hand, and lifting Janaki from the ground, She blessed her thus: "O Janaki From birth until today, no day passed without your sorrowing therein. You streamed tears always. Come! In my Home, be happy." The next second, they were both out of sight. Her Glory spread over the three worlds. This was clearly seen by Lakshmana and others.

They shed tears. Rama acted the role of a saddened person. He thought within himself "Janaki has gone in consonance with the inclinations of my mind. She was always moving in accordance with the plans I had in mind. Now, we should also proceed to our Vaikuntha residence." But, to others, he appeared sad and grieving a little. Soon, he left for the Capital City with his brothers and sons. He performed the concluding rites of the Yaga as planned. He gave away in charity the sixteen prescribed gifts in quantities that were beyond description. Rama honoured Emperor Janaka as befitted his status and took the sons to his presence. He was immensely delighted when he saw his grandsons. Since Janaki was replete with wisdom, and since he was aware through his divine insight of the divinity of Sita, he did not exhibit any surprise or wonder, any anxiety or worry, over what had happened; his mind was unaffected because he knew that what had to happen had happened. His attitude was also not affected to the slightest extent by the incidents that took place. On the other hand, he was delighted that he was endowed with the fortune he experienced. Janaka left for Mithila City filled with unbounded joy.

The Gurus and the Brahmins came into the presence of Rama, according to the message sent by him. And, they took leave of him, happy that they were enabled to witness the great Yaga; they returned to their homes fully content.

Thereafter, calling the sons to his side, Rama advised them about the means and methods of administration of the empire; then, he formally invested them with the insignia of imperium. He placed the son of Bharata, Taksha, over the Southern Kingdom; his second son, Pushkara, was given the Pushkara Kingdom. They destroyed the remnants of Rakshasas that were there and established themselves in those Kingdoms. The sons of Lakshmana, Chitraketu and Chitrangada, were mighty warriors, heroic fighters, veterans of war. They were deputed to the Western Region and destroying Rakshasas there, they ruled over that area. Rama invested those two with regal authority over cities with different names which became their capital cities. He also gave all the sons valuable advice on political and administrative matters. Kusa was installed in Ayodhya and so, Lava was awarded the Northern Region. That region was the treasure chest of riches. The city of Lavapura (modern Lahore) was fixed as his capital city. Rama gave away cows, lands, clothes and money to the fullest to each.

Meanwhile, the news, that Rama was contemplating return to his own place came to be known by the people of Ayodhya; they came in immense numbers to his presence and prayed that their request be listened to. Their request was that they too be taken by him to his divine home. The Lord said that it was a right request and he agreed to do so. He was glad at their affection and the devotion and dedication they had towards their, Lord. Lakshmana led them to the river.

The Kishkindha Kingdom was allotted to Angada. Sugriva, Jambavanta, Vibhishana, Nala, Neela and other individuals embodying parts of Divinity, and millions of Vanaras who had come to fulfill the Divine Mission came to the Presence of Rama at that time. Rama accosted them and said, "Vibhishana! You have to rule over Lanka; you will attain my Presence in the end"; he blessed him thus. Then, he turned to Jambavan, and told him, "Jambavan! Be on the earth till the end of the Dwapara Age. Then incarnated as Krishna, a fight with you will happen to me. You will then recognise me as now." He blessed him in that manner.

Then he proceeded to the bank of the Sarayu River. Bharata walked on the right side of Rama and Shatrughna on his left. Behind him walked the ministers and the people of the City. As they entered the waters, Bharata merged in the Lord; Shatrughna touched the water and shone in the Lotus and merged in the Lord.

The Lord uttered a blessing that all who came into this Holy Land and all who bathe in the holy Sarayu can reach Him.

(Concluded)

The Lord of Yoga

—R. K. Karanjia

I am very grateful to Bhagavan and the organisers of this Summer Course for giving me this opportunity of meeting so many young people from our great country. I feel jealous of the tremendous opportunity you are getting, an opportunity which I and my generation missed. We were brought up on a colonial system of education which was run quite contrary to the ancient Gurukula system of our land. In the Gurukuls, the teacher led the disciples from Darkness to Light. Unfortunately, because of our association with the West which had a contempt for our culture and traditions, we were subjected to the colonial type of education, where we learnt only those things that were of use to our rulers. This system continues even this day, though it is thirty years since the rulers left the shores of our country. Bhagavan has taken up the task of reviving the culture we have ignored. Our humanistic culture and super-conscious tradition are being once again validated by the efforts of Bhagavan.

I feel that the World has reached the flashpoint. There was a time long, long ago, when in the process of evolution, as a result of a mutation, man emerged. Another mutation is now imminent, as the result of a spiritual revolution. Either mankind will commit suicide or it will save itself by rising to Divine heights. The super-powers are sitting on stockpiles of bombs which can destroy the world, whoever decides to use them. The world may explode any moment, through some one's foolishness or madness. In the USA, considered as the most advanced country, we have all the evils that infect man—robbery, murder, pot, crime, and irresponsible sex life—in disastrous quantities. Many young people are moving out of those continents and wandering into quieter regions and more ancient culture-centers, seeking peace and light. They are the pioneers and fore-runners of the new generation which may save the world from self-destruction. I see many Westerners sitting among you; they are drawn by Bhagavan's Message that we can be Gods. They are trying to find the answers to the problems raised by the technological civilisation they have fled from.

Yesterday, I met a number of members of my profession and they were plying me with questions, how I came to be attached to a person who calls himself Bhagavan or God: I told them that Baba tells us that every one of us is God, yes, all of you seated here with Him. We live in a dream, where things appear real, but, are not truly so. They quoted the opinions of the Vice-Chancellor before me, but, what does the Vice-Chancellor know of the spiritual science based on the Kundalini in man? We have lost contact with the mighty source of power within us; we pride ourselves on the second-hand knowledge that we have gathered from the teachers of the West. The Divine Power in man can move mountains and change the course of rivers, Since you are being introduced into this great treasure of our culture here, I shall not refer to this as a College; it is a Temple. Our body, is also a temple; only, we have not made it fit for God to reveal Himself through it, within it. Through Yoga, the human body can be converted into a holy temple, where the Divine can manifest all Its powers.

This is the Kali Age, the worst Yuga in the development of man when man, is afflicted with wars, disease, fears, pollution of the outer and inner atmosphere, The sages had prophesied that seven deadly evils of an artificial society will infest man during this age, unless we realise our Divinity ourselves in time and shed the light of Love all around us. No bogus revolution can save the world from annihilation. Other remedies only intensify the rat-race, and achieve a balance of terror, while the human society is debased by drugs, defied by sex-crimes and decimated by war

and suicide. Baba is the re-incarnation of Lord Krishna, the Yogishwara, and the Lord of Yoga. India has His Message to give the world for its salvation there is God dwelling in us as the motivator and so we have to realise that we are eternal. Fire cannot burn us, nor can bullets `kill us. We are all embodiments of cosmic power.

I met the great physicist and perhaps the greatest scientist of his time, Einstein, along with Jawaharlal Nehru. He said, "We have the formula for Death, but, you have the formula for life." "Do something," he pleaded, "to help mankind to escape the black panther of death. The panther is sleeping in humanity's bed." India has the formula, but, Indians have no cognisance of the secret. We are now suffering from what is called, the 'Arjuna Complex'—full of despondency, agitation, indecision and fear. The `Krishna Cure' is the prescription needed for this complex—equanimity, recognition of the inner strength and of the impregnability of the soul, determination to act calmly and with dexterity, There is the need for a higher awareness, a giving up of the habit of negative thinking. The same Charioteer of Arjuna has come now, with the Krishna Cure for the Arjuna Complex.

"Know yourself and save yourself." That is the path of the spiritual revolution that is imminent. That alone can give power, wisdom, and success. Liberate the indwelling Goal, and then, you can draw upon the splendour of a thousand suns. The Cosmic Reality that is latent within us is as magnificent as that. India has to give the world the Vision of the God in man, the transcendental Union between man and God. This can be achieved through the lever of the Kundalini. By means of Yogic Science, we can absorb the Cosmic Power. The material is the spiritual; the spiritual is the material—both are manifestations of the selfsame Cosmic Divinity, And, therefore, he who is master of this Cosmic power can manipulate matter as he wants or wills. I told them who questioned me, that Baba was the Yogishwara who could will and shape things as he willed. This belongs to the realm of the super-conscious, which is beyond the reach of both physics and metaphysics. I asked them, why they should question about something they do not know! This too is a science, with its own technology and its own expertise. That is the reason why Einstein pleaded with Nehru, "We have learnt to control and use nuclear energy; let your spiritual adepts create a formula for the control and manipulation of Cosmic Energy." Baba is the Master who can propagate the formula which can raise the consciousness to the level of Sat-chit-ananda.

Students, you are exposed to that Cosmic Consciousness all the time. Your ego is bombarded by it; so, it cannot identify itself with the body and its needs. Through you, the spiritual revolution has to materialise throughout the length and breadth of the whole world. Hitler believed in the victory of Violence. Mahatma Gandhi said, `I can convince Hitler that he is, on the wrong track." He was convinced that spiritual force will succeed, because it has the Cosmic Consciousness as its motive power. Violence which is the weapon of materialism means suicide; this has been amply demonstrated quite often in history. We have the answer to the problems of the world; the tragedy is that we do not realise it and equip ourselves for the task of providing the answer through our lives.

We are not mere flesh and blood enclosed in a body. We are Cosmic Consciousness—God, embodied. Man and God are both parts of the same Cosmic Consciousness. Millions of years ago, the gorilla became man; the next stage is man has to become `God'. Baba says that you are God and you can realise this instantly. "Recognise yourself; release yourself from the prison of

this Body,” that is the call of the Sages of India. We know that Baba is not bound by the body, or any other limitation of time or space. The dinosaurs and other monsters of past eras could not adapt themselves by learning new horizons and so, they were left behind in the march of time. Man too might become an extinct animal, if he does not clean up the gutters of his mind.

Jesus did not `die' on the Cross; he entered the region of the super-conscious and so, the Resurrection was possible. Bhagavan has the mastery of this Super-conscious Region and so, He creates indestructible things every day. May the knowledge of our being God come into our awareness more and more and may the disaster awaiting mankind be averted by Bhagavan.

—*From Speech: 10-6-77, Summer Course*

The Universal Prayer

*Om Bhoorbhuvassuvah
Thath savithur Varenyam
Bhargo devasya dheemahi
Dhiyo yonah Prachodayath*

The Gayatri is the universal prayer, enshrined in the Vedas, the most ancient scripture of man. It is addressed to the Immanent and Transcendent Divine, which has been given no name, but, `Savita', which means that from which all this is born. The Gayatri is personified as having five facets or faces; it has three parts-(1) Praise (2) Meditation and (3) Prayer. First the Divine is praised, then it is meditated upon in reverence and lastly, the appeal is made to the Divine to awaken and strengthen the intellect, the discriminating faculty of man.

The Gayatri is considered Veda-sara, the essence of the teaching of the Vedas. Veda means, knowledge, and the prayer fosters and sharpens the knowledge-yielding faculty. As a matter of fact, the four Mahavakyas, or Core-Declarations enshrined in the Four Vedas are implied in this Gayatri mantra.

The Gayatri is usually repeated at dawn, at midnoon and at dusk. But, God is beyond time; it is as a result of our limitations that we talk of dawn and dusk. When we move away from the sun, it is dusk; when we move into the light of the sun, it is dawn. So, you need not be bound by the rule of the three points of time to recite the prayer. It can be repeated always and everywhere. Only, one has to ensure that the mind is pure. I would advise you, young people, to recite it, when you take your bath. Do not sing cheap and defiling film songs. Recite the Gayatri. When you bathe, the body is being cleansed; let your mind and intellect be also cleansed, by the remembrance of this Gayatri mantra, that I have given you this day. Make it a point to repeat it when you bathe, as well as before every meal, when you wake from sleep and when you go-to bed. And, repeat also, Shanti thrice, at the end. For, that repetition will give Shanti or Peace to three entities in you, body, mind and soul.

Every human being has four birthdays not one. The first is, when he is born as infant. It is at that time neither holy nor unholy. It craves only for food and security. The second birth is what you have achieved today—the Upanayana. Now you have become Dwija, the Twice-born. For, you are equipped with a mantra that can lead you from darkness to light. The sacred thread is a reminder of the new task assigned to you. The third birthday comes when you have finished your study of the texts of spirituality, when you have mastered the knowledge of the disciplines recommended by the Rishis and sages for self-realisation. The day you have achieved Self-confidence, Confidence in your self being immortal, you are a Vipra, the wise man. But, that is not the end. You have a fourth birthday to reach and celebrate. That day is when you have realised the Brahman, and merged your little self in the Self of which it is but an image or reflection. Then; you become the real Brahmana.

The Yajnopavitam or Sacred thread is a symbol of purity, so necessary for you to participate in the Yajna of Living. Life is a continuous series of sacrifice-of the lower for the sake of the higher, of the tiny in favour of the vast. And, the word Upanayanam, which has been given to this ceremony of initiation means, the conferment of another eye. Your two eyes cannot reveal to you the magnificence and the majesty of the realm of the Spirit. They are focussed towards the objective world and its transient attractions. So, the Gayatri mantra which will grant you the inner vision has been given you, so that you may get the third eye. The third eye is the Divine Eye.

The third eye also means that God can see into the future also. Siva has the third eye. That is why He is worshipped with the Bilva leaf, which is trifoliate. He has also the three-pronged Sula or Spear. When you place a bilva leaf on the Linga, pray that He may save you from the machinations of the three Gunas, by wielding the three-pronged Spear.

As regards the Gayatri, remember it is a treasure you must guard throughout your lives. If you have not caught the sounds correctly now, learn it from your parents or from the family priests in your own places. Perhaps they do not know the Gayatri themselves or they might have forgotten it through culpable neglect. Then, I would ask them to learn it from you.

Never give up the Gayatri; you may give up or ignore any other mantra, but, you should recite it at least a few times a day. It will protect you from harm, wherever you are, in a bus, or car, or a railway train or plane, in a bazaar or on the road. Westerners have investigated the vibrations produced by this mantra; they have found that when it is recited with correct accent as laid down in the Vedas, lustre is evident as a round ball; but, when it is repeated without regard to those accents, nothing happens except darkness. So, Brahmaprakasa, the effulgence of Brahma, will descend on you and illumine your intellect and light your Path when this mantra is chanted. Gayatri is Annapurna, the Mother, the Shakti that animates all Life. So, do not neglect it.

Elders and priests, the custodians of this mantra have given it the go-by. But, you, as inheritors and guardians of the great culture of this Country have a great responsibility, in preserving it and demonstrating its efficacy and worth.

—*Baba's Discourse 20-6-1977, Upanayanam Day*

Yoga Marga

Can a tank be filled by a pitter-patter of rain? Can thirst be quenched, by swallowing saliva? Can hunger be appeased by burning a wisp of straw? The realisation of the Truth of Creation and the Creator involves hard discipline and steady faith in the paths prescribed by the sages. These paths lead men to the goal, through inquiry, devotion, dedicated work, meditation, worship, and such other disciplines.

There is also the process of Yoga, which is being widely advocated nowadays, as a means of self-realisation available to practitioners. It is being taught and propagated as a sure and simple means of liberation from bondage. Novices and common folk are misled by the high promises; they have therefore to be warned in time, of the limits and possibilities of Yoga as now taught and propounded.

The very first axiom of the Yoga as a spiritual discipline is, "Yoga means and involves conquest over the agitations of the mind." Now, this is more easily said than done. The mind has to be dead, not dormant. Of course there are persons who have achieved this victory, but, no one of them will be available to you for guidance in mind-control or mind-conquest. They would be so sunk in Ananda that the demands of the body, the time, the causal chain etc. can never reach them.

What can be expected from the teacher of Yoga is only a diluted, limited, pseudo type of Yoga Darshan. And, only those who have stopped half-way in the path of Yoga will stand forward as instructors and guides. For, when one goes the entire length of road, he has perforce to leave the world and its needs far behind.

Yoga means Union, Yoking, and the Jivatma has to be yoked with the Paramatma, one has to find its fulfillment in whole of which it is a part. As a river that carries the waters of the sea (raised up by the sun, carried afar by the clouds and poured as rain on the earth's valleys and plains to run as rills, streams, and rivers in flood) into the sea itself, happy to lose their names, their limitations and their state in that consummation, the individual merges in the Universal. That is Yoga. It is Yoga that happens to the salt doll that is dropped into the depths of the sea to calculate the depth of the water. The salt too came from the sea and becomes one with the sea.

Man has five sheaths covering his individuality—the Annamaya (material) the Pranamaya (vital) Manomaya (mental) Vijnanamaya (intellectual) and the Anandamaya (blissful). When the self turns back from the objective world into the subjective world within him, he can unsheathe his individuality and reach the Bliss Nature of Himself. But, most men revel in the very first sheath—the material and engrossed in material pursuits and material pleasures, they end up with that entanglement. Man does not realise that he sees only what he wants to see; he cannot see beyond his need or anything besides. Unless therefore, his desires are purified and clarified, he cannot penetrate into the inner realms of delight.

Ask any one where the words he utters come from; he will answer, from the vocal chords. No. The vocal chords can produce 'voice', but, not words. The spinal column, from Mooladhara chakra to the Ajnachakra (the lowest point of the column to the mid-brow spot) is like the Veena whose strings when drawn and played upon produce resonance. The vital and the mental sheath are involved in these regions. When the playing fingers halt and press on frets fixed on the Veena at irregular intervals, different notes are created and delight ensues. When the mind decides upon an idea to be communicated, the Prana plays upon the strings and words emanate, the sounds emerging from the vocal chords.

The Mooladhara, the lowest of the chakras at the lower end of the spinal passage is the embodiment of the Prakriti principle, the Nature Principle. Therefore, it is related to the Annamaya Kosa, the material facet of man. It is the Prithvi tattwa of the earth, earthy.

The Swadhisthana chakra, at the point of the navel, is the guardian of the Pranamaya Kosa, the vital facet of the person. It is the Agni principle, the spring and source of warmth in the body, of the heat that maintains the processes of digestion and protection from environmental changes. The Manipuraka chakra is the next higher, on the spinal scale. It is the Jala tattwa, the water principle, helping the circulation of the blood, into the heart and from out of it, both, from all parts of the body.

The Anahatha chakra in the region of the heart. It embodies the Vayu principle which is in charge of the breathing process, inhalation and exhalation, so vital for life and activity. It vitalises also the spinal force and passes over the frets of the inner veena.

The Vishuddha chakra is in the pit of the throat, near the pituitary gland. It is the Aakasa principle and so, it promotes Sound or Shabda which is the characteristic of the Aakasa.

The Ajna chakra on the mid-brow spot is the embodiment of Vijnana, the splendour of awareness, for, when this chakra is reached man glimpses the Truth and gets transformed and translucent. It is only just a step for the final realisation, when the Sahasrara chakra on the crown of the head is attained. That is the consummation of all Sadhana, of all search.

The stage of Desire operates in the first two chakras, the stage of endeavour (Kriya shakti) operates in the next two, and the last two are where the stage of awareness Jnana Shakti is most evident. The awareness is there, latent in every one; ready to become patent, when the veils of ignorance are removed. The individual life-force or jiva-tattwam resides like a lightning flash in the womb of a blue cloud, between the ninth and the twelfth rings of the spinal column. It will be alert and awake only when Sadhana of any type is done after the cleansing of character and of habits.

If however, the Yoga path is undertaken when the senses are still potent and masterful, when the Sadhaka starts the exercises of breath-control, the effects on his emotions and passions will be disastrous. He will become insane and talk and write absurd and ribald things about himself and others. I have known many cases of such Sadhakas who have gone astray. That is why Sama (control of the senses), Dama (control of the inner passions and emotions), Uparathi (withdrawal of the mind from external pursuits) Titiksha (acquisition of the power to bear heat and cold, grief

and joy, profit and loss etc. with equanimity), Shraddha (faith in the scriptures and in the experience of sages) and Samadhana (Equal mindedness and fortitude) have been emphasised as qualifications for the aspirant.

Yoga, as taught and learned at present is at best only a system of physical exercises, a means to acquire health and a sense of physical well-being. It cannot be a spiritual discipline, leading to self-realisation. The body which is composed of the five elements can be affected by these Yoga practices; the mind has no illumining power of its own. Like the moon, it can only reflect the light of the Sun, or the Atma within. The Atma can be known only through Love. All claims to the contrary are spurious or beside the mark. Through the Kundalini Shakti and its ascent through the chakras, it is well-nigh impossible to realise the Universal Atma. Even when realised the experience is not communicable through lessons. The vision attained must be of the One, without a second; then only can it be genuine. The core of every being must be cognised as one.

There was a Guru once who initiated his pupil in the Narayana Mantra: "Om namo Narayanaya." When the pupil left his presence, he called him back and gave an additional direction: Have the form of Narayana (Vishnu) before your mental eye when you repeat the Mantra. The pupil left, but, the guru called him back again. He told him, 'But, be careful that you do not think of a monkey when you are reciting the Name and contemplating the Form'. The pupil agreed, but, the monkey could not be pushed aside. Whenever he sat for meditation, he told himself that he should not think of the monkey and the monkey insisted on peeping into his consciousness! So, he complained to the Guru and asked his advice. The Guru said that Vishnu or Narayana is omnipresent and immanent in every being and so he can meditate on Narayana as the Reality of every being that appears in his vision. How can you separate some things as not-God and some other things as God? They are all limbs of His Body, cells in His Body. When you separate the nose, the eyes, the limbs, the mind and the intelligence from a man, what is it that is left?

Therefore, do not be led into the Yogamarga, since it is fraught with dangers and since there can be no efficient teachers. Of course, Yogasanas can be practised under proper leadership for health reasons.

—Discourse, 16-6-77, Summer Course

A certain District Educational Officer, while on an Inspection visit to a High School asked the student of a particular class, "Who wrote the Ramayana?" The boy pleaded innocence and said, perhaps, the Head Master wrote it. The Head Master said, he had no knowledge of the book; he praised the Officer and hoped that it was he who wrote the Ramayana. The Officer did not know who it was; so, he approached the Director of Public Instruction who appealed to the Minister in charge of Education to appoint a Committee to discover who it was who wrote the book called Ramayana! This is the pitiable state of ignorance into which this country is fast descending.

—Baba

Baba in West Bengal

I am now 75 years old; I am a worshipper of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It is worth mentioning that I have got His blessings at Kamarpukur. Some four years ago, I suffered from various ailments-gastric troubles and heart illnesses. My son took me to Prasanthi Nilayam in 1973 and we stayed there for a week around Gurupoornima. Though I felt considerably better, I had later complete nervous breakdown, which made me give up my profession as an Advocate for over six months. In January 74, I resumed practice, but, I still had a bad pain (Cervical Spondilisis) in the spinal chord. I could not raise my right arm, as a result of this pain. I decided to suffer it, because, I felt it was a penalty for actions in previous lives. In November 74, my only son, went to Puttaparthi, and I was alone at home. The pain increased and became excruciating. Eminent doctors advised fomentation and electric pad. I applied very strong heat, but, could get no relief. I spent three sleepless nights of torture and wondered how I could spend the fourth night that was coming on. I asked a friend of my son to take me to an acupuncturist, for I was desperately seeking some remedy; he refused to do, since my son was away. I was in tears, as a result of the pain.

About midnight that day, when all methods of getting rid of the pain failed, my thoughts were of suicide. I prayed to Baba, either to put an end to my life or to relieve the pain.

That very moment, the pain vanished; I could raise my hand in the normal way. I had sound sleep. I have had no pain or trouble since. When people say that Baba has not yet visited W. Bengal, I now tell them, "He has visited W. Bengal that midnight. Otherwise, how could I be so miraculously cured?"

—*Hirendranath Banerjea, Howrah*

The World Council All India Conference

The Seventh All India Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations will be held at Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th, 21st, and 22nd November, 1977, in the immediate Divine Presence of Bhagavan.

The organisations will receive detailed particulars in due course from the Office of the World Council of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations.

Your Name

Be known by a name that will symbolise your real Self and not simply denote or describe your body. Have names that are saturated with Divinity, that remind you of the Divine that is latent and potent in you. And, constantly reveal to yourself the implications of that name. Try your best to live up to the demands of that Name. Do not shorten the Name or behead it into a string of alphabetical letters. Keep them as they are, so that you, as well as others, can have the

chance of uttering the significant name of God that you bear. It is a crime against your parents and ancestors if you defile or deface the Name they have handed down to you as a legacy for your salvation; hand it on unimpaired to your children and children's children. There is much in a name: much instruction, much inspiration.

—Baba

Beyond Mind, Space and Time

Rationalism is a way of knowing; it is the view that the human mind has the power to know some truths that are logically prior to experience.

All the inherent limitations of thought apply to rationalism also. The process of thinking involves dichotomies or dualities.

The Primary Dichotomy of Thought

The moment one begins to think, a dichotomy or distinction between subject and object or the thinker and the thing, emerges. It is incidentally interesting to note that a thing is that one can think of. During the process of thinking, the thinking subject and the object of thought become two distinct entities. This distinction between subject and object may be designated as the primary dichotomy of thought.

The Secondary Dichotomy of Thought

In addition to this primary dichotomy between subject and object, there emerges another dichotomy between the object of thought and all other objects. The object of thought is distinguished from all other objects. This distinction between the object of thought and all other objects may be designated as the secondary dichotomy of thought.

Double Dichotomization of Thought

Thus, the process of thinking involves a double dichotomy comprising the primary dichotomy between subject and object and the accompanying secondary dichotomy between the object of thought and all other objects.

This double dichotomization of thought is a necessary concomitant of all sensations, perceptions and conceptions. The moment we begin to think we find ourselves involved in dualities.

The Egocentric Predicament

The human mind cannot easily extricate itself from its egocentric predicament. All thoughts depend on and diffuse from the ego or the self. The process of thinking is essentially egocentric.

The 'Monkey Mind' and Mysticism

It is only when the 'monkey mind' is silenced in prayer and meditation or through yogic practices that the divine 'Voice of Silence' is heard. Annihilation of thought is accompanied by the annihilation of the ego. This is the arduous and uncharted path of yoga and mysticism. But,

the ineffable afflatus of mysticism seems to be almost incommunicable through the ordinary language of the workaday world. For the limited human mind, under normal circumstances, there appears to be no way out of the egocentric predicament. All our thoughts are found to be in the 'monkey grip' of the ego or the self.

Space and Time

The dualistic forms of space and time are imposed by the egocentric human mind on all processes of thinking. Thoughts invariably fall within the grooves of space and time. In other words, the process of thinking is confined to the rigid framework of space and time. Thoughts are conditioned by space and time. One cannot think, without introducing the categories of space and time. They are indeed the warp and woof of thought.

Geometric or Euclidean space is constituted by the three dimensions of length, breadth and height. Time is the unilinear fourth dimension.

A point in space is located by the three Cartesian co-ordinates represented by the x-axis, y-axis and z-axis. For specifying an event, the fourth dimension of time represented by the t-axis is needed.

Physical events are thus delimited to the four-dimensional space-time continuum.

The Equation of Egocentric Thought

To sum up these considerations, our egocentric thought (T) is a function (f) of the primary dichotomy between subject and object (d_1), the secondary dichotomy between this object of thought and all other objects (d_2), the three spatial dimensions of length, breadth and height represented by the three Cartesian co-ordinates (x, y, z) and the fourth dimension of time represented by the temporal co-ordinate (t).

The foregoing argument may be symbolically expressed by an equation containing seven variables.

$$T = f(d_1, d_2, x, y, z, t)$$

All philosophical speculation appears to be a painful elaboration, an interminable complication and a protracted clarification of the foregoing fundamental equation of egocentric thought.

The Tautology of Knowledge

All rational knowledge is tautological. We cannot really acquire any new knowledge. We can only manipulate knowledge. Materialists interpret the mind in terms of matter: Idealists interpret matter in terms of the mind. Biology is interpreted in terms of physics and chemistry, psychology in terms of biology and so on.

Thus, one thing is interpreted in terms of another. The complex is sought to be interpreted in terms of the simple. We try to go from the known to the unknown or to the unknowable. The less

fundamental is explained in terms of the more fundamental. This process of intellectual interpretation, misinterpretation and reinterpretation goes on ad infinitum.

This ceaseless cerebration provides neither spiritual enlightenment nor intellectual illumination but leads to the mutual multiplication and chaotic confusion of antithetical and dualistic concepts.

The Limitations of Science

Scientific knowledge is empirico-rational. Science starts with empirical knowledge. It gains knowledge from experience or through the senses and applies the rules of ratiocination to such empirical knowledge. It is confined to observable, verifiable and repeatable phenomena. It cannot obviously deal with that which is unique, unobservable, unverifiable and unrepeatable.

God

God can never become an object of rational knowledge, because to know God we have to distinguish Him from other objects, which will be tantamount to a negation of His transcendence, omnipresence and immanence.

The Universe

The universe is a totality of space, time, matter, mind and energy. The universe as a whole can never become an object of thought. We are in the universe. From the standpoint of idealism, the universe is within us. We can only acquire piecemeal or fragmentary knowledge of the universe. The universe in its entirety can never become an object of thought, because in distinguishing it we have to postulate the existence of another universe, which leads to the logical inconsistency of contradicting the original definition of the universe. This will become an instance of *reductio ad absurdum*. Thus, the human mind can never grasp the universe in its totality. The limited human intellect will always fail in formulating a universally acceptable *Weltanschauung* or world-view.

Man

Similarly, man as an individual can never become an object of thought. Each man has his own unique personality. Science can investigate repeatable phenomena but not a unique individual.

God, The Universe and Man

To comprehend God, the universe and himself, man has to obliterate his ego and transcend the six-dimensional logico-spatio-temporal continuum of egocentric thought either by transcending or breaking down the barriers of double-dichotomization, space and time. Man has to progress from pluralism to dualism and from dualism to non-dualism. He has to ascend from Dvaita to Advaita. This is the perilous but luminous path of yoga, mysticism and occultism.

Baba is Beyond the Bounds of Science

We are all embodiments of divinity, says Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Divinity is an attribute of God, who cannot be comprehended by the rational intellect. Baba is an integral incarnation of divinity. He will go on baffling those who try to turn the searchlights of science on Him and look at Him through spectacles blurred by empirico-rationalism.

The Supremacy of Bhagavan's Will

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is an integral avatar. He is a total manifestation of divinity in human form. He has absolute and unrestrained freedom of the will.

Human beings are not entirely free. Their lives are governed by the karmic laws constituted by the interaction of causality and teleology. Their actions are governed by causes and purposes.

An Avatar is not circumscribed by the laws of karma. His will is Supreme and self-determined.

Miracles are visiting cards of the Divine

There have been many authentic miracles in hagiology. A miracle is a suspension of natural laws. 'Miracles are my visiting cards', says Bhagavan Baba. They remind us of the omnipresent reality of divinity. They serve the purpose of an irrefutable refutation of that irrational rationalism which pretends to understand everything through reason. Rationalism breaks down during an emotional or spiritual crisis. No one has ever fallen in love rationally or scientifically. The heart, says Pascal, has its own reasons, which the intellect cannot comprehend.

Materializations

Bhagavan Baba's materializations are the crystallizations of His thought. If the mind is a subtle form of matter, then matter may be a gross form of mind. They are perhaps inter-convertible, when the logico-spatio-temporal barriers are either transcended or broken down.

Baba's will is supreme. His miracles bear testimony to the triumph of the spirit over matter and mind. Scientists, who believe in psychophysical parallelism and psychosomatic and parapsychological phenomenalism, should have no difficulty in accepting miracles as facts beyond the ken of egocentric human thought riddled with all sorts of logical dualities and spatio-temporal barriers.

Baba is Supermystic

Bhagavan Baba is a Super Yogi, a Super Mystic, a Super Occultist and a Super-Psychiatrist. He is a Yogi of yogis, a Mystic of mystics, an Occultist of occultists and a Psychiatrist of psychiatrists. His Divine personality is not constricted by the laws of our egocentric thought.

Matter and Energy

Even at the mundane level matter is being converted into energy. We have the well-known Einsteinian equation expressing the quantitative relationship between matter and energy. Nuclear Physics asserts that $E = mc^2$ where E stands for energy, m for mass and c for the velocity of light.

Mind and Matter

Since mind is the subtlest form of matter and matter is the grossest form of mind, they might be inter-convertible at the highest level of spirituality, when the spirit either transcends or breaks down the logico-spatio-temporal barriers which restrict egocentric thought.

Bhagavan Baba's miracles are phenomenal. They bear testimony to the concretization of mind as matter. There is also the possibility that the mind might act as a catalyst in the transformation of matter from one form to another.

The Dogma of Determinism is Debunked

Science believes in the dogma of determinism, which has been deflated and debunked by Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy or uncertainty according to which it is impossible to determine the position and velocity of an electron simultaneously. In other words, the true nature of an object or phenomenon is distorted when it is subjected to scientific investigation.

Causality versus Teleology

Science can tell us the 'know-how' but not the 'why-and-wherefore' of natural phenomena. It cannot answer the questions 'Why?' and 'What for?' Causality is the official creed of science. It deals with causes and effects but not with ends and means. It cannot even understand man as a whole, because human nature and behaviour are governed more by teleological considerations than by causal laws. Then, how can such empirico-rationalist science understand a completely self-determined Avatar whose will is supreme?

Transmutation of Thought

Baba's subtle thoughts transmute themselves into gross matter. His miracles are well-authenticated facts observed by millions of men and women from all countries of the world and from all walks of life.

Baba defies Science

It is presumptuous as well as preposterous to turn the searchlight of science on Baba for the simple and obvious reason that science is based on the methods of empiricorationalism, which is constrained by the intellectually insurmountable logico-spatio-temporal barriers. A nondualistic Avatar like Baba can never be investigated by rationalistic methods rooted in indissoluble dualities.

Some self-styled scientists and pseudorationalists ignorant of the limitations of reason are strutting about like Don Quixotes brandishing their swords at spirituality and its manifestations.

Rational science cannot investigate a suprarational phenomenon like Bhagavan Baba. All such investigations are exercises in futility and imbecility.

Spirituality versus Science

Science must try to spiritualize itself instead of trying to rationalise spirituality. Science belongs to that realm of reality and relativities where truth has been tautologically defined as correspondence to facts.

Spirituality is the highest realm of reality where all relativities are resolved, dualities dissolved and absolute truth is comprehended in the lambent light of divinity. Bhagavan Baba reigns supreme in that supra-rational, supra-intellectual and supra-scientific realm of spirituality where space and time dissolve together in Eternity.

To know Brahman is to become Brahman. Without becoming Brahman one cannot know Brahman.

Sub specie aeternitas, that is from the point of view of the Eternal Knowing, Being and Becoming merge together, when the human spirit soars above all barriers of thought and experiences the Eternal, the Infinite and the Ineffable.

—**B. Srinivas Murthy, M.A. Sri Sathya Sai College, Kadugodi**

Reduce your wants to the minimum. Do not yield to the temptation of carrying round a transistor radio and listening to the enervating sloppish songs and lilts. Man can be happy with much less junk around him. Like the silkworm, you weave a cocoon round yourselves. Watch your likes and dislikes with a vigilant, self-respecting eye and discard everything that threatens to encumber your path, to either here or hereafter.

—**Baba**

Bharatiya Paramartha Vahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

1. The Supreme Reality

The process of living has the attainment of the Supreme as its purpose and meaning. By the Supreme is meant the Atma. All those who have grown up in the Bharatiya culture—the Bharatiyas—know that the Atma is everywhere. But, when asked how they have come to know of this, some assert that the Vedas have taught them so, some others quote the Sastra texts, and some others rely on the experiential testimony of the great sages. Each of them bases the conclusion and proves its correctness according to the sharpness of intellect in each. Many great men have directed their intelligence and skill towards the discovery of the omni-present Atma and they have succeeded in visualising that Divine Principle. In this country, Bharat, we have evidence of this successful realisation of the goals placed before themselves, by preachers, pundits, aspirants and ascetics, when they tried earnestly to pursue them. However, among millions of men, we can count only a few who have been able to visualise the Universal Atman.

No other living being has been endowed with intelligence and discriminative faculty, heightened to this degree, in order to enable it to visualise the Atma. This is the reason why man is acclaimed as the crown of creation, and why the Sastras proclaim that the chance of being born as man is a very rare piece of good fortune. Man has the qualifications needed to seek the cause of Creation; he has in him the urge and the capacity. He is utilising the Created Universe for promoting his peace, prosperity and safety; he is using and partaking of the forces and things in Nature for promoting his happiness and pleasure. This is approved by the Vedas themselves.

The Vedas are the authority for the faith of millions who refer to it as the Vedic Religion. They are the very words of God. The Hindus believe that the Vedas therefore had no beginning and will have no end. God speaks ever to man. They are not books written by authors. They are revelations conferred by God on many inquirers of the ways of earning the Supreme Goal. They existed before they were revealed thus as valid paths; they will continue valid even if man forgets the path. They did not originate at any period of time nor can they be effected at some

other time. The Dharma which the Vedas allow us to glimpse is also without a beginning or an end. For, it refers to the Supreme Goal.

Of course, a few may argue that, though it may be conceded that the Dharma relating to the supreme goal has no ending, surely it must have had a beginning. The Vedas declare that the cycle of Creation-Dissolution has no point where it begins and no point where it ends. It is a continuous wheel. And, there is no change in the quantum of the Cosmic Energy—either increase or decrease; it is ever the same, ever established in Itself. The Created and the Creator are two parallel lines, with their beginnings unknown and their endings incomprehensible. They are moving at equal distances from each other, ever and ever. Though God is ever-active, His Will and the Power behind it are not clear to the human intellect.

The Supreme, according to the Bharatiyas, (inheritors of Indian culture) is Vastness Itself. It rises up to the highest skies and roams free in that expanse. It was declared in clear terms, long prior to the historical period. The practice of the concept of the Supreme and the propagation of this concept suffered serious set-backs in the course of history; but, it has confronted each of these with success and is today asserting itself, alive and alert. This is proof of the innate strength of this revelation. The conceptions of the Supreme Goal as laid down in Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism endeavoured to subsume into their categories the Bharatiya concept and transfuse it as part of themselves; still, it did not accept the alien status in its own birth-place; on the other hand, it clarified to those religions themselves their own concept of the Ultimate and emphasised the Unity of all view-points, and established cordiality on the basis of the absence of difference. While the stream of knowledge regarding the supreme Goal discovered by the Bharatiya saints flowed on, the concepts of the other faiths remained as pools beside it.

In India (Bharat) itself many sects were born like mushrooms from out of the main faiths. They tried to pluck by the roots or to cause mortal damage to the basic concept of Hinduism regarding the Reality, the Supreme. But, as when in a terrific quake of land the waters of the sea recede only to return with thousand-fold fury roaring back upon the shore it had seemed to quit, this stream of Bharatiya wisdom was restored to its pristine glory, when it rose above the confusions and conflicts of history. When the agitations subsided, it attracted the varied sects that distracted the mind of man, and merged them into its expansive form. The Atma principle of the Bharatiyas is all-embracing, all-revealing, all-explaining and all-powerful.

Developing faith in the Atma Principle and loving it earnestly—this is the real worship. The Atma is the one and only Loved One for man. Feel that it is more lovable than any object here or hereafter—that is the true adoration man can offer to God. This is what the Vedas teach. The Vedas do not teach the acceptance of a bundle of frightfully hard rules and restrictions; they do not hold before man a prison-house where man is shut in by the bars of cause and effect. They teach us that there is One who is the sovereign behind all these rules and restrictions, One who is the core of each object, each unit of energy, each particle or atom and One under whose orders alone the five elements—ether, air, fire, water and earth—do operate. Love Him, adore Him, and worship Him—say the Vedas. This is the grand philosophy of Love as elaborated in the Vedas.

The supreme secret is that man must live in the world where he is born like the lotus leaf, which though born in water floats upon it without being affected or wetted by it. Of course, it is

good to love and adore God with a view to gain some valuable fruit either here or hereafter; but, since there is no fruit or object more valuable than God or more worthwhile than God, the Vedas advise us to love God, with no touch of desire in our minds. Love, since you must; love for love's sake; love God, since whatever he can give is less than He Himself; love Him alone, with no other wish or demand.

This is the Supreme Teaching of the Bharatiyas. Dharmaja, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, as depicted in the Mahabharata, is the ideal of this type of Lover. When he lost to his enemies his vast empire which included all India and had perforce to live in caves among the Himalayan ranges, with his consort, Draupadi, she asked him one day, "Lord! You are undoubtedly the topmost among those men who follow unwaveringly the path of Dharma; yet, how is it that such a terrible calamity happened to you?" She was stricken with sorrow.

Dharmaja replied, "Draupadi! Do not grieve. Look at this Himalayan range. How magnificent! How glorious! How beautiful! How sublime! It is so splendid a phenomenon that I love it without limit. It will not grant me anything; but, it is my nature to love the beautiful, the sublime. So, here too I am residing, with love. The embodiment of this sublime beauty is God. This is the meaning and significance of the love for God.

God is the only entity that is worth loving. This is the lesson that the age-long search of our Bharatiyas has revealed. This is the natural trend of man's essence. This is the reason why I am loving Him. I shall not wish for any favour from Him. I shall not pray for any boon. Let him keep me where He loves to keep me. The highest reward for my love is His love, Draupadi! My love is not an article in the market." Dharmaja understood that Love is a Divine quality and has to be treated so. He taught Draupadi that Love is the spontaneous nature of those who are ever in the awareness of the Atma.

The Love which has the Atma as its basis is pure and sublime; but, since man is bound down by various pseudo forms of love, he believes himself to be just a Jiva, isolated and individualised, and deprives himself of the fullness and vastness of Divine Love. Hence, man has to win the Grace of God; when he secures that Grace, the Jiva or the individual will be released from identification with body and can identify himself with the Atma. This consummation is referred to in the Vedas as 'Liberation from Bonds (Bandhavicchedana), or 'Release' (Moksha). To battle against the tendency of body-identification, and to win the Grace of God as the only means of victory, spiritual exercises have been laid down, such as philosophical inquiry, besides sense-control (Dama), and other disciplines of the six-fold Sadhana. The practice of these will ensure the purification of the consciousness; it will then become like a clean mirror that can reflect the object; so, the Atma will stand revealed easily and clearly. For Jnana-Siddhi (the attainment of the highest wisdom), Chitta Shuddhi (the cleansing of the consciousness) is the Royal Path. For the pure of heart, this is easy of achievement. This is the central truth of the Indian search for the ultimate Reality. This is the very vital breath of the teaching.

The Bharatiya approach is not to waste time in mere discussions and assertions of faith in dogmas. They do not delight at the sight of empty oyster shells thrown upon the beach. They seek to gain only the pearls that lay in the depths of the sea; they would gladly dive into those depths and courageously seek for the pearls. The Vedas show them the ideal to follow and the

road which leads to the realisation. The ideal is the awareness of the supreme Truth that lies beyond the knowledge gained by the senses of man. The Vedas remind man that the non-physical Atma is in the physical 'him', that embodiment of Truth is the Supreme Atman, the Paramatman. That alone is real and permanent; the rest are all transitory, evanescent.

The Vedas took form only to demonstrate and emphasise the existence of God. The Hindu Siddhapurushas (those who attained the highest goal of spiritual Sadhana) have all travelled along the Vedic path and carried on their investigations according to Vedic teachings. The Sastras contain authentic versions of their experiences and the bliss they won. In the Sastras, and in the Upanishads, they assert, "We had the awareness of the Atma." Hindus do not aim at confronting a dogma or a theory and scoring a victory over it; they aim at testing that dogma or theory in actual practice their goal is not mere empty faith; it is the Sthithi (the stage reached), the Siddhi (the wisdom won). The life-aim of the Bharatiyas is to reach fulfillment, through constant Sadhana, the fulfillment that comes from the awareness of one's Divinity. Mergence with the Divine is the attainment of fullness. This is the Supreme Victory, for the Hindu, the Bharatiya.

*Namasmarana is the hoe, for the mind's useless weeds.
I separate my Samskaras and offer them to Thee
All successes and failures—so, with clear heart, I may
Be a sweet open Lotus—to offer Thee—some day!*

Destiny and Free-Will

"Success or failure is your own making; you decide your own destiny; the Lord has no share in deciding it," says Bhagavan Baba. While the 'writing on the brow' has to work itself out Bhagavan reminds us that it is not written by some hand other than our own and assures that the hand that wrote it can also wipe it out.

The embodied soul

The Universe is not the result of meaningless chance. It is the creation of the Supreme and is also pervaded and sustained by the Supreme. The individual Soul is a spark, a ray, and a reflection of the Supreme. The embodied Soul or Jiva consists of the gross body, the *Prana* (principle of breath), and *Manas* (the principle of the mind). *Prana* regulates all the unconscious activities and *Manas* using the five *Indriyas* (organs) of knowledge and the five of actions, regulates the conscious activities. All these are organised by the *Buddhi* (intellect). The Ego is the centre around which the experiences of the senses and the mind gather. The individual Ego is subject to *Avidya* (ignorance). It attributes to itself a separate existence. This sense of separateness develops *Ahamkara* (egoism). *Avidya* or ignorance prevents the Ego from realising unity with the Supreme or Brahman, with other beings and the world of objects which the Supreme pervades and sustains.

The human predicament

The individual engages himself in action throughout his life. The Soul assuming the role of the doer and the enjoyer reaps the fruits of such actions and survives the death of the physical body. It gathers around it the impressions arising out of the experiences conveyed to it by the mind and the senses in their contact with the external world. These impressions called *Vasanas* (predispositions) colour and influence the individual's actions. Unable to exhaust the accumulated *Vasanas* and to overcome the enveloping ignorance, the Ego persists even beyond the fall of the physical body. It is reborn to continue its unfinished work. Inevitably however, the march of the Soul is towards evolution. The forward and backward movements of the Soul in the Scale of Divinity in successive lives do not negate the Divine purpose. Time, against which the span of life is measured, is insignificant as compared to Eternity which is the measure of the Supreme. The bondage has necessarily to be broken and this happens ultimately by the Ego waking to the Divine call through Sadhana, either on its own volition or under the pressure of circumstances.

For the Soul thus released, the world is nothing more than a stage to complete the remaining part of its destined role. Once the curtain falls and he retires, he does not appear again. Embodiment ceases for him.

Destiny

The hard facts of life do not however permit the ordinary man to dismiss the material world as a dream or illusion. It is an illusion to one who has woken to the Reality of Divine Consciousness; but to the ordinary man, bound by ignorance, the world is an objective reality. One is born high, one low; one rides the crest of luxury, another wallows in hunger and pain; one is the oppressor, another, the oppressed; one is virtuous another is vicious. The self-same Divine is in all, but no two lives are the same, not even twins born to the same parents, in the same environs at about the same time. While those who enjoy success, happiness and luxury may ignore the realities so long as the going is good, others who are caught in the grips of pain and suffering wonder about the riddle of life. Some deny God, some censure Him; the humbler accept their plight as something beyond their understanding, beyond their control and surrender to what they call 'the dictates of destiny'.

It is no doubt, destiny; it is not however the inhuman and capricious decree of a tyrannical God. The Lord is all compassion, all Grace. He is nearest to us, in the innermost recesses of our being. We have only to be conscious about this and direct our steps inward. When we are moving outward we are getting away from Him at every step; the reversal of the steps takes us nearer and nearer to Him; the world of objects slowly fades in the distance. As we proceed we will also find the Grace and guidance necessary for us to reach the Goal. As Bhagavan Baba Himself has assured, for every one step towards the Lord, the Lord takes ten steps towards the devotee.

Law of Karma

The world of 'becoming' is subject to the Divine law of Karma which acts justly and allows each the freedom to work out his own destiny. Under its operation good begets good and evil brings about its own retribution. As Bhagavan Baba says, "There is a law of cause and effect; every Karma has a consequence, whether you like it or not, whether you anticipate it or not. A good Karma produces a good result; a bad one has to produce a bad result." The Lord does not interfere with the operation of the Law. The high and the low, the Saint and the sinner are all the

same to Him. He declares, "I am the same in all beings. None is hateful nor dear to me " (Gita, IX-29).

Karma, literally meaning Action is a very comprehensive term. From the smallest activity of an individual at one end, it embraces the activity resulting in the Cosmos coming into existence at the other. Explaining the Cosmic evolution, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna, "Karma is the name given to the creative force that brings beings into existence." It also includes the rites and sacrifices embodied in the Vedas, since they contemplate actions performed to please the Gods or for obtaining certain specific results. We are concerned here with Karma as the law which governs human destiny both in its prospective and retrospective aspects and the means of transcending the Karmic results by conscious effort i.e., by the exercise of freewill.

We must start from the premise that this life is a continuation of several past lives and that it is also a link in the chain of lives yet to follow unless in this very life one is able to break the bondage and attain salvation. The individual comes in this world with his Karmic load. It is the same law of Karma which determines when and where he should be born, and what his environs would be. The nature of the Karmic load also influences his Gunas (qualities), whether his character would be Satwic leading to a virtuous life, Rajasic-one predominated by passion and pomp, or Tamasic, i.e., mean and slothful. His attitude to and propensities in life are also influenced by Karma in the form of Vasanas, which, as we have already seen, are nothing but the impressions left on his subtle body by his past actions.

The Ego which is in a seed form initially develops as one grows and engages himself in activities. It should be noted that the term activities covers not only the physical acts involving the Karmendriyas, but also the 'acts' of the mind. The thoughts which are the activities of the mind are as much 'productive' of results as of the organs of action, if not more.

Karma in action

We know that one's character sets the quality of his earthly life. Thoughts build character. An individual develops in his everyday life, consciously or otherwise, an enormous assemblage of mental images. This is done by the mind engaging itself in 'action' all by itself or in conjunction with physical acts. When one sits and thinks about a person whom he hates, the passions of anger and hatred predominate in his mind. The Tamasic or darker Vasanas already in him get further strengthened and the baser qualities get a firmer grip on his Ego. On the other hand if his mind is engaged in kindly or pleasant thoughts, or in prayer and meditation his baser propensities not only get dissipated, but his Satwic or finer qualities are enhanced, the Ego also sheds some of the dross enveloping it.

Just as thoughts build character, deeds build environment. Environment in this context is not only physical environment; it means the total situation in which we live including the attitude towards and relations with fellow beings and the society. No physical action is ever performed unless the mind wills it. Someone attacks a person only after the mind acting in conjunction with the intellect works out the intention. Here, apart from the mind invoking the darker passions and thereby influencing the character and Ego, the physical act of attacking has its own results, such as reprisals, counter-attacks and the animosity of the victim, leave alone the special consequences. Contrariwise a kindly and virtuous act brings into play the finer emotions and divine

qualities and creates an atmosphere of Love and Good-will apart from exerting an ennobling influence on character.

To sum up, every action has a result. It may be physical, moral or spiritual, or a combination of any of these. The Ego which, as the doer, is instrumental in providing the stimulus for such actions on the basis of accumulated Vasanas becomes also the experiencer which receives the results. Strengthened by the new experiences, the Ego continues to be in the meshes of Samsara and, unable to exhaust its Karma, it gets embodied again, in order to work out its Karmic load. This continues, until consciously, or otherwise, the Ego gets erased, and the Soul attains liberation.

—C. P. K. Nair, *Pattambi, Kerala*

MOTHER

O Mother beloved,
Mother benign,
Mother most tender,
O Sweet mother mine!

Mother so soft
So strict by design
Mother so giving
Mother so forgiving
O Mother Divine
To look on your face
Gives assurance of peace
Our worries, hatreds and fears
Should all cease.

To be in your lap
Is eternal rest.
For, far above all loves,
Your Love is the best.

OM

Before I went to India
I thought I knew Sai Baba,
Miracles—healing—Wow!
Just great.

Wrong!
I saw a physical form,
So many things. A voice of gold,

A walk of grace,
A smile always,
Physical bodies healed,
Minds stirred—
Wait and wait—

Things happened.
But, what is important
Love, His, always reaches your soul,
Slowly, surely, to change you
Forever.

—*Gerald Dominick, New York*

Sai Family News

Easwaramma High School, Puttaparthi

Bhagavan blessed the students and teachers of the Easwaramma High School and addressed the gathering there on Independence Day, 15-8-77. He distributed prizes to the winners in the Competitions held as part of the Celebrations. He said that education must result in good, strong character filled with humility and the eagerness to serve others. He said that at the Easwaramma High School, special effort is made to instil spiritual disciplines and to promote Love of God and Service to man, and so, the pupils must benefit from the curriculum and the atmosphere and become real servants of the society wherein they dwell and the country of which they are the sons and daughters.

The United Kingdom

Devotees and others in the United Kingdom are informed that the address of the Headquarters of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, including its Units, is the following: 10, Laisteridge Lane, Bradford B. D. 7., IRD (England).

Guyana (S. America)

The Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre, Georgetown, opened by Dr. B. P. Apte, Director, the Indian Cultural Centre, in April 76, has extended its work through Bal Vikas and Seva Dal and, at the invitation of several Temple Committees, spread the teachings of Bhagavan and shown films about Him, in villages located far off from Georgetown.

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Monthly Open Air Bhajans have been arranged by the Central Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Colombo, at the Galle Face Green, Beach, on every Poya Day (Full Moon Day, which is a public holiday in Sri Lanka). This programme was inaugurated on 27th March, and more than 3000 people participated. A convoy of buses carrying 120 devotees, Bal Vikas students and Seva Dal members, went round a number of towns, villages and holy places, and returned after a journey of 900 miles back to Colombo, after six days of activity. In every place, Bhajans, discourses and

items of drama and dance by Bal Vikas pupils delighted the hundreds who attended that gatherings.

Roorkee, U. P.:

The District Governor, Lions Club, has adjudged the Seva Project run by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti (in co-operation with the Lions) as the best Service Project, consecutively in 75-76, and 76-77. It is an intensive project for the rehabilitation of lepers.

Malaysia

The Sathya Sai Baba Seva Dal Group of Port Klang, Malaysia, has constructed the 'Prema Nilaya', a prayer hall and service center at Kampong, Miskin. This building was inaugurated on 6th August, by the Minister of Information, Malaysia, Hon'ble Y. B. Menteri Datuk Amarhaji Abdul Taib Mahmud, President of the Malaysian Inter-Religious Organisation. Bhajans, Film Shows and Distribution of special Inauguration Souvenirs were parts of the programme.

United States; The Sai Satsang

Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Centres in the Northern States met for three days (June 10, 11, and 12) at a Satsang, at Frank. A. D. Camp near Sturbridge, (Massachusetts). Bob Hill, Secretary of the Manchester Unit of the Organisation, in Connecticut was the Convenor of the meet. By evening of the 10th, members from various centres began arriving at the Camp. The Chairman of the Manchester Unit acquainted them with the guidelines, the rules and regulations and other matters of spiritual discipline, so that the atmosphere might correspond as near as possible with that of Prasanthi Nilayam. Later, men and women sat in separate lines before the altar where Baba's picture was placed, and chanted Bhajans.

On Saturday, every one was up early. They chanted the Pranava and recited the Suprabhatam song. Then, women in one group and men in another group went round chanting Bhajans, as part of the programme of Nagarsankirtan. A few earnest devotees then spent sometime learning how to chant the Bhajans. Some others formed study groups, and the rest listened to the exposition of some verses from the Gita. Bhajan followed and after Bhajan, all sat in meditation for some time. Later, Kumari Michele read the story of Uma from Sister Nivedita's 'Cradle Tales of Hinduism'.

In the evening, the children who were pupils of the Bal Vikas Centre of New Jersey enacted a charming play on 'Sabari', the tribal woman who was deeply devoted to Rama. A five-year old boy spoke on Baba, most sweetly. The children also sang Bhajans, and everyone thrilled to the sincerity and the melody. Bhajan followed in which every one took part. The final item in the programme was a film show by Dr. Pani on the Inauguration of the Walter Cowan Block of the Sri Sathya Sai College Hostel, by the Vice-President of India. Many liked the film so much that they yearned to become students again so that they could stay in the Hostel and be in the Presence of Baba.

On Sunday too the same schedule was adhered to. That day, after Nagarsankirtan, members from the various Centers spoke on the activities undertaken by each Center. Members from the Centers from Manhattan, Brooklyn and (Queen's from New York, the Sayosset Center from Long Island, the Phoenix Center, the South Jersey Center, the Manchester Center from Connecticut, the Boston Center and the Washington Center spoke. Besides these, devotees who

had come from Miami (Florida), Poundridge (New York) and Vermont State also gave short accounts of the Sai activities there. The Bal Vikas children enacted most charmingly another play based on the story related by Baba on the theme that no one need fear death. They sang the Song, 'Love is My Form' and thrilled every one. Study Groups were formed to learn more about the Culture of India and the spiritual disciplines practised there. Dr. Pani had the film shown again; he also spoke on Baba and his experiences at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan. Many members plied him with questions in their eagerness to know more and more of the Unique Divine Phenomenon that they recognised in Baba. The Satsang was an instructive and inspiring experience to every one who participated. They will remember it for many years in their lives.

The Brother Among Brothers

The ideal of brother-hood depicted in the Ramayana story is without parallel in any other epic anywhere in world literature. When, during the battle in Lanka, with the Rakshasa hordes, Lakshmana fell in a faint and could not be revived, Rama lamented the calamity, saying, "Alas! Lakshmana is the breath of my breath, a brother like him has never been available for any one else on earth." Lakshmana's life and relations with his brother Rama are shining examples for mankind.

It can be said that Lakshmana is the A in the sacred syllable AUM. Bharata, the other brother is the U; Shatrughna, the third one is the M. And, Rama, the eldest, is the full OM (AUM). Rama is the concretisation of the Brahman that emanated first as the Primeval Sound, OM. When Rama and Lakshmana were wading through the jungle, after the loss of Sita, the sages who saw them described them as the 'Sun and Moon'. Their mien was so majestic and magnificent. They shone with the splendour of courage and determination. When strength of body and steadfastness of mind reinforce each other, one's mien becomes so attractive. Youth today have neither physical strength nor mental steadfastness. So, they appear too old before their time, 60, even while they are in their teens. When the body is weak, the mind too gets weak. You must try to develop physical well-being and health, for, a gem has to be treasured in a safe strong box. The gem of divinity that is your reality has to be kept in a strong box namely, the body.

Rama and Lakshmana were, even in boyhood, careful about the dress they wore. During the period of their early spiritual apprenticeship, they discarded princely robes, even though Dasaratha tempted them to wear costly jewels and clothes. They were particular to wear dress that would be appropriate to the roles they were playing. When in the forest as exiles, they wore deerskin and had the hair knotted on top. They argued that dress must be worn for one's own satisfaction and not as imitating some one else. They were never slaves of fashion or convention. They laid down the norms for others; they never accepted what was laid down by others, just to earn their favour.

Heroism was the hall-mark of the brothers. They met every obstacle squarely and exhibited the enterprise necessary to meet and overcome opposition. Youth today have to learn this lesson. They quail before the tiniest obstacle and lose heart at the first difficulty they encounter. Like the heroes of the Ramayana, they should march forward bravely whatever the handicap in either

secular, moral, or spiritual fields of activity. Of course, when the truth that there is but One Reality in all and that, that Reality is God, becomes revealed, then, there will be no more room for anger or hatred. You will have to seek and see only the good in every one. The passion in your eye will colour the vision you see. Tulsi Das, while composing his epic poem Ramacharitamanas, wrote that the flowers in the gardens of Lanka were white. Hanuman who was present, unseen, manifested himself, his face full of dissent; for, he said, they were red and not white, as he had himself seen, with his own eyes. Tulsi Das refused to amend the adjective; Hanuman insisted that the error be corrected. The matter very nearly approached a scuffle. So Rama Himself had to intervene. He told Hanuman that anger against the Rakshasas had reddened his eyes and so, the white flowers appeared red to him!

Lakshmana had a pure heart from his very birth. As he grew up, he was able to overcome the urges of his senses and establish himself as their master. His character was above reproach. He eagerly welcomed any order from Rama and enjoyed fulfilling it to the best of his ability. The first two days of his life, Lakshmana spent in wailing aloud, in the lap of Sumitra, his mother! She tried all remedies-magical, and ritual. But, the baby could not be consoled or persuaded to feed itself or sleep. She consulted Vasishta, the Royal preceptor, and he advised that Lakshmana be laid beside Rama, in the Palace of Kausalya. She did as directed and, in the company of Rama, the child of Sumitra slept soundly and played most happily. He could not tolerate separation from Rama. His greatest desire was to be in Rama's presence. He followed Rama like his shadow. He never resided in a Place where Rama was not. Rama was all that he wanted, all that he cared for.

When Rama started out into exile in the forest and wore garments of bark, Lakshmana too wore them and started out with him, though the father's wish according to the boon he had granted to Kaika referred only to Rama. For 14 years, he watched over his brother and his wife, guarding them day and night, without any regard for his own comfort or even for sleep or food. Tulsi Das pays great tribute to Lakshmana for this devoted service. When Rama returned to Ayodhya after the period of exile, Tulsidas says, the citizens, in their lakhs, cheered at the sight in the distance of the flag on top of the chariot which was bringing him. But, they did not know, he says, that the pole which carried the flag of Rama's triumph was Lakshmana, the devoted brother. How could the flag fly so splendid without the dedicated service, the undaunted courage, the steadfast loyalty of the brother who gladly shared the travails of exile with Rama, be asked.

In the drama enacted by Narayana, where He came down as a Nara (man), the brother had a crucial role, Lakshmana laid his life down for the purpose of realising the mission of the Avatar. He never transgressed by so much as a step the boundary laid down by Rama. When Rama ordered him to raise a fire, into which Sita was advised to jump as part of the fire-ordeal to prove to the world her chastity, Lakshmana obeyed with a bleeding heart. When Rama ordered him to take Sita out into the forest and leave her there alone and unguarded, Lakshmana obeyed, though his heart was wrung with pain.

There were two occasions, when Lakshmana had unfortunately to go against the specific orders of Rama. When Maricha, who had assumed the form of the golden deer, had enticed Rama to a long distance and when he was shot by Rama he cried out, O Sita, O Lakshmana, as if Rama himself was calling out for help. Then, Sita wanted that Lakshmana should go to where the

cry came from, though it meant that he would break the command of Rama not to leave Sita alone in the cottage. Lakshmana stoutly refused to leave; he knew that it was a stratagem of the Rakshasa. But, Sita imputed motives and used such harsh words that Lakshmana had to disobey Rama and leave the cottage.

The second instance happened towards the end of the Avatar drama. The Gods sent Rama himself to Rama, to remind him that the Avataric career can be closed and all the Divine Participants can return to the Heavenly Abode. When Yama came into the audience hall, Rama directed Lakshmana to be at the entrance and not allow any one to enter and interrupt the conversation. He told him to be vigilant, on pain of death. While Lakshmana was keeping watch, the short-tempered sage Durvasa approached him and demanded entry. He was furious when he was stopped. He threatened that he will lay a terrible curse of destruction on Ayodhya and its inhabitants, on the entire Raghu clan. Lakshmana weighed the pros and cons. He concluded that his death would indeed be a lesser calamity than the entire population of Ayodhya being destroyed. So, he admitted Durvasa and received the punishment gladly. Lakshmana decided every act of his, on the touchstone of either Rama's wish or the general good. He gave up everything, his wife Urmila, his mother Sumitra, princely life at Ayodhya, for the chance of serving Rama and furthering his mission. When he killed Indrajit in battle, Rama embraced him with unbounded joy, and exclaimed, "Ah! Dear Brother! What a great victory you have achieved today. Now, I feel I have already secured Sita back."

Between Rama and Lakshmana, there was never any trace of envy, or suspicion. Lakshmana was supremely indifferent to what was happening around him, if it did not affect Rama. His greatness is immeasurable. He served Sita for fourteen years, every day of the year; but, he never once raised his eyes up to her face. His conduct was the height of righteousness. When the bundle of jewels that Sita had thrown down while being abducted by Ravana was retrieved by the Vanaras at Rshyamuka Hill, they handed it over to Sugriva. Sugriva brought it before Rama and Lakshmana for identification. When Rama asked Lakshmana whether he could identify any of the jewels as belonging to Sita, Lakshmana said that he could vouchsafe for the genuineness of only one jewel, that which Sita wore on the ankles; for, every day, when he fell at the feet of Sita, he could see it and so now recognise it as unmistakably hers. Such was the noble character of Rama's brother.

When Lakshmana was engaged in battle with Indrajit, he fell in a faint and Indrajit wanted to lift him unconscious and carry him into Lanka as a hostage. But, since he is the incarnation of the cosmic serpent, Sesha, he was tremendously heavy; he could not be moved at all. So he gave up the idea and went away. Meanwhile, Hanuman arrived there and when he uttered the name 'Rama, Rama, Rama' his weight was reduced to that of a feather and he could be easily carried to the Divine presence of Rama. Lakshmana was so responsive to the Ramanama. Before that name, even when he was unconscious, his powers were not demonstrated, nor could they be proudly exhibited. This is a measure of the humility and the heroism of this greatest among brothers.

—*Divine Discourse 26-5-77, Summer Course*

The One-pointedness

Education must impart the qualities in the individual that will ensure his peace and thereby, universal peace; it should cleanse the mind of all traces of narrowness, and help in fostering Unity and Love. This is the message of Bharat (India) from time immemorial. The Vedas proclaim these as the goals of education. This is the Vedabhoomi, the land that reveres the Vedas which the sages learnt through Divine Revelation. The seeds of this Message grew up as saplings in the garden of the Upanishads: these saplings grew and blossomed in the ancient Sastras, and the winds carried the fragrance of their Ananda into the four corners of the world, to vitalise and awaken the people of all the Continents. In those days, the sages lived in their hermitages, in quiet sylvan surroundings, on the banks of rivers, with their pupils. Each hermitage was a University, with the sage as the Kulapati or Chancellor. They were proficient in all the branches of knowledge and they were eager to give the knowledge over to whomsoever could receive it and make the best use of the treasure handed over to them. They succeeded in their mission as a result of their own efficiency, the enthusiasm of the pupils and the sublimity of the environment. It was all so simple and sincere, so fresh and so free.

The environment which surrounds educational institutions at the present time is quite the opposite of this ancient picture. Then, the pupils lived with the preceptor in his own residence and imbibed not only information but also inspiration, not only manners but also morals. They rose with the dawn, had their bath in cold water, went through the rigorous schedule of prayer, study, meditation and household chores; they ate the food that the Preceptor gave them. There was no distinction made in any of these disciplines between the prince and the peasant, the son of a pundit or the son of an illiterate. There was no chance to waste time in idle pursuits, trivial gossip, or in satisfying vain whims and fancies.

Every pupil was acquainted with the basic values of Indian Culture, their origins and developments, and their essential validity for the progress of the country. At the present time, the number of pupils has vastly increased, and so the quality of both teaching and learning has suffered much. Serving the teacher was itself part of education in those days. It was easy to please the teacher and get the best out of him by the process of loving service. How can salaries and fees ever satisfy the teacher? They only increase the greed for more. Then, the World's prosperity and peace were built on the foundation of Dharma; now, they depend on Dhana, i.e. riches.

The Creation of the Universe must have happened when even Time was unknown. And, living beings that have dwelt on this planet since then, are countless; the existent species are also innumerable. Man is acknowledged by all as the Crown of the animal kingdom; his is the summit of living beings. Of Jantus, it is said, he is the highest. Why? Because he is the only animal that can investigate his own self and realise and reveal the Divinity which is his reality. Other animals have no thirst for the basic inquiry and no hunger for this satisfying wisdom. This thirst has led many to posit that there is God and some, to deny the existence of God. God is described in the Gita as "more minute than the minutest and vaster than the vastest." Let us consider this paradox for a little while.

We cannot see the air that surrounds us, that we live by, and that we inhale and exhale every moment of our lives; how then can we visualise the atom and the 'particles' or 'energy knots' inside them, or the Divine that manipulates these subtle forces? Of course, when the vision is purified and clarified into its most subtle aspect, as Sukshma-buddhi, and when we are equipped with the Jnana Chakshu (the Wisdom-eye) as Arjuna was, then, we can identify the Divinity that lies behind the minutest as even more minute.

As for being vaster than the vastest, consider the sun. It is 93 crores of miles away from the earth; that is to say, if we travel at the rate of 500 miles per hour all the 24 hours of the day towards the sun, it would take 200 years to reach it. The sun is so big that the terrestrial globe can be dumped into any one of the thousands of pools or 'pits' which astronomers have discovered in it. The stars that appear to be so tiny and so multifarious are each far, far bigger than the Sun; they appear like sparkling sand particles strewn thick on the sky; but, the distances between one star and another is even greater than the distance between the Sun and the Earth! How can the petty mind of man ever conceive of this vastness and form a picture of the entire Cosmos? But here too, the sages have, by their sharpened intellect and ecstasy-filled minds, been able to get the vision of God immanent in this macrocosm, as much as in the microcosm, and even transcending its boundaries of space and time. Their experience has led them to express their adoration through concrete forms: Christ, Allah, Jehovah, Rama or Krishna. These are embodiments of the glory and the grace they tasted, the Love they felt as at the core of the Cosmos.

The Created Universe is called Prakriti, Nature. Prior to the manifestation, there was Darkness; after the manifestation, there was Light. The Darkness is the Tamasic state, when there was no activity. The Creation is the Rajasic state, when movement, agitation, uplift and downfall alternated. The Five elements were formed and attained comparative quiet. That is the Satwic state, when Divinity shone through them. These five elements are perceptible by the five senses; in fact, they are the responses to the needs of the senses. The Satwic state is the Divine state, when Light is shed on the Truth. This Truth was there, even earlier than Creation and the Cosmos. Truth is more fundamental than the atom, it must be said. Every atom and every star manifests the Truth to those who have the eye of wisdom. Each aspect of science has a special feature when it applies to some one group of things or beings. What is the special feature of man? If he too lives and dies as any animal, how can his supremacy be justified? His supremacy lies in his capacity to become aware of his Truth. We use the word, One-pointedness when Sadhana is talked about. The meaning that we generally give to that word is not correct. Each sense organ or faculty has a 'point', which makes it valid. Don't we say, 'There is no point in it', when we condemn some thing or argument? Seeing is the 'point' of the eye; hearing is the 'point' of the ear. If there is no point or Agram (as they say in Sanskrit) it is blind or deaf. The sense is then afflicted with some disease, it has some defect. Even if you catch a slight cold, the nose loses its 'point', it cannot discover smells.

Now, what is the 'point' of the mind? We call it, One-pointedness. That is to say, the mind must be pointed towards the ONE—the ONE that is denoted as the ONE without a second. as the ONE which willed that It may become this MANY. Unless the mind lays aside all other pursuits and seeks to become aware of the ONE that has become the MANY, that is inherent in the

MANY, that is the MANY, it can be pronounced that the mind too is diseased, it is suffering from some defect.

The Sages of ancient India had mastered this ONE-pointedness, and, when they willed, they could transmit that awareness to their pupils. Such persons are rare today. We have teachers in plenty but no one of them has taken up with determination this task of discovering their own identity. The Rishikul of those days have become the schools (rshikul-shikul-shkul-school) of today with the disappearance of Rishis from the field.

I have told you often that besides your parents, your teachers, and elders you have to revere other adorable ones also-your deeds. For, deeds drag us down or elevate us. Deeds chain us to both birth and death. Deeds deliver us from that chain! Deeds result in joy or grief, prosperity or poverty, gain or loss, pleasure or pain. You must have realised that your enthusiasm or despair, success or failure are but the consequences of your actions. While engaged in action, you come up against certain laws of nature, which you cannot overstep. If I loosen my hold on something I have in my hand, it has to fall down. When some one ascending a staircase slips, he has to fall down, whether he is a millionaire or a beggar, a scholar or an illiterate fellow. The law does not differentiate. Now, in every deed or act, God is present as the invisible Motivator, in every minute thing that you handle or manipulate God is present as the inner core. So, always try to elevate yourselves by doing good, speaking good, seeking good, and having the good of others in mind.

You do not lose much if a finger is so damaged that it is cut off. The body can still function and be a fit instrument. If you lose a limb, even then, you can function and benefit by your faculties. But, students! Remember, if character is lost, everything is lost! Your body may function, but your life will be ruined; society will be ashamed of you. You can be worthy, of the name students only from the day on which you imprint this caution on your, minds. Do not allow laziness, hatred and anger to contaminate your hearts. The world looks forward to your leadership in establishing and ensuring peace; how can this be realised if you cultivate hatred and anger? Practise calmness and the habit of deliberation. Don't get agitated and yield to mass frenzy. That is a sign of weakness and waywardness.

If any one blames you or abuses you or hurts you, do not do the same to him in return. Behave nobly and with patience. When a dog bites a man; he does not bite the dog in return. Education leads you from darkness to light or at least it ought to. It is only those who wander in the dark that fall into pits. Can a man Walking in the light, fall into a pit? If he does, it means, that he is still in the dark. Vid means light; so, a Vidyarthi must seek light, and gain it. What is the use of an eye that does not reveal to you the pitfalls? Education must endow you with that type of eye which will reveal in time the pits that yawn in your path.

Vidya must confer humility, selflessness and the ideals of service. If a man adores his stomach as his heaven and his iron safe as his Kailasa, how can society honour him as a scholar?

The educated man must be ready and skilled enough to serve his parents, his village, his state, his nation, his language and his culture. When a, balloon is blown, it expands until it bursts.

When the ego is filled with ideas of service, it also expands and when it, bursts, you have achieved self-realisation. This is what is referred to as the breaking of the granthis of the heart, in the Upanishads.

You are born in society; it has helped to guard you; and guide you, to foster you, to educate you and to fill you with dreams and ideals. Repay to society the debt you owe to it. Proclaim aloud that you are Bharatiyas. Decide with pride and enthusiasm to serve Bharat. The story of Bharat and the culture of Bharat—these are as much to be adored as your parents.

—Divine Discourse Gurupoornima and College Day, Brindavan 30-7-77

Atma Bodha

I recall my first visit to Dharmakshetra Andheri, Bombay, for the Darshan of Bhagavan, several years back. I went in great excitement and with much eagerness. But, unfortunately, by the time I reached the place, the Shamiana and the grounds outside it were packed with people and I could get only standing space, far far away at the back, near the road. I could get only a faint distant glimpse of His red robe and his halo of hair. But, I could hear the nectarine voice of Bhagavan. He said, "Divyatmaswarupulara!" He was reminding us that we are the embodiments of the Divine. Those words, with the heart-warming resonant vibration of His Voice were the first words I heard and although I hardly understood what they meant, they made a deep impression on my mind. I wondered what they meant and how I deserved to be addressed so, as well as the thousands who had gathered there. I was told that He addressed all gatherings in this manner with those very thrilling words. His declaration that I am a Divyatmaswarupa has remained indelible in my memory ever since. Whenever I think of Bhagavan, the same words flash in my mind and awaken me.

I also recall what he said during the Discourse that day, although I do not remember all that He advised us. Nor could I understand it fully, as many others appeared to have. I remember distinctly one statement of His, "Every one of you is a mixture of three personalities—(1) the one you think you are, (2) the one others think you are and (3) the one you really are." He said, "You think you are the body, with all its sense-impressions; others think you are, the name you bear and the rupa that you exhibit, but, you are really and truly, the Atma, the Divyatma."

Bhagavan said. "In reality, you are the Atman, the Godhead itself. The notion of Nama-Rupa is an illusion, a temporary impression. Your sense of individuality is a superimposition. Only God exists; never forget that all are ONE in Atman; there is, as Truth, only one existence. That is why we speak of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Not the brotherhood of man alone, but, remember your kinship with all beings—Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, the entire Universe is one Household with all its inhabitants as one family. Since I had been cut off from our traditional spiritual heritage by the western type of 'secular' education, I could not imbibe this great lesson fully and clearly.

Fortunately for me, a few days later, my parents came to know of a Bal Vikas class run by a Guru of the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti and I joined the group of students. I could understand the sublime import of these utterances of Baba to a certain extent. Moreover, in later years, I never missed a chance of listening to the discourses of Baba, wherever given in Bombay.

When I reached the pre-Seva Dal Class, one of the texts for study was the Atma Bodha, composed; for making clear the teachings of the Rishis, by Sri Sankara himself, a thousand years ago. Studying it at the feet of the Guru, I realised that what Bhagavan told us in those few sentences the first time I heard Him was the essence of Atma Bodha itself.

Atma Bodha means Knowledge of the Self, the Atma, that is to say, knowledge of the truth of our being, of our Reality. Are we merely physical creatures and should our intellect mind and spirit be subservient to the material needs of this physical creature? Or, are we a spiritual entity, utilising this body, mind and the Intellect for the spiritual end? If this question is answered

aright, man can save himself and the world; if the answer is erroneous the destiny of man and mankind is marred grievously.

A man's action, feeling, reasoning and thinking are all dependent on his idea of the self. His view and perspective of life will be either materialistic or spiritualistic according to his conception of himself. If he regards himself as physical being and his soul as subservient to material ends, he devotes himself to sense pleasures; he seeks power and authority over others. Whenever large sections of the population of a country and their leaders become materialistic like this, imagining themselves as bodies only, then, society degenerates and war, bloodshed, destruction and hateful suppression ensue unchecked.

If, on the other hand, man regards himself as a spiritual entity, and believes himself as a soul struggling with a recalcitrant body to fulfill his high destiny, he promotes the peace and happiness of all around him. This was the path the seers of this land' trod in: the past ages. Mere charity or service without a basis of this type of spiritual awareness cannot yield the best results; it cannot be effective. You have to feel the joys and sorrows of others as pleasurable and as poignantly as those others. This can happen only when you feel the unity of all Atmas, in God, the Paramatma.

Therefore, it behooves every one who aspires to live a happy and useful life to cultivate Self-knowledge or Atma-Bodha—the true knowledge of the spiritual basis of man, the world and of the entire Cosmos. Ignorance of the Atmic basis produces pain and suffering; self-knowledge destroys these. Self-knowledge brings in its train peace and blessedness. It is this state of beatitude that is named Moksha.

This is the theme of the Vedanta, the Truth summarised by Sri Sankara in half a couplet:

*Brahma Sathyam; Jagat mithya;
Jivo Brahmaiva, naa parah.*

Brahman is the only Reality; apart from Brahman, the World has no reality. It cannot stand on its own. It is just an illusory appearance, like the snake we superimpose on a rope lying across the road, when we see it in the dusk. It is just a *vivarta*, a transfiguration of Brahma. The Jiva also in essence, in spite of the Upadhi which makes it appear as separate is none other than Brahman. The Atman, the witness self is Brahman only. In truth, all creation is but a manifestation of the Divine; the Divine is the cause, the Divine is the effect.

The question now arises, if we are all Godhead, why are we not aware of it all the time? Why are we alienated from each other? Why do we consider ourselves as distinct entities riddled with swajatiya and vijatiya distinctions that are deep-rooted in our minds? Why do we suffer these griefs of the finite individuality and existence? The Atma-Bodha gives answers to all these supposedly rational and -intellectual questions. It says that we suffer from the falsehood of plurality (Adhyasa) as result of a solidified fundamental ignorance (Ajnana), ignorance of our true nature. We do not understand the rope; we are ignorant of its true nature. So, we succumb to mal-observation and mis-apprehension. A snake form appears in place of the rope and we flee in terror. Or a lake appears where there is a desert and we run forward to slake our thirst. Once the

darkness of Ajnana disappears the snake disappears and with it, the fear. Once we learn from the Atma Bodha that we are the ever-free Atman, (and not the ego-centred, desire-infected, the duality—tossed Jiva), we are liberated from the prison into which we have sentenced ourselves, the finite individualised cell of that Jiva-prison. The Atma-Bodha says, "Tharathi sokam atmaavid," "He who has intuited Brahman has crossed the Ocean of Grief."

The Atma-Bodha tells us that Shravanam, Mananam and Nididhyasana are the 3 steps by which the knowledge of the Self can be acquired. What are we to listen to? What shall we dwell upon in our minds? What shall we elaborate and experience in Nididhyasana? The four Mahavakyas are enough for all the three stages. After clarifying our reasoning faculty, and purifying our minds (emotions, feelings and passions) through following the Karma and the Bhakti Margas of spiritual discipline, we have to listen to these Mahavakyas through a Guru, and then ruminate on them. The Manana or, rumination dispels all doubts and intellectual conviction and comprehension results. We have to meditate on the truth expounded in them, until we attain the Akhandakaravriti, the form of the impartite Unified One. Then the ignorance that veiled the Truth, the Maya disappears resulting in the experience of the non-dual Self.

The Mahavakyas are Prajnanam Brahma, Tatt twam asi, Ayam atma Brahma and Aham Brahmasmi. The tatt and the twam the aham and the Brahman will merge in the flash of that realisation. This is the Bodha of the Atma, that is the One and Only of the Universe. He who has realised the Brahman shines with the blessings of Baba, radiating purity, Love, and Divinity, living only to shower Love on all. Atmano mokshartham, Jagat hithaya chathat is the Vedantic ideal man—he who realises God and liberates himself from Maya and promotes the peace and happiness of mankind.

May Bhagavan guide us and all humanity on this pilgrimage for the discovery of the Self. Bhagavan exhorts us. "Start early, drive slowly, and reach safely." We, pre-Seva Dal students, boys and girls, enter in the teenage period of our lives, have started early on this pilgrimage, with the invaluable guide book, "Atma-Bodha" in our hands. We may drive slowly and cautiously; but, we are sure, with Bhagavan's guidance and love, we will reach Him safely.

—Lalitha Ayer Pre-Seva Dal Student, Bombay

Bharatiya Paramartha Vahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. Indian Spiritualism: Special Features

Questions may be asked, and doubts expressed by many, about the state of a person after he has attained fulfillment, the fullness of awareness. His life will be saturated in unexcelled Ananda, and he will experience one-ness of thought, emotion and knowledge with all. He will be in ecstasy, immersed in the One and Only the Eternal Divine Principle, for, that alone can confer joy during the process of living. Genuine joy is this and no other. God is the embodiment of eternal ever-full joy. Those loyal to Bharatiya culture, whatever the sect or faith which they

claim as their special mould, accept this axiom, that "God is the highest source of joy." This matha (conclusion) they accept as abhimatha (dearest and most pleasurable).

Fullness means wholeness, does it not? Wholeness implies One and not two or three; does it not? There cannot then be any place for the individual. Or, can there be? When an individualised Atma or Jivi, the particularised differentiated self, has become full and whole, there is no possibility of his return to the consciousness of the objective world, is there? Such doubts may arise in the minds of many.

But, this line of thought is not correct. When the individualised Jivi becomes fixed in the totality or Samashti (the whole) he loses all ideas of distinction and is ever in the consciousness of the totality, the One that subsumes the many. He will then be aware that the reality of each is the reality of all and that Reality is the One Indivisible Atma. He will not exhibit any consciousness of distinction between individuals.

The Divine that he knows as the core of each 'thing and being' is now recognised by him as the Divine that he himself is; and, so, he will be deeper than ever in the fullness of Ananda. How can he then experience separateness? No, he cannot. The rays of that Ananda illumine all regions; the sages and the great Rishis became aware of the Bliss. They communicated that experience to the world in easily understandable language. The unreachable moon is made known by pointing a finger in the direction where it can be seen! So, too, they brought within the purview of men, according to the state of consciousness which each of them had attained, the Truth that lies beyond the reach of mind and speech. Their teachings were not only simple, but varied, to educate and elevate all levels of understanding.

A small example

One feels happy when one has the knowledge that this one little body is his, does he not? Then, when he knows that two bodies are his, should he not be twice happy? In the same way, the knowledge that he has an increasing number of bodies, the experience of happiness goes on increasing; when the whole world is known to be one body, and world-consciousness becomes part of the awareness, then the Ananda will be full. To get this multi-consciousness, the limited egocentric prison walls must be destroyed. When the ego-self identifies itself with the Jivi or Atma, death will cease. When the ego-self identifies itself and merges with the Bliss of the One, sorrow will cease. When it merges with Jnana or the Higher Wisdom, error will cease. "Material individual-ness is born out of delusion; this body which creates that impression is only an ever-evolving atom of a boundless ocean; the second entity in me is the other Form, namely, the embodied Self; when the ego of mine merges with the Self in me, then, the delusion disappears, through the upsurge of its opposite knowledge." When man's thought matures in process of time, undoubtedly all schools of thought have to reach this conclusion.

A tree's value is estimated, with reference to its fruits. Take idol worship, for example. Moralists, metaphysicians, philosophers, adherents to the path of Devotion, and the foremost among the virtuous in all parts of the world have all agreed that idol-worship is highly beneficial. So long as attachment persists in the material body and possessions, worship of a material symbol is necessary, it is but a means. But, many decry it as a superstition. This is not correct. It is not the right approach. Such an attitude is just an outburst of foolishness.

In fact, is not belief in one's being the body, a superstition? Can the body last forever? Is it not a leather-doll with 9 apertures, in which life is so perilously existent that a sneeze may cause collapse? Again, should we not characterise the life people lead, believing in the reality of this world, as another superstition? Is not all the self-importance assumed by people who have positions of power and a great quantity of riches, another foolish pose? But, acts done on the basis of faith in the Atma, the Reality within, cannot be dubbed as superstitious or foolish. For every opinion one expresses, if proper reasons are given, all will rejoice. But, to declare as superstitious, all that one does not like, is a sign of frenzy, foolishness or egoism.

We will find it impossible to love God or adore Him, unless we meditate on some Form; this is as essential as breathing for sheer living. That is a necessary stage in the process of living. One has to accept it as such. Childhood is the father of old age. Can old age condemn childhood or teenage, as evil? To experience the Divine Principle, idol-worship is and *has been* a great help, to many. How then can the aspirant and the practitioner of spiritual disciplines condemn idol-worship after passing through that stage and deriving benefits from it? That would indeed be very wrong, and inappropriate.

The Bharatiya march towards the Supreme Reality is not from Untruth to Truth. It is from truth to Truth, from incomplete truth to complete Truth, from partial truth to full Truth. For, what are Sadhanas? Every effort made by men, from the remote forest-dwellers and the unsophisticated tribals, who adore the gross forms of Divinity to those highly evolved seekers who adore the Full and the Absolute, is a Sadhana. Each such effort will take man a step forward in progress.

Each individual Jivi is comparable to a tiny bird; the bird can, by longer and higher flights, gradually rise up into the sky. And, a stage may finally be gained when it can fly right up to the full-splendoured orb of the Sun.

The basic truth of Nature is the One in the Many; that is the key to its understanding. The Bharatiyas grasped this truth; they held fast to this key. People of other countries were content to lay down certain axioms and enforcing belief in them. They insisted on the acceptance of these axioms and the observance of rules and regulations that arise out of them. They held one single coat before the individuals of the society where they lived and required every one to wear that same coat; if it does not suit the size of any one, there was no alternative coat for such people. They had to live without a coat to protect them against the chill wind.

The Bharatiya approach was quite different. For each aspect or variation of feeling and thinking, volition and action, they made available a distinct Name and Form, and provided modes of worship and ways of adoration, in accordance with the emotional needs and intellectual calibre of the aspirants and devotees. Of course, a few had no need for such special consideration and treatment. But, many took advantage of this concession, and advanced in their march towards wisdom and liberation.

For one thing, never was it laid down as part of the Bharatiya spiritual endeavour, that idol-worship is a must or that it is a stage that has to be gone through. But, there is one fact which each one must preserve in his memory: it is this—"Bharatiyas may have attachment with

their bodies; they may be attached to the upkeep and development of their standards of living; but, they would never yearn to cut the throats of others. The Bharatiya who is fanatic about his religion would rather immolate himself in flames raised and fed by him, rather than through hatred burn alive those who do not accept and revere his religion. Bharatiya spiritualism negated the destruction of the Atma, the One inextinguishable Truth.

For, the Bharatiya Religion fostered the faith that the Self in man is no other than the Overself or God. Bharatiya Religion directs a big long journey by men and women, through varied paths, confronted and controlled by varied circumstances, but, encouraged and enlightened by various types of faith, towards the goal of the splendour of God-consciousness or the Consciousness of the Divine. Though the practices and rites might appear on the surface to be crude, they are not opposed to the ultimate Truth. The seeming contradictions have to be interpreted as incidental to the need to inspire people with varied intellectual, moral, economic and social backgrounds. For example, the light that comes through a tiny piece of coloured glass is of the same origin as bigger clearer light. The extent, clarity, brightness etc of light depends on the medium only. The source of all light is the One Truth, the Source of All, the Basis of All, the Goal of All, the Reality in All, and the Centre in All. As the thread on which pearls are strung as a rosary, God or the Overself is interpenetrative in all beings. In *all* beings—that is the message of Bharat. All beings everywhere, anywhere!

Examine carefully all the texts and scriptures that deal with Bharatiya culture and traditions. Find out whether in any of them there is mention that Moksha or Liberation or the Highest Realisation is available to those who are Bharatiyas *only*, and not to others. Can you produce a single statement on those lines? It can't be emphatically asserted that you cannot discover a statement like that. Bharatiya Spiritualism has limitless vastness, sad immensely high ideals; it is a full stream of sanctifying ideations, flowing along with no decline or diminution, straight and smooth to the Ocean of Divine Grace. The journey is direct, along a royal road towards the supreme Goal.

Another point: The source of all spiritual principles recognised and revered by Bharatiyas is God; He is the one supporting Pillar. Therefore, no other support is needed for faith. Bharatiya spiritualism is the very foundation of all other faiths; it stands on the very summit. It has achieved victory over many opposing faiths, confronting them with many valid arguments and theories. Bharatiyas have no need to follow any religion or spiritual discipline, besides their own. For, nowhere else can you secure a discipline or truth that is not existing herein. Other faiths have only adopted some one or other of its beliefs and principles and placed them before people as ideals to be adopted.

What has to be borne in mind is this Bharatiya (Arya) texts on spiritualism are the most ancient in the whole world; they are the earliest studies and discoveries of the Atma, on Personal and Impersonal God, and on Codes of Conduct—individual and social based—on those revelations and discoveries. In no other country, among no other peoples have such ancient teachings seen the light. There may be, perhaps, some misty ideas or brief glimpses; but, they do not deserve the name, spiritual text or literature! The Vedic literature pictures not only spiritual inquiries by the sages and Sadhaks and their results, but also, their lines of thought, their yearnings and aspirations, their secular struggles and temporal problems.

(To be continued)

Good Company

The company one keeps decides his character; a person tries to join the group where he can freely express his innate nature. So, Satsang is a very important requisite for moral and spiritual advancement. Man, by nature, desires to cater to the desires that arise within him or the urges that invite him from outside; very often, these are deleterious. So, he ruins himself by giving them the chance to master his personality. Consider the influences that good association can modify or elevate. A length of string is a worthless thing; no one will wear it on the hair, nor will any one reverentially place it on the idol of God. But, let it associate itself with a few fragrant flowers; then, women decorate their coiffure with the length of floral garland; devotees place the garland, string and flowers, on the idol they adore. A block of stone in a public square is a neglected, much maligned, misused thing; street dogs foul it. But, let the stone receive the company of a sculptor and his pupils; it is shaped into a charming idol of God and installed in a temple, to receive the homage of thousands for centuries. Take the instance of the domestic mouse. In the houses where it dwells, it is hunted and trapped, poisoned and killed. But, when God Ganapati, adopted it as His Vehicle, it came to be adored as a holy animal. The serpent is hated and beaten to death, whenever it makes its appearance; it is dreaded and avoided by man. But, in association with Lord Siva, who has them round His wrists, ankles and neck, it receives reverence from millions. The company of the Divine gives it a halo of consecration.

So too, evil company demeans and debases. Take the example of Fire. Fire is held to be sacrosanct and holy; it is religiously fed and fostered in every orthodox home, where the Vedas are the guidelines of life. But, when the God of Fire enters a ball or a rod of iron, it has to suffer hammer-blows in plenty while the rod or the ball is being shaped into some tool which man has planned! Attachment to the metal, iron, brings about this calamity to the highly venerated Fire.

The years of life allotted to man, as a result of the enormous amount of merit earned and accumulated through many lives in the past, have to be utilised for the purpose of rising higher into Divinity; for this adventure, congenial and inspiring company is essential. The search is for diamonds; but, people are misled into believing glass beads as diamonds; they gather them and are content. Riches decline only when spent; but, life is clipped short every moment, whether you spend it or not. Even if you idle away the hours, or sleep unconcerned, every minute makes you older, takes you nearer the grave. In order to direct time into useful channels, life has to be regulated and limited; habits have to be sublimated; tendencies have to be corrected and constructive attitudes fostered. These are emphasised in the Sathya Sai Hostel and it is a pity that some of you do not appreciate the restrictions and the guide-lines. They might be irksome to you just now, for, you have joined this hostel quite recently after growing up in totally different environs. Perhaps, you crave for what is called 'freedom', of will and action. But, when you have not fixed an ideal before yourselves, this becomes easily 'license', the uncontrolled self-will and wandering in the streets. What is the end of 'freedom'? The real end of freedom is not 'pleasure' but, 'wisdom'. Swa-iccha is the Sanskrit word for 'self-will'. Self here means the higher self, the Over-self. Its will is ever to merge with the Supreme and be immersed in Ananda.

Just consider the fate of students in most of the other Colleges and hostels. Note the unhappy state of affairs prevailing there. The atmosphere is not congenial either for academic achievement or for personality development. It is saturated with imitative excitement or factional politics. Has man evolved from the animal only to descend to depths worse than the animal? Is man to be motivated only by the needs of hunger and fear? A cow comes forward to eat a bunch of grass; it runs away at the sight of a stick. Can man be happy by securing degrees, or by attending pictures, roaming around the bazaars and spending time aimlessly? In many cases, the parents and elders are at fault, because they are bad examples for their own children. They drink and gamble, hate and fight. And, education has to save you from pursuing these wrong paths. I may tell you that students of this hostel who have lived here for some months in accordance with the rules and regulations have won appreciation of the authorities of sister Colleges in Bangalore, for their punctuality, earnestness and disciplinary behaviour.

A disciplined life is the best offering you can make to the country or to the Divine in you. One single person, who is averse to regulated living, may by his example spoil the careers of many others with whom he comes in contact. So, each of you must accept the ideal, after analysing its implications and its validity. Animal instincts and impulses have persisted in human nature as vestiges and it is only when their upsurge is controlled and eliminated, that the springs of Divinity can manifest themselves. The Hostel provides you just the chance and the Satsang that help you to accomplish this. Nature can be modified by nurture; dogs become vegetarians and do not relish meat, when they are trained to relish only that type of food. So, open yourselves gladly to the influence of the Satsang available here. Of course, storks will ridicule the Hamsa; crows will carp at the cuckoo's song; but, in spite of all the cynicism, the Hamsa struts about as grand as ever and the cuckoo has not developed any flaw in its tone. Those who ridicule find themselves isolated, neglected, and laughed at for their idiosyncrasies.

Very often, even the most intelligent schemes of men result in the opposite turn of events, due to some fundamental flaw in their reasoning. It was in Bobbili that, years ago, an infectious disease resulting in boils on the skin spread fast. It was discovered that the infection originated with domestic rats. But, the rats could not be totally destroyed by means of traps. The ruler decided on encouraging people to keep cats as pets at home, and he gave each householder a liberal monthly allowance of rice, in order to feed the cats. Five kilograms of rice was the quantity supplied every month. After awhile, complaints poured in, that the cats were not being fed; instead, the householders were themselves consuming the rice intended for the cats. So, the ruler ordered them to present themselves in Court with the cats they reared. When they appeared along with the pets, it was discovered that the rumours of misappropriation were false. Every cat was plump, well-fed and astonishingly heavy.

There was one cat and one only, reared by Ramakrishna, that was lean and hungry. When the ruler challenged him and charged him with neglect and misuse of the rice supplied, he said, "Master! No one of these other cats has never caught a rat; they are too well-fed for that; they have no hunger; how then, can they seek out and kill rats? My cat catches at least a dozen a day." The ruler had to agree that his plan was a big flop. It produced the opposite effect! The rules laid down for you are for your own good, remember. Whatever I do, speak, or order is for your good, for rendering your future years happy and fruitful. This is the most valuable period of your lives

and you must be thankful that you are spending it in this atmosphere, in the midst of this Satsang. All this is being done, because of my belief that you are all mine. Even if you deny that you are mine, I shall persist in telling you that you are mine. For, I am the Divinity that is your Reality. The I in you is disturbed and distressed when you stray into wrong and wander into waywardness. Therefore, understand well the value of the schedule of work and worship prescribed for you here and have your personalities moulded to the best shape, so that you may shine forth as inspiring examples of the servants of God and of man.

—*Divine Discourse, Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Brindavan 17-8-1977*

While the rains pour on the mountain peaks and the water rushes down the sides, no river emerges there from. When, however, the waters flow in a single direction, first a brook, then a stream, and then a torrent, finally a flooded river is formed and the rains reach the sea. Water that runs in one direction reaches the sea; water flowing in four directions gets lost.

The holy stream of noble deeds must flow full and steady along the fields of holy thoughts to finally abide in the great ocean of bliss.

—**Baba**

How free is free-will?

Karma or the consequence of activity is classified into three categories: Sanchita, Prarabdha and Agami. Sanchita is the accumulated Karma of the Past and Agami, is the Karma that is being accumulated at present for the future. Prarabdha is that portion of Sanchita which is responsible for the present. Prarabdha has necessarily to work itself out in this life; but, the consequences of the activities of this life may have to be experienced wholly or in part, in this very life. While on this topic, the enquiring mind naturally asks, "Of what avail is free-will against destiny?"

Karmic law is Divine, laid down by God. So, it does provide some motivation for a spiritually purposeful life. Bhagavan assures us, "The Law of Karma is not an iron law; by dedication, by the purification which invites benediction, its effects can be modified and its terror assuaged. Do not despair; do not lose heart."

Man must open his mind to the influence of the ever-present Inner Motivator. For, the Unity of the Soul and the Supreme Being is the ultimate Truth. This knowledge is the consummation of all Sadhana. The Consciousness of Divine Presence is the prerequisite for transcending the bondage of Karma. This being the ultimate object, the main task of free-will will be (i) developing calmness and fortitude towards one's Prarabdha and (ii) regulating his thoughts and activities in such a manner as can lighten the Karmic load and even shed it altogether.

The intellect should be trained and developed, in order that it might bring the mind under control. With the mind under control, its responses to the sense stimuli can also be controlled. The standard of values gets elevated. There comes about progressive detachment of the mind from the world of objects and an increase in reliance on the Consciousness within.

This is what the Lord tells Arjuna: "Let him gain, little by little, tranquility by means of reason, controlled by steadiness, and, having fixed his mind in the Self, let him not think of anything else" (Gita VI 25). As a result, a person who would have faced a situation with anger and hatred or with sorrow and remorse, will, in course of time, meet it with calmness and composure. When free-will is enlightened by intellect, he develops Viveka, discrimination. By preventing his baser passion from influencing his character, and colouring his Vasanas or tendencies, he has created an atmosphere in which his physical acts would not breed maleficent results. It is common experience that patience and forbearance, apart from being virtues, are also positive attitudes, exerting beneficial influences on one's own mind and character, as well as on the environment. Directing thoughts and actions into virtuous channels lightens the Karmic load a great deal.

But, salvation lies in transcending Karma altogether. Good Karma drags one back into birth as relentlessly as bad Karma! The links forged by good Karma continue to be part of the chain which binds the soul to physical existence. Salvation lies in ending this chain. Is this ever possible? The answer is a positive 'Yes'. The most effective means for this is propounded in great detail in the Gita. It is Karmaphalatyaga, in one word, that is to say, the renunciation of the fruit of action.

Ramana Maharshi said, Action is jada (inert). It has, by itself, no capacity to bind. It is the attachment to the fruit of action that binds. We sow in order to reap; we act in order to obtain a result. The desire provides the link between the activity and its consequence. If the desire is given up or is absent, the link is broken. If all actions, prompted by Prarabdha or otherwise, are performed with this attitude, no further links are added to the chain. There is no short cut by which Karma can be transcended.

No doubt, if one can desist from action, no result can accrue. But, the Lord affirms " No one can remain even for a moment without doing action " (Gita III-5) Also, there is no sense in any one giving up his responsibilities and priding himself that he has given up activity. " Nor by mere renunciation does one attain perfection ," says Krishna (Gita III 4). In fact, the Lord enjoins on Arjuna to do his dharma, to fight (yuddhaswa), without being obsessed by the consequences. Freedom from desire is 'nonaction'; and, not physical abstention from action. It is an inward attitude, not an outward conduct. The Gita describes a sanyasin as a person who does the work he ought to do, without seeking the fruit (Gita IV-1). As a practical step in this direction, as a Sadhana that will promote this attitude, Krishna advises, "Whatever thou dost, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest, whatever thou givest, whatever austerities thou dost practise, do that as an offering to Me." (Gita IX-27).

"As long as you feel yourself the doer, so long you are bound to enjoy the fruit. But, if you try to find out whose Karma it is, you will find that you are not the doer! The doer of the action is not the real 'I' or the 'Atman'. It was the false 'I' or the 'Ego'. If, we identify ourselves with the real 'I' our responsibility for the action and the fruits of the actions ceases. Thereafter, the actions become only offerings to the Lord."

Bhagavan Baba referring to Karmasanyasa, as expounded in the Gita, says, "No attempt need be made to run away from the duties of one's station and status. Remember those duties have to

be done as 'worship', as 'offerings' of one's intelligence and skill, qualities, thoughts and feelings at the Feet of the Lord, in a spirit of thankfulness for the chance given-without a trace of egoism or sense of attachment to the fruits of action." Karmaphalatya is therefore the supreme Sadhana.

While engaged in this Sadhana, one can derive strength from the Divine within, the Divine manifesting Its Grace in various ways, mostly unexpected and miraculous. Faith in Karma engenders humility and by inducing in us a mood of justice and charity (which constitute the essence of spirituality) we expose ourselves to the intercession of the Supreme for our progress in the spiritual path. Many, including puritans among the philosophers, may doubt the possibility of such Divine Grace. But we have the experience of many devout aspirants to substantiate this truth. Grace has come down on aspirants belonging to all religions. The Cosmic Will under its own Law works wonders in the lives of genuine seekers. Lord Krishna has assured His Grace to such souls. With the same authority, derived from His being the same Supreme, Bhagavan Baba says, "I will guard you even as the eyelid does the eye." "The Lord," He says, "seeks the aspirant even more intensely than the aspirant seeks Him."

Let us have a quick look at the Jivi who has through the exercise of Viveka, and Vairagya, through adherence to Karmaphalatya, sad through Divine Grace, realised the identity with the Supreme. Such a soul is called a Jivanmukta (released-even-while-alive). Sankaracharya expounds the characteristics of the Jivanmukta in his 'Viveka Choodamani' thus: "He is steady of wisdom. He experiences endless Bliss. He is free from desire. His concern about the world has stilled. In the absence of 'I' and 'Mine' concepts, the body persists for him, like a shadow. Seeing everything with an equal eye, he is unperturbed by pleasure and pain. To him, Prarabdha has virtually ended, because he is no more identified with the body, through which the Prarabdha has to work! His Sanchita cannot take effect, since he has no future birth. And, Agami does not arise, since he has no sense of agency. He lives in the world; in endless Bliss, unconcerned with everything worldly, until his body drops off, like a dry leaf. His soul is already in tune with the Supreme and there is no further birth (and consequently, death) for him."

The Law of Karma is a perfect Law; but, as Bhagavan says, it is not an iron law. Karma does not doom us into complete fatalism. It makes us responsible for our thoughts and deeds. Man can wipe out his destiny, by the exercise of his free-will, through discrimination and detachment. "You reward and punish yourselves," says Bhagavan; "You are here, because you wished to come here. You gravitate to the level to which your deeds drag you or lift you; you make your own future by your thoughts, desires and deeds."

Bhagavan also assures us that the 'writing on the brow' which is by one's own hand can be wiped off, by the same hand.

—C. P. K. Nair, Pattambi, Kerala

Raso Vai Sah

Isaavaasyamidam sarvam—all this is enveloped in God. In the body, God is immanent everywhere. Rasovaisah—He is sweet nectar. He is called Angirasa, for, He is filling every anga or limb of the body. Every limb and organ has a Divine principle motivating it, fostering it and guarding it. When the urge of the Divine is bypassed and the senses go out on their own under the prompting of the mind to seek knowledge of the objective world around them, they get only false and perverted knowledge. When this truth is realised, faith in God and detachment from the objects can be reinforced and made a part of living. When the mad rush for sense pleasure is slowed down the benefits of detachment will be evident. More mental peace, greater physical health and deeper interest in social service will become patent.

The Ramayana helps man to develop this great quality of detachment. The Upanishads declare, "thyagenaike amrthathwam sanasuh"—immortality can be won only by renunciation. The Ramayana is the elaboration in story of this grand lesson. Rama, who had stepped on the footstool of the throne of the Empire in full faith that he was to be thereafter the unquestioned monarch of a vast region, had to renounce that vision, step down, and move immediately into the forest as an exile, condemned to spend fourteen long years there, in order to honour the words of the very father who was leading him up to the throne for being crowned.

In fact, when we probe into the inner meaning of the Ramayana, we will discover that Rama is the Atma, no more, no less. Sita is Truth, its genuine embodiment, Lakshmana is the Intellect (Buddhi). Sugriva is Viveka (discrimination). Hanuman is Dhairya (courage). Vibhishana is the Satwa quality (the quality of balance, equipoise, equanimity). Ravana is the Rajoguna (the passionate extrovert-oriented character). Kumbhakarna is the Tamas quality (the dull, slothful, dull nature). Dasaratha is the representative of the body of man, which has the dasa (ten) Indriyas (senses) in the body which is really the basis of the intellect, and the Atma. The three Gunas are his three wives; the four Purusharthas (goals of man) are the four sons. Every incident in the Ramayana is full of inspiration for those who desire to learn the ideal life. Rama, his brothers, comrades and companions are each of them examples of persons saturated with Dharma. Rama is 'vigrahavaan dharmah', the very personification of Dharma; so, he gathered around himself only votaries of Dharma.

Rama is the indweller in every body. He is denoted as 'Atmarama', the Rama who is closer than the closest to each individual. His blessings up-surfing from that inner spring can confer Shanti and Ananda (peace and bliss). One has only to keep away from identification with the body, and decide to discover and reveal the divinity latent in man. This is the lesson that the Ramayana holds out to mankind. So long as the mind craves for objective possessions, man cannot secure peace and bliss. Sita forsook Ayodhya and all the luxuries and, happiness that life in Ayodhya promised her, so that she could be with Rama, in the forest. This spirit of detachment blessed her with the constant presence of God, as Rama, but, when she cast longing eyes on the golden deer and craved for possessing it in the hermitage where they lived, she lost the company and the presence of Rama. Give up sense objects; you gain Rama. Crave for them; you lose Rama. This is the moral that the Ramayana endeavours to teach mankind. Raga leads to Roga; attachment brings about pain. Tyaga leads to Yoga; renunciation leads to the bliss of union with the source of bliss. This moral, if taken to heart, can save human communities in all lands.

Make the heart pure by filling it with thoughts of the glory and grandeur of Rama; be established in the conviction that the Rama principle is the reality of your existence. Enter the spiritual path of Sadhana equipped with unshaken courage and steady faith. Do not allow doubt and despair to weaken your determination. March forward. Earn Self-satisfaction and Self-confidence. And, accumulate Ananda as you near the goal. That is the hope I entertain about you; that is the blessing I shower on you.

**—Ramayana Souvenir Message: Bhagavan
Sri Sathya Sai Women's College, Anantapur**

Somebody knows when your heart aches and everything seems to go wrong; somebody knows when you are lonely, tired and discouraged; somebody is hurt when you have fallen; somebody loves you when you are given up by all; he wants you and waits for you, and wants you to know that he waits for you. He is Sathya Sai Baba.

—A Beneficiary

Readers! Be Warned!

Reports are being received, from a number of places, of crooks and cheats who take advantage of the credulity of devotees and indulge successfully in a variety of tricks, by which they gain reverential treatment, lavish hospitality and gifts of money. Through periodic announcements in the Sanathana Sarathi, we have warned readers against such persons. We have requested them not to welcome into their homes or introduce to the Units of the Organisation any stranger, unless they are well aware of the genuineness of their claims as fellow-devotees. No donation should be given to or collected for such people or on their behalf, even if they claim association with Prasanthi Nilayam or Bhagavan, or say that the- purpose has been blessed by Bhagavan.

Recently, a youth calling himself Ramasarma of Amalapuram visited a village and claiming to be a resident of Prasanthi Nilayam, persuaded the parents of a feeble-minded boy to send him along with him, so that he could be taken to Bhagavan and cured. The parents gave him a substantial sum for expenses. But, nothing has been heard since, of him or the boy! Another person named Nambudiri Viswanathan is operating with similar stories in Nagpur District around Tumsar.

There are others who try to blackmail devotees, pestering them with stories that their parents have sent money to them, as money orders in the name of the devotee! They even show letters forged for the purpose and they are followed by people calling themselves 'journalists' who threaten the devotee with character assassination, unless they are paid money! Since such social crimes are increasing, great care has to be taken to keep strangers off from Units of the Organisation.

Another point. There has been recently a recrudescence of the 'chain letter' fraud. Readers are hereby directed to break the chain and advise others to do likewise; for, Divine

Grace is not won by such silly tricks nor can it be lost by refusing to yield to such comic threats. Bhagavan's devotees must keep clear of these gimmicks.

—Editor

Sai Family News

Their True Home

Onam Festival is for Keralites an occasion when all members of the family gather round the Home Shrine. Since many years, for an increasing number of Keralites, however, the Home Shrine has become the Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. This year on August 27, there were at least 5,000 Keralites at Brindavan, Whitefield. Bhagavan moved along the ranks of devotees, preceded by a charming band of tender Bal Vikas Boys playing the traditional Kerala Panchavadyam. Everyone received Darshan and Namaskar. On the 26th and 27th, Bal Vikas children from Trichur enacted, in the Divine Presence, the dance drama (Kathakali style), 'Vamanavatar'. On the 27th, in the evening, Bhagavan discoursed on the significance of Onam Day, which commemorates the humbling of Bali and the victorious advent of the Vamanavatar.

Jaipur College

The Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Jaipur (Rajasthan) was shifted to its own new building, on Ganesha Chaturthi Day 16th September 77. Bhagavan communicated His Gracious Blessings to the students, members of the staff, members of the Seva: Samiti and of the Sathya Sai Trust, Rajasthan.

Kothacheravu Rest House

"Sri Sathya Sai Prasanthi Kutir"—is the name of this facility, provided, with the blessings of Bhagavan, for pilgrims to Prasanthi Nilayam, who have to wait for connecting buses, at Kothacheruvu, (the village 7 miles away from Prasanthi Nilayam, where roads from Penukonda, Dharmavaram, Kadiri and Mudigubba meet and from where the road to Prasanthi Nilayam starts. This building was inaugurated on Sunday, 25th September.

You are now living in Ignorance, Darkness. The knowledge that you have in you the spark of the Divine, encased in sheaths of bliss, intelligence, feeling, sensations and organic substance—this knowledge is the Light that will dispel ignorance. Earn the knowledge yourself; experience it. Do not simply borrow the knowledge from other. Make it your own; you cannot exist on the money in some one else's purse or bank-account. You must light your own lamp and travel forward with the light that it sheds. This is the Self-confidence you have to acquire, confidence in the Self of yours, the Self that is a spark of God.

—Baba

The Divine

"Isavasyam idam sarvam", this is the opening statement in the celebrated Isavasyopanishad. It means that 'all this' is enveloped by 'Isa' or Ishwara, or God. Ishwara does not mean simply the

Form of God, wearing serpents on His body, smeared with holy ash collected from the cremation ground, having the Ganga flowing from His Head and wearing the Crescent Moon as an ornament on His matted hair. In, the Upanishads, He is depicted as the Source of all Prosperity and Happiness; but that does not mean that He is the source of what worldly people regard as riches. Prosperity and happiness are not conferred by properties and possessions, vehicles and houses, gold and jewels. But, the most precious item of prosperity is the awareness of the Atma, the spark of the Divine in each. Samkara is another name for Ishwara; it also means the same, for, while Sam means 'suspiciousness' or Mangala, what greater suspiciousness can there be than the equanimity and strength that awareness of Atma can confer? That Isa is declared in the Upanishad as 'idam sarvam'; He is in all this. He is immanent in everything in space and time. He is neither masculine nor feminine, He is both. That is the reason why He is named Sambasiva; the feminine principle is His left half, the left side of His body. Sa (Sacred) Amba (Mother) Siva (Father) is equivalent to the name Sai Baba, which also means the same—Sa (Sacred) Ayi (Mother) Baba (Father). God is Father and Mother to all living beings. The native suspiciousness of God is curtailed when He incarnates in human form; for one thing, the body God wears is cast off; death ends the career when the incarnation so wills. So there is a 'trace' of in-suspiciousness, affecting the Avatar. That is the reason why the prefix 'Sri'—auspicious—is added, to the name. You do not say Sri Siva or Sri Ishwara or Sri Vishnu; but, when you refer to the Incarnations, you invariably refer to them as Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sri Sayi.

Isa is known as Mrutyunjaya, the conqueror of Death. Death is the consequence of Time and so, when God is the Lord of Time, Himself being beyond time, He is unaffected by time. He swallowed the fiery poison that emanated from the Ocean when it was churned, and the poison is still held by Him in His throat, which is blue as a result. He saved the world from a holocaust of destruction by this great act of compassion, poisonous serpents, symbolic of deadly desires, are the jewels He wears! He has worn on His matted hair the Ganga, sacred water, life-giving, life-sustaining water, for all the world. The Crescent Moon, cool, bright, charming, is worn by Him on His brow. The fire that burns ignorance into ash is situated in His Third Eye, between the brows. He has all the five elements as His symbols and signs; they originate from Him.

The human body is also composed of these five and as a consequence, the Siva is in men also. Learn this additional lesson from Siva: the malignant poison He has kept unseen in His throat; the benignant Ganga and Moon He has kept on His head for all to see. You should also act similarly. Whatever in you is deadly, injurious and malignant, control them, devalue them and keep them away. Whatever is benignant, useful, productive in you, allow others to share them and benefit by them.

Since Siva is the originator of Time, when we attach ourselves to Him, we can brave the vicissitudes of time. You have heard the story of Markandeya. Fate had decreed that he had to die in his sixteenth year. The Gods had granted that boon to his father. So, he spent all his days in the worship of Siva and he had totally submerged his self in Siva. When the allotted period was over, Yama, the God of Death, presented himself, and hurled his noose at him. But, that noose fell around Siva too for, they had both become undifferentiated. Siva was enraged; He cursed Yama, so that he was rendered invisible to the eyes of his victims. Markandeya was saved.

Yama and the noose are merely symbols of deeper truths. Yama is the personification of Time. It is Time that kills, through deterioration and disintegration. The noose is not manufactured for each being that has to be dragged away by death; there is no noose factory, under the control of the God of Death. Each being prepares a noose for itself, out of the strands of self-attachment and cravings for 'mine'. The noose that binds man to the body-self and to the possessions that cater to its pride and comfort is the noose that Death finds handy. But, if man has earned the Grace of the Creator of Time, what can Time, do to disintegrate him?

The trisul or three pronged spear which Siva has in one of His hands is the symbol of His mastery over Time—the past, present, and future. In another hand, He has the small Drum, Damaruka. This is the symbol of Shabda, the Primeval Sound, with which all Creation started and which pervades all Creation.

You must convince yourselves that the Siva principle is the same as the Vishnu principle, though a great deal of controversy and conflict has hidden and perverted this Truth. Vishnu means, He who is everywhere. Ishwara is also omnipresent. Siva has Shakti as the left part of His body; Vishnu has His consort, Lakshmi, on His chest, for ever. The wheel that Vishnu has in His hand is the symbol of Time, just like the Trisul in Siva's hands. So too, the Conch is the counterpart of the Damaruka—both representing the Cosmic Sound. The Mace (Gada) in the hand of Vishnu symbolises strength, not the trivial physical, economic or authoritarian strength, but, the strength derived from spiritual discipline and the awareness of the Inner Reality. Meditate on the Vishnu Principle and success is assured through the strength He confers. And, what is the significance of the Lotus which He holds? The Lotus represents the Heart and He is the indweller in the heart; He is the Sun whose rays unfold the petals and manifests the charm and the fragrance. It conveys the lesson that, if the heart is pure; and the mind is free from egocentrism, the Lord will deign to reside therein and confer eternal bliss. It is not necessary that one should accumulate scholarship or wealth or hours of penance to gain Grace. The yearning to win Grace will itself illumine the dark corners of the heart and lead man on to the final fulfillment.

Without Grace, no victory can be won; no feat can be accomplished. His Will must prevail over all subordinate wills. The Puranas have a story to illustrate this truth, Siva was discoursing on spiritual disciplines at Kailasa and every day, many sages and ascetics gathered to benefit by the Divine instruction. Rain, snow and heavy gales caused great discomfort to the vast gathering on the peak. So, Parvati, the Consort of Siva, pleaded with Him that a huge wide hall be constructed for the convenience of the audience. Siva had no such idea; he discouraged her. "It would be a huge burden to maintain, it was really unnecessary since no one really worried about the weather or the discomfort" He said. But, Parvati could not be persuaded to give up her pet project. She initiated the construction and completed the Hall in record time: Unfortunately, it was discovered later that the moment selected for starting the construction had a big flaw, astrologically speaking. It was a very inauspicious hour. The consequence indicated in the Sastras was that the building would be destroyed by fire! Parvati prayed to Siva to approach the God of Fire, Agni, and persuade him somehow to save the building from his attention. Siva feared that he might not go against the dictates of the Sastras. But, Siva was willing to try cajoling Agni, at least to assuage Parvati, who was very upset at the prospect of the God of Fire,

burning down a structure she had planned and perfected. She would rather set it on fire herself, than let Agni boast that he had burnt into ashes a building the Consort of Siva had raised.

While Siva was proceeding to where Agni was, Parvati said, "If Agni agrees to our request and promises not to tamper the Hall, well and good! But, if he refuses to intercede between the dictates of the Sastras and the building, please give me a sign. Raise aloft your hand and play the Damaruka. Its sound will reach me from wherever you are. I shall immediately set the Hall on fire myself and deprive Agni of his prize." Siva thought the plan was very good and feasible. Agni reverentially agreed never to burn the Hall, so lovingly built by Parvati. Siva was delighted at the success of His Mission. He had not expected that Agni would yield so soon.

Therefore, He spontaneously offered Agni a boon and asked him to name it. Agni was very happy at this sudden gift of Grace. He said, "Lord! I have heard great praise of the Tandava Dance which you have blessed the Gods with, on many occasions. I could not be present on any of those occasions. Please be gracious enough to dance the Tandava now before me." And, Siva danced, beating time with the Damaruka furious and fierce, enchanting and inspiring. In the ecstasy of the Dance, He whirled the Damaruka and the sound reached the ears of Parvati, who was waiting for the signal, herself to anticipate Agni. She guessed that Agni had refused the plea and she set the Hall on fire herself and watched the conflagration until it subsided. When Siva came back to Kailasa with the happy news, He found the hall a heap of ash.

Thus Parvati was made to understand that without Grace of God, even the best laid plans, by whomsoever laid, will end in failure. So, act in such a way and, with such a motive that God will shower grace on you. When you try to deceive God, the very idea to deceive will recoil on you and bring you harm. God has no revenge in Him. There was a schoolboy, once, who was very poor in mathematics. When the day of examination in Mathematics came round, he went to a temple of Sai Baba and vowed that, if the questions were easy and he could do all the sums correct, he would offer 5 kg of sweetened rice to Him. The paper turned out to be quite within the limits of his capacity; he finished answering all the questions within 2 hours; the sums were all correctly solved; he had an extra hour on hand. So, he took a few sheets of paper and drew up a list of items with their price, to prepare the offering he had vowed to Sai Baba. He had a ten rupee note in his pocket; but, when he added up the cost of rice, sugar, cashew nut, cardamom, ghee dried grapes etc, the total amount required was found to be about 15 rupees! He tried cancelling a few items and reducing the quantities of a few, but, the total was always more than what he could afford. Then, he argued that Sai Baba was not in need of sweetened rice and that a few fruits should certainly satisfy Him. Fruits too were pretty costly, he found; flowers were not so costly, but, he remembered that in Gita, God had said that patram (leaf) pushpam (flower) phalam (fruit) or toyam (water) would be enough to please Him. So, he finally decided that toyam from the well in his house would be ample payment for the Grace he received that day. He could well save the tenner for a film show he longed to see; he calculated how much that would cost and was glad to find that he could take to the picture one of his friends too. Just when he arrived at this happy conclusion, the invigilator called that the bout was over and asked for the answer papers to be handed in.

Our friend woke up from his reverie and in the confusion, he handed over the sheets whereon he had made all the calculations of cost and quantity for the sweetened rice offering, the fruits

and the flowers, and finally, the picture. When he went home and looked into the papers he had brought home he found to his dismay that they were the answer-papers he had to give the invigilator! It is all a matter of `re-action, re-sound and re-flection'. What you plan to do to another recoils on you. God is neither angry, nor vengeful. He is the eternal witness of the play. You punish yourselves for your evil thoughts and deeds; you reward yourselves for your good thoughts and deeds. That is the real Truth.

—*Divine Discourse: 18-8-77, Brindavan*

The Three Temptations

It is recounted in the Holy Bible, when Jesus was baptised, a Voice from Heaven declared him to be the `Son of God' with whom `I am well pleased'. He then undertook a fast for forty days and forty nights. At the end of the fast, Jesus realised his identity with God and emerged as a Teacher of Mankind. Another interesting event happened at this crucial moment of his career, which reveals both his Divinity and the substance of his teaching. It is an eye-opener, not only to the truth of Jesus, but also to 'all the sons and daughters of God'. We can ill afford to forget the lesson that this incident contains.

At the end of the fast, the Devil came to Jesus and said unto him, (1) `If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread'. Jesus answered him, saying, `It is written that man shall not live by bread alone, but, by every word of God'. And the Devil (2) taking him up onto a mighty mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And, the Devil said unto him, 'All this power will I give thee and the glory of them; .for, that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore will worship me, all shall be thine'. And, Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; for, it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve '. And, (3) the Devil brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the Temple and said unto him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee. And, in their hands, they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone'. And, Jesus answering said, 'It is said, thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God'. And, when the Devil had ended all the temptations, he departed from him, for *a season*.

If we can understand the import and implications, of these three temptations, and ponder over the way Jesus met them, we can understand the purpose and process of the present Avatar, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, better Let us take the three, one by one.

(1) The Devil first challenges Jesus to perform a miracle, evidently to prove to his, satisfaction that he is the Son of God. He requests a *demonstration* of his divine powers, a particular miracle which *he* wants to witness! But, Jesus smiles the simple, serene, Baba—smile and refuses to be drawn in. For, his mission is not to prove his Divinity to man, but, to raise man to the level of his own inherent Divinity. His mission was to teach man that he cannot live on `bread' alone; he meant by 'bread' the knowledge gathered by the senses and collated by the dry intellect. Intuition, faith, clarified emotions were also necessary, as vital as vitamins which the bread

lacks. Jesus had no desire or plan to instill faith through miracles; for, faith does not really arise from a miracle, but, miracles are wrought by faith. Miracles divert attention from the giver to the gift. Baba exhorts us often, "I don't like you to cringe like slaves. I am happy when you stand before me and demand Grace as something due to you by right." God's greatest gift to man is Free-will. It is free because it is God's own Will. He never wants us to mortgage this great gift and believe in Him, for the sake of something we can get out of Him." God wants our Love, free and full because Love and Faith are our nature. Our faith in the Lord should not be based on a stone changed into bread or a pumpkin produced when we want it, under controlled conditions, as Jesus was challenged to do, at the end of the historic fast. Not that Jesus never demonstrated any miracle. When he fed 5,000 people with a few loaves of bread, the miracle issued from faith, not, from a challenge or from a call for rational investigation.

(2) The second temptation involves a crucial factor. The choice before Jesus here is between Shreya and Preya, the liberating or the entangling paths, freedom or bondage. Jesus knew, the temptation of power and authority is the most formidable for man. In his eagerness to save man from this great and vulgar enemy, he dismisses it with high disdain. He commands the Devil to get away. The validity of life lies not in living only, but in knowing why one does live. `Why do I live? For catering to the hungers of the body? For feeding the fancies of the mind? For dismissing the cravings of the spirit as irrational and irrelevant?' No.

(3) The third temptation throws light on a vital aspect of man's relationship with God. When the Devil tries to tempt Jesus into verifying his faith, he raises a more subtle question. Jesus was not prepared to verify the assurance that God has given the faithful. Faith is an activity of the heart, a tryst with the Divine. This has a lesson for us now. Are we prepared to measure and discover the strength of the love that our parents have for us by a test, a clinical thermometer. God cannot be a specimen to be investigated and so, Jesus was not prepared to barter away the heart, for a commodity of no value, namely, the mind. Jesus must have given the Devil a very compassionate and serene smile as we know Baba does when this old, old item of challenge is placed before either himself or those who have faith in him.

"God cannot be tested; He can only be tasted," Jesus meant by the statement 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God'. This is what Baba means when he says, " Know thyself and then you know me." God is not a mental concept which has to be verified, now and then, but, God is an experience which you and I can have-once won, with us forever.

These three questions of the Devil were put to him, for the Devil took him to be the son of man; but, Jesus answered them as the Son of God. He knew he had come as the messenger of eternal life, to lead man to eternal life. He came as a conqueror, not as one conquered. He knew that the innate Divinity in man cannot satisfy itself by bread alone; he needs the honey of the spirit, He refused to yield to the Devil, when he held before him all the riches and all the authority that the worlds can offer. For, as he said, and as we have been told by Baba, "What though you gain all the riches and authority of the world, if at the same time, you lose thy soul?"

The three temptations of the Devil involve both man and God. They reveal the career of God as man and give warnings to man in search of God. They demonstrate that the Divine is not eager to show off Its power to man and subjugate him by instilling fear. It loves to help man

realise his Divinity. Again, it shows that God is the giver of gifts, but, He likes least to be exchanged for gifts. He wants man to realise that He is far more, infinitely more lovely than the loveliest of His gifts. Man, in search of God, has to note three truths of the Divine: (!) God prefers to satisfy the hunger of the heart rather than merely cater to the hunger of the senses and the mind (2) Test Him not, for you cannot; taste His sweetness and the Bliss He grants (3) God is subordinate to none; everything else is subordinate to Him.

The temptations are as much ours too, as the Devil in us prompts us to ask of God nowadays the same questions. We are so easily duped by the ego in us; on the brink of light, we plunge into darkness. Let us remember that we either integrate with God or disintegrate! It is within our choice inner or outer. Once the choice is made, the road is clear and clean. There is always a kind hand leading you with a kindly light.

—*Prof. B. K. Misra, Cattack*

Your Presence Within Me

Many have come before You, Sai Baba, while I remained in my place;
Many have known the joy of Your Form, touched Your Feet, seen Your Face;
Millions have heard Your Voice, felt Your Glance, known the bliss of Your gazing at them.
Some touched Your Hands or Your garments, if even just the hem
I asked for Your will, my Lord-Christ-Sai Baba, and this is my only desire.
My eyes have not seen Your Face or Your Form, but my heart was consumed by Your Fire.
My ears have not heard Your Call of my name, while You are a half-world away.
But my Soul heard Your Call and each atom of me answered, "Yes," without a delay!
The Hand of Your Form has not rested on me, my Lord-Christ-Sai.
But Your Presence within me is greater than mine, and this I cannot deny.
No, my Lord Sai, my form remains here while Yours is in view of the ones at Your Feet.
Yet, when I turn my own gaze within, it's Sai Baba, my Lord that I meet.

—*John Eversole, Los Angeles, California, U. S. A.*

A Child is Born!

A child is born. An 'I' enclosed in flesh and bone; brawn add brain, starts its pilgrimage through the rough and smooth of life. The creature feels that it 'is'. It knows that it is 'aware' of light, sound, smell; softness, warmth, It seeks the 'joy' it, has mislaid. It Can, as the days pass, move along flee path of Truth, goodness and beauty—if prompted by the Voice within and led by kind, understanding hands; it can realise that all these are attainable, together, in one experience that can be treasured and multiplied. Or, it can slide down the slippery path of falsehood, wickedness and ugliness, as it has often done during many previous attempts to dwell on earth. It can be easily deluded by the appearance of things, for, its-'sensual instruments; ore; defective and the coordinating and evaluating mechanism is seldom correct. It can grovel in the darkness or revel in light; it can bind itself or liberate itself. By trial and error, it has to learn to live well, and win the approbation of the elders surrounding it, the society that shelters it and, the Voice within. Ages of schooling have gone into the inner make-up of the child; it came into the world trailing clouds of glory or dark forebodings. It knows in the depth of its being that the stage of Eternal Ecstasy is its goal. For this was it born, for this purpose its journey has been planned from cradle to the grave, with the very first beat of the drum in the heart.

This is its destiny. It is an orphan in search of the Father, a stream in search of the Ocean from which its waters came through the sky, a ray that has strayed away from the Sun. It has a thirst on its tongue, a gnaw in the chest, a vacuum in the heart; these are not cured, by trivial allurements or temporary alleviations. Until it attains fulfillment; it will have to fall into such crucibles, and get rid of the dross that it has loved so long.

The child brings with it a bunch of physical characteristics-and a packet of skills, a few aptitudes and instinctive angularities, a stock of memories, built into its tender frame. It directed itself into the home, where it is welcomed as a regal guest or shunned as an unwelcome intruder. Some mysterious premonition directed it thither. Perhaps, it was earned about, by the mother when she was a little girl playing with dolls. It was, perhaps, a wish in the veins of the father when he reached the years of adolescence. It was born in a moment of bliss—Anandani jayanthe, Anandani jivanthe, say the Upanishads. In bliss are all creatures born; for bliss they struggle, in bliss, they ought to find fulfillment,

Baba says that every child must be 'wished for', welcomed and fostered with affection and discriminating care. The child announces itself with a cry. Its first contact with this world raises a sob, a wail. For, it has to eke out its life, independently, however loving others may be. That cry is the expression of a question that has been haunting it since ages. It could not discover its answer; and, so it has come again. Baba says, the cry is, 'Koham Koham'? —'Who am I?' Ah! If only the parents were wise enough to answer that question and allay that yearning! They too do not know who they really are; they just fumble along, unidentified, known by the name they are given by others.

Fortunate indeed are the children who after dragging their legs along on earth for years are able to answer the Koham, with a Soham, 'I am He', I am the Almighty, the Omnipresent, Omniscient God. Then it is happy, laughing at the joke that God has played on it, —hiding in you and

hounding you to seek Him, on hill and dale, sky, and space, sea and snow. And, laughing, it departs, while all around, people, as Kabir sings, weep in ignorance.

The child asks, 'Koham'; the youth answers, 'Dehoham' (I am the body) But soon, he realises that the body is but the vesture of the soul, if he is intelligent enough. Baba wants that all the bungling and blundering that happens now in youth and middle age while passing through the Dehoham stage be avoided. Therefore, He has prescribed for the Bal Vikas classes Sankaracharya's Atmabodha, so that even as children, they may know the true answer to the question, 'Koham' and derive courage and confidence, love and light, thereby.

—*Taraka*

Beacon of Hope

The Second State Conference of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Tamil Nadu was held at Madras on 30/9 and 1 and 2 October. Useful discussions among the delegates resulted in many valuable suggestions and resolutions for developing individual spiritual progress and social service as Sadhana. Sri Prabhudas Patwari, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, while opening the very attractive and instructive Exhibition about the activities of the Bal Vikas classes conducted by the Mahila Vibhag section referred to the great many challenges which our great tradition and culture have to face—loss of faith in God, a cynical appraisal of norms and values of good life, irreverence about character and truth: He said that Bhagavan stood as a beacon of hope and confidence, re-emphasising for the world the message of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He said, "I thank the organisers for bringing me to participate in this holy and pious occasion."

Bharatiya Paramartha Vahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

3. The One Alone

'The very first experience in the history of Indian thought is the thrill of wonder. This is expressed in the Rks or hymns found in Rg Veda, the earliest revelations of the Bharatiya mind. The Rks are all about the Gods or the Shining, Ones (the Devas). Of these Devas, there, are many; Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Parjanya—these are the names of a few. They appear in these Rks, one after the other. Of these, Indra with the Thunderbolt (vajra) as his weapon is the chief. He is the mighty One who confers rain upon the earth. Indra is called so, since he is the Master of the Indriyas (the senses) of man, that is to say, he is the Mind which handles the senses. He is also known as Puruhutha—puru meaning 'often' and hutha, 'invited'—the entire name meaning, 'the God who is most called upon'. The Mind (which is identified with Indriyas, since it masters them) is also adored in the Vedas as Rudra. The Mind contacts the objective world and experiences it through the instrumentality of the five senses; this aspect of the Mind is the Indra aspect. It has also another capability. It can master the senses, and become aware of the Universal Inner Truth of the multiplicity cabled the Objective world. This aspect of the Mind is

designated as 'Rudra'. This is the reason why the Vedas describe Indra and Rudra as the One with two names.

About the outer Gods too, it is possible to quote many such descriptions. Yet ultimately, all descriptions lead to the same conclusion. The Rks adore Deities first, as presiding over some function or other; then, these latter get transformed into different names and forms of the One God who has all the worlds in Itself, who is the Witness, resident in all hearts, and who is the Sovereign of all Creation. Gradually, all other meanings and reactions are suppressed, as not relevant. For example, an element of fear is associated with the deity, Varuna. The fear sprouts and spreads in some Rks, but, soon, the wisdom of Aryas (Noble seekers) subjugates the fear. Many Rks are prayers to Varuna from people afraid of being punished by Him for their sins. But, the idea of a terrorising God cannot flourish on Indian Soil. Nor can many Gods of many natures. Bharatiya culture and spiritual outlook upheld the One God or Ishwara.

Next, the Ekeswara! This axiom, that there can be only One and not many, is current in India since very ancient times. Even in the ancient Vedic and Samhita literature, this faith is already evident as an age-long belief.

But, the notion of a personal God struck the thinkers and practitioners of this land as rather elementary, a kind 'of unripe stage in' spiritual progress. It did not satisfy their highest aspirations. This attitude found in the revelations of Rishis has not been understood or appreciated by scholars and writers of other countries who have studied and commented on the Vedas and affiliated texts. They still dwell on the earlier beliefs in, 'many gods' or the later belief in 'one personal God'. Ignorance of this kind brings a smile to the lips of the Hindu.

Really speaking, even those who learn in their mother's laps to put faith in a God equipped with attributes, known by a name and having a recognisable Form, have later to rise to a stage higher than this and become aware of the One, that is spoken of as 'having many names and many forms'. The Sadhanas are directed to the realisation of this Truth.

The ONE—in Him alone is all this flux, all this changing Cosmos, established. He is the guide and guardian of every consciousness. All such denotations touch only the fringe of the ONE. Westerners said that the intelligence of man couldn't succeed in this venture. But, the seekers of this land showed a heroism that could not be measured or limited. This is a fact that cannot but be accepted. Western Philosophers renowned for their daring flights into the realms of the spirit have shown only a tiny spark of this heroism; so, they are amazed at the speculative and experiential heights reached by the sages of India. This feeling of wonder has been charmingly expressed by Professor Max Mueller. "Into whatever unknown realms of experience their causative and positive inquiry led them the Indian seekers ventured boldly therein. They never hesitated to discard, for the sake of success in this adventure, whatever they felt as an encumbrance. They were not affected by fear of how others might judge them." Max Mueller exhorted people to involve themselves in Bharatiya Paramartha Vahini (the Nectarine stream of the search for the Supreme, flowing in India), for he felt the Indian Sadhakas pursued the path of Right, the path of Truth.

Ekam sat; viprah bahudha vadanti—One alone is; the wise speak of It as many. This indeed is most sublimely meaningful. This is the basic truth behind the spiritual efforts of India since ages. And, even the theistic principles and practice that will spread all over the world with unprecedented benedictions in the coming years have as their basis this' great axiom laid down by the sages of India, long long ago.

Rks arose on various Deities and Divine Forces, because, the Rishis knew that the "One that alone, is," can be cognised by each one only from his own viewpoint, and that it is different for different persons, depending on the stage reached in clarifying and purifying the vision. They announced through that statement, their discovery that the One is the subject which all the sages and saints, seers and poets, hymnists and composers adored and praised in various languages, during various moods, through various styles of expression. Thus, from the declaration quoted above, Ekam sat viprah bahudhaa vadanti, emerged consequences of the highest value to the world. For example, many are surprised that India is the one country where religious fanaticism is absent and no one hinders or harms the religious observances of another. There are, to this country, theists and atheists, dualists, non-dualists, monotheists and others; they all live together in peace and harmony, without causing or suffering injury.

Materialists stood on the steps of temples (held sacred by Brahmins and resorted by them for worship) and defamed and denied God. They called upon all to follow them. They declared that the idea of God is but an insane fancy. They condemned God, scriptures, codes of morality, righteousness and their guiding principles and said that they were all superstitions designed and developed for selfish aggrandizement by the Brahmins. They roamed across the land and propagated these conclusions. And, no one hindered them. Buddhism, which systematically slighted Hindu rites and religious beliefs was allowed to co-exist in an atmosphere of respect. The Jains too did not accept the Vedas and the Vedic Gods. They asked in derision how such Gods can exist and be believed in. Examples of the spirit of tolerance rooted in the revelatory statement quoted above are innumerable. Until the Muslim ravagers sprang on this country no one in this land of Bharat knew what was meant by violence. It is only when foreign hordes fell upon them and resorted to violence that the people came to know how intolerant man can be.

Hindus helped Christians to build churches in India. They showed readiness to co-operate with Christians; this is evident all over the country. There was no bloodshed at any time, in dealing with Christians. The stream of thought directed to the supreme Truth would not allow itself to be polluted by violence. To confirm this fact as well as to understand the validity of this attitude requires clear thinking and strength of intellect.

Buddhists were the very first propagators of religion who undertook to spread their faith by travelling over the world. That religion entered all countries famed in those days as civilised. The monks who ventured into those lands were tortured; hundreds were killed by imperial decree. But, soon, good fortune smiled on Buddhism. Buddhism taught that violence has to be eschewed. Buddha was accepted as a God, as another Name for the One, which has many names, according to the Vedic dictum, "Ekam sat, viprah bahudhaa vadanti" He was Indra, He was Rudra. That was the unifying effect of the basic revelation of the sages. May this declaration be ever in the memory of man!

Bharatiyas, grown up in the culture of India, have deep faith in the equality of all faiths. Whether it is Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism or Christianity, they believe that no one should talk lightly of the worship of God. They believe that when anyone talks lightly of any One of the Names of God or any of the Forms of God whom others adore, they are insulting the One God. This was the message held forth by the Indian way of spiritual life. Those who have learnt this truth and adhere to it are the real sons and daughters of India.

This Truth is beyond the grasp of all; not all can achieve this knowledge: who is the ruler of the Universe? Who is it that stands outside It and guides it? What is the cause of the existence of this Cosmos? Whence did this originate? How did it happen? What caused this existence? The Vedas have many riks dealing with these mysteries. Bharatiyas have probed into them.

Creation means and involves the putting together of substances; what is put together must come apart, in course of time and get liberated. The individual is created and so he has to disintegrate and die. Now, some are born happy; some are enjoying healthy, happy lives. Some are born miserable; others are born without hands or legs. Some are born feeble-minded or as defectives. Who hurt them or injured them? God is proclaimed as just and kind, is it not? It can be argued how such a God can ever be so partial and prejudiced? How can such differential treatment come into the Realm ruled by God? Such doubts are natural. But, the vision of the sages of Bharat who moulded the thought of this land revealed to them that. God is not the cause of these differences; they are the consequences of the acts indulged in by the individual in lives previous to the present one. They result in happiness and misery, health and handicaps.

Goods and bads are self made, the effects of what was done in previous lives. Can the bodies of men and their conditions; the ups and downs men meet in life, can they not be the accumulated; result of hereditary, impacts and tendencies? There are two things that stand like parallel lines before us, when we consider this subject, mental and material. If satisfactory solutions can be found for the problems relating to human nature and its special qualities in materialism then, there can be no basis for believing that there is a factor called Atma or the Soul! But, it is impossible to demonstrate that the capacity to think, for example, has evolved out of physical matter!

When an item, of work is done again and again, it becomes, a habit, a skill; isn't it? Therefore, the skill, or habit that a new-born exhibits must be due to constant repetition indulged in long ago, isn't it? Of course, such practice must have taken place in a previous life or many lives. So, it is necessary to posit the validity of the belief in past and future lives, for all living beings. This is a basic belief in Bharatiya spiritual thought.

(To be continued)

Dasara—77

The Ten days' Celebration of the Dasara Festival '77 was a refreshing, revitalising experience, for the thousands who had gathered in the Presence. The Festival was inaugurated at 7-30; on the

morning of 13th October, with the Hoisting of the Prasanthi Flag, by Bhagavan, on the Prasanthi Mandir. Sri. N. Kasturi spoke on the four types of devotees who gather in the Divine Presence, as mentioned by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita—the distressed, the indigent, the inquiring and the realised—Artha; Artharthi Jijnasu and Jnani—and said that Bhagavan is Durga (worshipped as such during the first three days of Dasara) Lakshmi (worshipped as such during the second three-day-period) and Saraswati (worshipped as such during the last three days) and the Mother Principle known to the realised beings as Jagan-mata (the Universal mother). Bhagavan in His Discourse laid emphasis on the need of Faith, in the immanent and transcendent God, as the real Core of oneself.

From noon, until late in the evening, that day, about ten thousand poor people who had gathered in the open spaces around the Srimati Easwaramma High School were, fed sumptuously, Bhagavan Himself supervising and personally sharing in the 'service' of sweets to them. The large numbers of defectives and destitutes were given new clothes.

On the 14th, the 21st Annual Day of the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam, was celebrated at the Poornachandra Auditorium, in the immediate Presence of Bhagavan. Sri. Govind Narayan I. C, S. the Governor of Karnataka State, was present at the Function. Srimati Govind Narayan presided. Sri. N. Kasturi described the services rendered by the Hospital to the large number of villagers around, at the well-equipped and well-staffed Hospital itself (in its out-patient and in-patient departments) as well as by means of the Mobile Medical Van (fitted with diagnostic appliances for blood testing, eye testing and dental examination, X-ray study etc) which moves into the villages, carrying health education and curative drugs to people isolated from doctors and hospitals. He spoke of the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital at Whitefield, as well as of hundreds of Free Dispensaries run by the Sathya Sai Seva Samitis all over the land. Bhagavan lays special stress on medical help as part of Sadhana. Therefore, more than 1000 Samitis are conducting medical check-ups on a large scale, of adults and school children; they are also holding Free Eye Operation Camps, Dental Care Camps, Skin Diseases Camps and other similar Seva Activities with the help of devoted and enthusiastic doctors. The Seva Dal (both men and women) are helping the Blood Bank movement in a big way, everywhere, by donating blood and registering themselves as donors with Hospitals. He declared that the Hospital Day had become a day for the Remembrance of the Service being done by thousands of doctors as an expression of their Devotion and Dedication.

On the 15th, Sri Govind Narayan I.C.S., the Governor of Karnataka State inaugurated the Vedapurusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna, before a huge concourse of devotees gathered from all parts of the World. He said, "Last year, on October 10, I and my wife were at Shirdi. Today, October 15, we are in the presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I wonder if there is a link, relating these two incidents! We are fortunate to have Baba's Darshan at Whitefield and I had a keen desire to be here, in His own Home. I felt like coming here on my own. The call came from Bhagavan Himself. I wondered if there was a link, again. In my programme usually worked out days ahead, I found this day with nothing fixed and so, I did not have to cancel a single appointment! Thus, we are among the fortunate ones who could be present here this day. We must have accomplished some good Karma, which has rewarded us with this good fortune. Nothing can happen, unless the Divine wills it. Even a thought will not be born, unless Baba wishes it to be born. We are now commencing this great Yajna, this Sapthaha of Adoration.

There are four steps in all rites for the Adoration of Divinity—Self-purification, Invocation, Offering, and Seeking the Presence of God. Cleansing of the mind, giving up hatred and greed, control of the senses, these are all part of the first step. Then, from the depths of the heart, rises the prayer, and the offering made to Him of all of one-self. Seek from God only closeness to him, sitting at His Feet, listening to His words and conveying our genuine feelings to Him, "The Governor concluded His speech, with the call, "Let us pray to Baba that He may help us all to shower His Grace on all of us so that we may tread the Path that leads to God."

Bhagavan in His Divine Discourse advised all to cultivate Fortitude, by means of Yoga, or Chitta Vritti Nirodha, the steady control of the agitations that sweep the mind. He said that Yajna teaches man the great lesson of Tyaga, for the higher purpose of Self-realisation. The ryot sacrifices a few measures of grain as seed and gets back bagfuls of grain at harvest time. Bhagavan spoke of the efficacy of Vedic mantras which can transmute the atmosphere as well as the inner climate of the participants.

During the Saphaha Yajna, the huge congregation of devotees could get every morning the Darshan of Bhagavan for hours, when he moved among the Priests, Pundits and Scholars in traditional Lore, engaged in the rite and when He slowly walked among their own ranks. Three Pundits gave musical discourses in the traditional style on Meera Bai, Kabir Das and Sulochana. They were members of the Sanathana Bhagavata Bhakta Samajam, associated with the All India Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, established by Bhagavan for the promotion and preservation of Sanathana Dharma. The seniormost Pundit among them, Br. Sishta Chandramoui Sastry and another scholar, Br. Lankana Sitharma Sastry addressed the gathering during the Saphaha.

During all the evenings, students from the Sri Sathya Sai College for Boys at Brindavan, (Whitefield) and the Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur, were invited to address the gathering. They won all hearts by the spirit of dedication and discipline that saturated their speeches. Each of them was a brilliant example of high academic achievement; also, of simple, sincere exposition of the inspiring experiences they had of the Love, Wisdom and Power of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan enlightened the gatherings every evening through His Divine Discourses, filled with illustrative stories and parables, which illumined in a flash, the deep philosophic truths He expounded. He also elaborated on the practical aspects of Sadhana, Namasmarana, Service, Toleration based on Understanding and Reverence.

The children of the Bal Vikas belonging to the Srimati Easwaramma High School enacted a play on 'Pilgrimage to Puttaparthi' which was highly appreciated. The Bal Vikas Children of Madras City performed a Musical Dance-Drama, based on the life of the great Saint-Composer Purandara Dasa. It was a thrilling experience to witness the perfectly produced, enthusiastically enacted play. Sri Ids Marion St John (California) and Sri Gita Orescan (Germany) together sang,, on another evening, four songs on Bhagavan (in English) and a Bhajan Song (Jai Durga Lakshmi Saraswati). The thousands who heard them were moved into ecstasy by the beauty of the language and the fervor with which they rendered the songs. Another evening, the pupils of Nritya Kalyani Institute of Dance, Madras, staged the Koochipudi Ballet: Sree Krishnaparijatham and delighted the vast gathering who witnessed it. On the Vijayadashami

Day, Bhagavan graciously created precious gems for the Poornahuti in the sacred fire, which was sanctified for seven days by the ritual offering of Vedic mantras and consecrated ghee; He created a gem-jewel which was placed on the forehead of the Shirdi idol, before the Vibhuti Abhishekam, through the shower of sacred ash emanating from an empty vessel. He sprinkled the Holy Teerth of the Vedapurusha Yajna on the vast multitudes that had assembled.

At the evening gathering, Bhagavan released a Gramophone Record of songs in His Adoration written by Bhaskara Sai Krishna Yachendra, M. A. and sung by Smt. P. Susheela, and Sri. V. Ramakrishna, the Music Director being the famous Rajeswara Rao. As a token of His Blessings Bhagavan Himself fixed in the ears of the octogenarian Pundit, Br. Sishta Chandramouli Sastry, the doyen amongst the Vidwans of the land, pendants of Gold which were artistic jewel pieces in the traditional auspicious shape. Afterwards, when Bhagavan was seated in the Silver Swing, the Orchestra party of Sri Rajeswara Rao accompanied Smt P. Susheela and Sri V. Rama Krishna who sang the songs written by Sri Bhaskara Sai Krishna Yachendra and a few other devotional songs.

On the 22nd, Bhagavan blessed a few poets who read their compositions in His presence Brahmsri Deepala Pichayya Sastry (Telugu), Dr. C. Narasimba Sastry, M. A., Ph.D., known by his pen-name Amarendra (Telugu) Br. Jandbyala Papayya Sastry, known as 'Karunasri' (Telugu), Sri K. Prahlada Rao, B. A. (English, Telugu and Sanskrit), Sri N. Kasturi, M. A., B. L. (English and Kannada) and Dr. Mrs. Zeba Bashiruddin, M. A., Ph. D. (Urdu and English). Bhagavan too sang a few of the Divine Compositions with which He used to delight the devotees many years ago. He advises the poets to be engaged in Sadhana all the time and to revere the medium of poetry as a sacred call to elevate the standard of morality and sincerity of the people.

The Festival attracted thousands of seekers from all quarters. Among those who visited the Nilayam to benefit by the chance of Darshan during the Festival was Mrs. Carmen Romano de Lopez Portillo, wife of the President of the State of Mexico, who was accompanied by the Mexican Ambassador to India.

Two pleasant announcements were made on the 22nd, to the devotees, one, about the "Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar" to be started at Ootacamund, on the Nilgiris, in February '78 (Details given separately) and the other about the taking over of a number of educational institutions now being managed by the Loka Seva Vrinda, at Alike and other places in Karnataka.

Altogether, for every one of the thousands who stayed at Prasanthi Nilayam for the ten-day Festival of Love and Light, it was an instructive, inspiring and illuminating experience, which has transformed their attitudes and aspirations into higher levels and deeper significances.

—*Pilgrim*

On the Look-Out

Today the world is tormented by fear, strife, greed, anger and lust; materialistic pursuits and sensual pleasures have become universal. Simplicity and truthfulness have given way to pomp

and show. Man is judged great on the basis of wealth and the power he can yield over other men. Godly men who are not more than a handful, are unable and powerless to exert their influence to moderate the tragedy. Mankind is caught in a quandary and is facing extinction through pollution of the atmosphere, internal and external.

Luckily Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has won the reverence and adoration of millions and is fast transforming them into worthy instruments for affecting a Sai Revolution. He has revived Vedic learning and Vedic Yajnas and cultivated among the people of India as well as foreign lands a desire to read and understand the Hindu epics, Sastras and Puranas. He has encouraged the study of the Upanishads and the Gita through the hundreds of Study Circles the Seva Samitis have started. He also declares that the basic teaching of all Hindu scriptures—as in the scriptures of every religion—is Love, Love thy neighbour as thyself, for all are of the same Divine Essence. Bhagavan says that only Love can promote Love, that Love is effulgence of Shanti that is the bulb into which flows the current Sathya brought by the wire, Dharma.

Bhagavan directs that His teachings must first transform the home through the children, by means of the Bal Vikas programme of service and through the mother, by means of the Mahila Vibhag and Mahila Seva Dal. Children, all over the world, are being led into the bright light of pure thoughts and elevating ideals through the Bal Vikas classes. They will be the pioneers of the new Era. They are the future leaders and the makers of the destiny of mankind. Baba says that the new social awakening should start at their level. If we concentrate on the physical, intellectual and moral progress of children, society will benefit much in the long run. The children must be trained to develop ideals of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. If children are brought up in an atmosphere of reverence, humility and courage, as taught in the Vedas, Upanishads and Epics, it will revitalise and rebuild the new Sai Social Order. Education has to be supplemented by good company and conscious self-effort. The Colleges started by Baba and run under the constant guidance of Baba as well as the Summer Camps on Indian Culture and spirituality provide training for the youngsters in spiritual Sadhana and help youth to chart their spiritual and intellectual development in the right direction.

Bhagavan's mission is also centred round villages, for, villagers are much more closely tuned to spiritual awakening than people who are town dwellers. Baba's concern for their well-being can be seen from His visits to remote areas to rekindle the spiritual aspirations of the people. He has directed every Seva Samiti to adopt a village for intensive service, in the fields of Vidya and Vaidya—education and health. He has instructed the College Students to engage themselves in rural service, among the residents of the villages around Kadugodi, Whitefield. Bhajan and Nagarsankirtan are the primary instruments by which the villagers are drawn into the Sai Programme of Study and Service.

Baba says, "Prepare yourselves for serving others—not only by learning first aid, the rules of the road, the process of blood donation, the use and fitting up of mikes and loudspeakers, etc—bit, also by intense Japa, Dhyana, and Namasmarana; for, unless you fill yourselves with God, you are bound to be dry and cruel. Remember, it is God whom you are serving, not man. Serve with gratitude, with reverence, with humility."

Baba wants us to be on the look out for the distressed, the defective and the diseased and serve them skillfully and sincerely, to the best of our capacity. There should not be any tinge of ego in the act; no one should brag about it or feel proud. Do not delay or deny, because the person is non-deserving. His need is the proof that he deserves. Baba says, “Have constructive thoughts, consoling words and compassionate acts. Be on the look-out for eyes filled with tears.”

—P. Kaoagarasa. Colombo

Raksha Bandhan

The festival of Raksha Bandhan is observed in many parts of India. It has a profound meaning as its inner core; but, like all social and familial vows and ceremonies, it has become a mere ritual now, a hollow hilarious observance.

Raksha means protection, refuge, safeguarding. When a child is born, the mother guards it and affords protection. While in the womb, she feeds it with her prayers, her love and vigilant attention. When he arrives in the world, she keeps him well fed, warm and well-guarded from injury, and physical harm. The parents together take up the task of guarding his health, and promoting his education, his character and his good habits. Everything concerning him is of deep concern to them; they are afraid he may fall into evil ways; they are worried about his future. Christ declared that unless a man was born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. The reborn child should have a protector, while it toddles forward along the spiritual path.

The father was once the Guru also. But, seldom has any father the qualifications necessary to guide another into self-realisation. The physical kith and kin are helpless when one goes on pilgrimage into this region. God, the indweller, can take you by the hand and lead you to Himself. God is also Mother, Father.

Therefore, man would be well advised to bind himself to God, available now in human form, as Bhagavan Sathya Sai; have the Raksha Bandhan mentally with Him and adopt Him as the nearest kinsman. This is the Bandhan that ensures Raksha.

—R. Chandramouli

Indian Culture has always emphasised the hard way, the beneficial way, by which the heart will be softened and the hands rendered liberal. But, people are now enamoured of cultures that emphasise the 'priya', and not the 'hitha'—the pleasurable, and not the profitable. Indian culture attaches no value to frill and fancy, mirages and mushrooms. It advises control of the senses and prevents us from catering to them and becoming their bond-slaves. Inner concentration is to be preferred to outer distraction. Quietness, simplicity, humility—cultivate these, instead of noise, complexity and conceit.

—Baba

Revere the Act

In this land of Bharat, tradition and culture recommend reverence to parents, elders, teachers and God. I would add, reverence to acts, as another imperative. Youth have to engage themselves in holy activity, suffused with a sense of prayer, so that the activity might result in the good of all. Acts once done cannot be undone; they inevitably bring their own consequences; they have to be undertaken in fear and with care. For, acts mould character, transform destinies and mar the fortunes of one-self and others.

Activity generates generations
Activity hastens decay and death.
Activity is the Path of Worship
Activity lays a trail of Disaster.

God distributes to each the consequences of his acts, impartially and inevitably. Man cannot avoid accepting them. In the Gita, Krishna declared that one should not get attached to the fruits of action; He did not declare that action can be barren, or free from fruits. Whatever happens is the 'fruit'. It may be pleasant, or painful. It happens, as a result of a Divine Law, the Will of God. One has merely to accept it, and admit that it is the Grace of God that gave it to you.

Bitter quinine is given when one suffers from malaria; it has to be accepted as a sign of Grace, for, though we may reject it as bitter on the tongue it will cure the fever and restore us to health. God is compassionate. He knows and He gives. Vinayaka (Ganapati) has two consorts, Siddhi and Buddhi—Achievement and Intelligence. Through Intelligence, one achieves. The trouble is Intelligence or Buddhi has no Shuddhi, Clarity. So, complaints are made and discontent promoted, when acts do not yield anticipated results.

This day is Vinayaka Chaturthi, when Ganapati is honoured and adored in every home. Among the 108 names with which, He is worshipped today, there is one "Unmatthasekharaya namah," ("Homage to the Lord of the Insane"! The sanity on which man takes pride is with reference to this world of appearance, but, there is a world of Reality where clearer vision can grasp a saner truth. That truth, to lower, intellects might appear Insane; but, words, do not matter, it is facts that count.

Vinayaka has a globular tummy and an, elephantine head, with a trunk and two tusks, one of them half-broken. One day when Parvati, the mother was leading Vinayaka along, the moon laughed a derisive laugh at the absurdity of the appearance. The mother's heart was touched; no mother can admit that her child is not charming. She cursed the Moon and said that, whoever gazed at the Moon that night (and, every year, on that night) will render themselves targets of public derision.

Vinayaka was a very affectionate child. There is a story of the exploits of Vinayaka, and his brother, Subramanya (also called Kumara). Parvati set a problem before the two and promised to honour the winner. She wanted them to go round the world and reach her quick. Kumara rode his vehicle (the peacock) and Vinayaka rode his (the mouse). With his heavy body and the tiny

mouse, Vinayaka could not make any headway. Narada, the son of Brahma, met him a short distance from the starting point. He advised him that one's parents are 'the only world that matters' for the son, and so, it was enough if he went round the parents quickly, before Kumara returned from his expedition. Of course, the Universe consists of Jada and Chaitanya, of Purusha and Prakriti, of Brahman and Maya; Siva and Parvati, are the symbols of these two entities and there is nothing beyond.

Siva and Shakti (Parvati) have become all this. The violin has four strings but, imagine the millions of tones and tunes they can manifest, when the bow is run over them! There are 26 letters in the English alphabet; look at the millions of books written on millions of subjects with no more than those 26! Everyone's parents are the Siva-Shakti for that one. They are for him the visible representatives of Siva and Shakti.

Vinayaka removes obstacles that hinder the progress of the good; He also creates obstacles and difficulties, and hinders the manifestation of evil. He is called Vighneshwara, the Lord of obstacles. Vinayaka means, 'He who has no Lord over Him'. Since He won in the contest between the brothers and came first, Siva blessed Him and directed that every holy rite and auspicious activity must begin with the worship of Vinayaka. Even when Siva is worshipped, the ceremony has to be initiated with Puja for Vinayaka (Ganapati)! People pray to Ganapati that He save them from the path of sin. One has to be vigilant against evil, vice and sin. The fear of Sin and the love of God are both essential for a happy, peaceful life. Today, fear of sin has faded. Love of God is but a part-time occupation. How can one have love of God, if at the same time one has no fear of un-godly acts or thoughts? Youth should be particularly alert in this matter; they are now anchor-less boats caught in a storm on the wild surging sea.

They are kites with no strings to hold them back. Students of our College must not flounder or waver. They must become examples of holy mother-hood; they should not yield to flimsy doubts and deleterious decisions. There is a proverb in Telugu: "If the daughter-in-law is dark, the family will be dark." Therefore, you who are the future daughters-in-law ought to be strong, straight, simple, sincere, and full of Love towards the distressed and the helpless.

The emphasis has to be laid today on, character. Your education here is not for jobs; it is for cultivating and strengthening character. So, whether the act be small or big, pray that no obstacle comes in the way. It has become a habit with people to blame God for whatever they suffer. "Why am I bothered thus? Can You not better the conditions for me?" This is the way God is blamed. But, God does not do anything; it is your thoughts, words and acts that bind you or bother you, help you or hinder you. The Postman hands over to you letters bearing your address. He is not concerned whether they carry good news or bad. When you release the hold, the thing held will fall off—whatever the person, peasant or prince, pundit or illiterate. The law of gravitation operates, irrespective of persons. So, too, God assigns consequences to the acts and they have to be accepted gladly.

You might have read or heard that, once, when Dhritarashtra was holding Durbar with a large concourse of kings and courtiers, his sons Duryodhana and Dussasana dragged on to the dais the wife of the Pandavas, Draupadi, and attempted to humiliate her by disrobing her. But, when she prayed to Krishna, He blessed her instantaneously, so that an unending length of sari defied the

brothers and defeated their plans! There is a story behind this act of Divine Grace. An act of service that Draupadi had done previously fetched her this timely boon. It was a consequence of a good deed done by her.

Some years previous to this tragic occurrence at the Durbar, Krishna was at His place, surrounded by Radha, Rukmini, Draupadi, Satyabhama and others. It was the festival of Bhogi and Krishna was chewing bits of sugar-cane. The skin of the cane He was handling cut His finger and gave rise to bleeding. Rukmini and Satyabhama sent maids in all directions with instructions to bring some helper or help. But Draupadi tore off a length of cloth from the sari she was wearing and bandaged it tight over the wound so that the flow of blood was stopped. That small strip of sari she gave spontaneously to relieve the pain resulted in the amazing gift of an endless length of sari at the most critical moment of her life. Sudama too gave the Lord a handful of 'beaten rice' and the Lord rewarded him with immeasurable wealth.

Ganapati is adored as 'Suklambaradharam' (wearing white robes), Vishnum (present everywhere) and Sasivadanam (of the complexion of Vibhuti). He is known as Chaturbhujam (four armed): two of these hands are for the tasks of the world and the other two are for guarding and guiding devotees. (Since man is concerned only with worldly tasks, he can well do with two hands only). He has the wheel (time) and the conch (sound) in his hands.

Ganapati is praised as Prasanna-vadanam (having a bright sparkling face). He is not glum or gloomy, depressed or dejected. He is joy and spreads joy. How heartwarming it would be, if an elephant laughs! It must be really grand. He has no anger in him, only unalloyed bliss. This is what is termed Samadhi. Equanimity is the essence of Samadhi; it is not a period of unconsciousness or a stroke of hysteria. Sama-dhi means, equal-mindedness. When heat or cold, grief or joy, gain or loss do not affect you at all, then you have Samadhi.

The next word in the hymn of praise of Ganapati is 'dhyaeth', 'I meditate'. Some crooked atheists have discovered another meaning for this hymn and they apply it to the donkey! It carries white clothes (of the dhobi), it is Vishnu (omnipresent, in almost all places, roads, bazaars), it is of the complexion of ash, it has four limbs, it can also be said to have an unperturbed look. The fact that the hymn has this meaning too for mischievous minds shows that divinity exists in the donkey too. God is the innermost reality of every being.

Tukaram had realised that truth. Hindu pilgrims carry the waters of the Ganga in a pot all the way south to the extreme peninsular point of holy Rameshwaram and pour it on the Lingam of Ramalingeswara as ceremonial Abhishekam. National integration is also achieved thereby. But, Tukaram achieved spiritual integration of all living beings in the process. While he was trudging along with the precious Ganga water, he met a donkey in the throes of thirst, lolling its dry tongue, on the hot sands. Impelled by a sense of compassion, Tukaram poured the water that he had to use for Abhishekam, down the throat of the hapless animal. His disciples protested, but, Tukaram replied, "Dear Ones! Instead of pouring this sacred water on a stone symbol, how much more worthwhile is it to pour it for helping this 'living thing'?"

Vinayaka is worshipped not with rare and fragrant flowers, but, with blades of grass and wild, drab and commonplace flowers. The reason is: Vinayaka is innocent of pride or pomp. Four

types of persons are innocent this way and so, deserving worship.... the realised soul, the, child, the mad person and the person possessed by a ghost.” The Jnani or realised man sees God in all and is incapable of, vice or hatred. The mad man is not responsible for his words and acts. The child is too tender to have any wrong ideas. The ghost-ridden man too is incapable of volition. Now, just as a man caught in, a marsh can be saved only by some one standing on hard ground, a sinner can be saved only by some one above and beyond sins, free from vice and hatred, pomp and pride. He has no selfishness and so, he-saves all; he has no prejudice or preference.

The, Vinayaka Chaturthi, is the very, first of the Festivals that occur in the calendar. The three Festival Nights (the Ratri) come after this holy day. The Navaratri, the Sankranti and the Sivaratri. Ganapati is worshipped first so that the other, festivals which follow may be celebrated nicely and according to scripture.

Resolve to make 'the best use of the facilities and the atmosphere of this College. Draupadi was by asked Dharmaraja to stay back at Indraprastha and serve the blindfolded Gandhari, the Queen mother of the Kauravas. She disdained such a life and preferred the dangerous and hard life of the forest in exile with her husbands. She said, "I am born the daughter of the Emperor Drupada; I have become the daughter-in-law of the world-famed mighty Emperor Pandu; I am wedded to heroes who are ever ready to maintain their precious honour; I am the mother of sons who are embodiments of courage, heroism and fearless adventure.” You too must manifest such fearlessness and such staunch loyalty to lofty ideals. She was a heroic wife, a heroic mother. She earned, undying, fame as a daughter who upheld the fame and honour of her parents. She upheld as a daughter-in-law the fame and honour of her husbands' clan and dynasty.

Earn the, name that, as students of the Sathya Sai College you were worthy of the ideals of the College. There is no gain if you discard here itself all things you learnt here, the moment you leave this College. Fill every act of yours with the prayer that it may conduce to your well-being and progress. The discipline you have involved yourselves in here will be your support and saviour, wherever you: pass your days. Pray, while you carry on any act. "Act! Do not drag me down into wrong; stand by me while I strive to be right.” Revere every act of yours as a sacred one.

*—Divine Discourse, Vinayaka Festival; Sri Sathya Sai College for Women,
Anantapnr, 16-9-77*

Sandals of the Lord

—Charles Penn

OM to Thee, dear Guru,
To Thy Sandals, I bow.
Oh, peerless Guru,
To Thy Sandals, I bow.

During this most auspicious time, we would like to share with our Brothers and Sisters, a story about a Gift, so precious that it brings the Presence of our Lord right into our Meditation Room. Devotees around the world will be glorifying His Name on the Fifty Second Birthday of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Many of us who were at Puttaparthi for His Golden Jubilee will be recalling that day of days when He 'flew' right into our hearts.

Thou art our Instructor,
The Lord of all powers,
To Thy Sandals, dear Guru,
Once again do I bow.

It could have been that Swami was preparing me for the Gift, for it seemed that each time, during the Second World Conference and the evening events, I found myself sitting in front of a beautiful mural, near the stage, in the Poornachandra. The scene showed the Buddha sitting in meditation under a banyan tree. Beside Him were His, Sandals. My eyes were often drawn to them. They looked so majestic as they silently awaited their chance to adorn His Blue Lotus Feet.

The deep inner meaning
Of OM they expound;
To thy Sandals, dear Guru,
Once again, do I bow.

On the afternoon before Faith, her mother and I were to leave for Bangalore, Swami in the Interview Room, turned to Faith and me and the words (which Brother Kasturi had suggested as a title for a book on Baba I may write), "My Beloved" fell from my lips. The smile that came upon Swami's face was overwhelming. Again, I repeated "My Beloved," and He said, "Yes, yes, of course. Do you doubt it?" Then I was delighted and surprised when we were invited by Swami to a second interview, the next morning.

Next morning, Swami brought smiles of happiness to an American couple as He gave the wife a red gown of His for their University Sanctuary. Then, He called to me and asked me what I wanted. The word "Love" came to my lips as He waved His Hand and presented me with a lovely silver medallion. His likeness was embossed on one side, OM on the other side. Now it has become a jhoola hanging from a silver chain round my neck.

Early next morning, we found ourselves being drawn once again to the Mandir for a final glimpse! Without explaining the thought within me, I left Faith's side and headed for the Mandir door. I felt a little like a calf heading for its mother across the field. At the same moment that I reached the door, Dr. Bhagavantam also arrived. Without hesitation, I found myself explaining to him about a deep desire that I had been unaware of during the interview of the previous afternoon. I was actually asking for his Sandals!

The good Doctor seemed to understand fully and within moments, returned to the door and handed me a white glass cloth bag, and said, "Baba wants you to know that these are very special Sandals and they carry with them His Love and Blessings."

An eagle to slay
All the snakes of desire,
Dispassion and wisdom
Thy Sandals inspire.

The joy that fell upon us as we looked upon His Sandals made our journey back to Bangalore, one of sheer ecstasy. Leaving Faith and Althea at Whitefield, I returned to America, with the precious cargo. As soon as I arrived home at Santa Monica, I opened the, carved sandalwood box purchased to protect the Sandals. As I was gazing upon them with awe and dear thoughts of the Golden Jubilee, I noticed our tape-recorder near the chair. In it was a new tape that I had not listened to before—the title, "English-Guru Gita."

I pressed the play-key; the voice of Michael Dinga began to sing the beautiful verses used throughout this story! I was amazed, for, I did not know that he sang of the Sandals on this tape. And, as I enjoyed the words, I sat with tears of joy, almost obscuring the Sandals of the Blue Lotus Feet of our Lord.

A trustworthy boat
To cross over Life's seas,
Thy Sandals awake
True devotion to Thee.

They serve as a fire
To the waters of doubt.
To Thy Sandals, dear Guru,
Once again do I bow.

Each week, His Sandals adorn our center table with blossoming flowers as we meditate upon his Name. Recently, a devotee had no sooner closed her eyes than she found herself looking at His Lotus Feet. Her eyes were slowly cast upwards, there to meet those of Bhagavan... From the Beginning to the very End, He watches and guides each one of us, And such sweet Leelas He plans for our spiritual progress.

The Impact

Brought up in Uganda, at Kampala, in a pious atmosphere, I was what you may call 'religious' by nature. Being far away from the motherland, I had idealistic views about Bharat and Bharatiya culture. I had heard from scholars and pundits who visited Uganda from India various expositions on the scriptures of our country, the Upanishads and Bhagavad-Gita etc. I was soon categorised by my friends and companions as walking on airy stilts of abstract ideas about God, with my head high up in the sky. Their opposition did not dishearten me. I still cherished my reverence for Bharatiya culture and its ideals of plain living and high thinking. I was determined that, one day, I shall go to my country and live the life extolled in the ancient texts.

While I was in this mood of expectation, Bhagavan visited the 'Dark Continent'. I saw Him and listened to His discourses. I realised that He is the great One come to redeem mankind and uplift the fallen and the faltering.

The main things that impressed me then were: (1) Like some bigots and egoistic propagandists, He does not teach a New Religion or insist on our adoring a New God. He synthesizes the good in all religions out of His magnanimity. He praises all religions as of equal validity. His love embraces all castes, creeds and sects of all faiths. Like Christ, Bhagavan fulfils; He has not come to destroy any faith. He does not concern Himself with the collection of followers or funds to build centers for any sect of His. There are many spiritual teachers who are dollar-beggars, and play things of the rich. He takes in every individual with sympathy, but; He submits to no one. He remains the Master; in any company, however learned, rich or powerful.

(2) Bhagavan has the compassion and the power to be our truest friend, and well-wisher. My experience has shown me, that those whom-we call our relatives and even 'friends' are ours only as long, as their selfish interests are undisturbed; when we really need their help, they quietly slide away. Bhagavan never lets us down. When we call on him, there He is; when we don't call on Him, still, there He is, waiting and watching.

(3) Bhagavan wants us to involve ourselves in a more living way with members of our family, parents, brothers and sisters and also to engage ourselves in the intelligent service of others, less fortunate than ourselves. That type of work is worship of Baba, He says. Doing the duties that are expected of us to the best of our talents is also a religious trite, which is pleasing to Him, He says.

(4) Whatever Bhagavan teaches, He demonstrates in practice in His own life. He does not maintain a distance between Himself and us, which He could do; with enough justice. He does not put on an expression of deep profundity. As He has said among children, He is a child; among men, He is a man; among women, He is a woman; and when He is alone, He is God.

(5) The greatest impact He has made on me is due to another characteristic, which I am deeply thankful for. When you are with Him, He, makes you feel that nothing is impossible for you. He endows us with a sense of mission and the skill and courage needed to fulfill that role. We are not animals that have risen in the evolutionary scale; we are Divine, He tells us and His Grace raises us to that level. It is said, God told man, 'Build a better world'. The man replied, "How can I? There is nothing I can do. The world is so down and out." Listening to him, God smiled, and said, "Just build a better you!" Bhagavan helps us to become a better we.

(6) Now, when I cherish my precious Bharatiya culture; I know that Bhagavan will give me all the encouragement I need and all the light I need. When I attempt to practise in daily life the basic virtues of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, I know that Bhagavan will be pleased to see His child fumbling along towards Him.

I was, so to say, in a dark room, in which a lamp was about to be extinguished. The flame was struggling to survive. Suddenly and mysteriously, Bhagavan appeared with His resplendent

Form, with His eyes of compassion and smile of solace, and He poured from unknown resources, oil in that lamp and the flame swelled in delight. Now, the light is spreading even outside the room, all over the place.

—*Rajeswari Patel*

The Pace of Grace

I was serving in the Indian Air Force, and therefore. I moved to different corners of the country. Wherever I stayed, I experienced wonderful Leelas of Bhagavan, and came to know similar experiences from others. The Sai movement has taken root in most places. It used to sprout with Bhajan and then grow through the stages of Narayana Seva, Bal Vikas Classes Sadhana Camps, Village Cleaning, Seva Dal, Mahila Vibhag and Library Service. Readers will be astonished to hear that, even in places where people have not heard the Names of Rama or Krishna, Sai Baba is revered and adored. In Assam, I came across such people in the labour colony of a Tea Estate. We started classes for their children and when the elders gathered to watch and appreciate, we began Bhajans and talks on the heritage of our sacred land. Gradually, they gave up drinking and smoking and now the Estate is the focal point for a Sathya Sai Seva Samiti. At Chandigarh we were told that there were no pool, living there! When a search was made, we discovered many poor lepers and, service was started for them. Devotees are serving them well and the lepers do bhajan, most sincerely and melodiously.

It was on Deepavali Day, 1963, that I had the unique good fortune of an 'interview' with Bhagavan. Baba described my entire history and corrected me in various ways. He blessed me and gave me a photograph of His, as a symbol of His constant Presence with me. I have had innumerable occasions when I have felt His Grace. Let me share just one with you.

My niece, Neeta, aged seven, fell from a tree growing in the garden of my residence at Kanpur. She was rushed to the U.H.M. Hospital. She was unconscious and her whole face had swollen much. Her father was a well-known personality in the area and so, he was able to persuade many eminent doctors to take great interest in the patient. But, their efforts were of no avail. She remained unconscious for over six days. Doctors and specialists lost hope. One day, about 4 P. M., she became breath-less. Doctors and others advised that the funeral be arranged soon, since it was getting dark.

Just at that time, my father who was praying at home to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for Neeta's survival sent my wife to the hospital, with a little Vibhuti to be applied to her forehead and to be put into her mouth. On reaching the Hospital, my mother who was sitting by the side of Neeta's bed said "Vibhuti ab kya karegi?" "What can Vibhuti do now?" Everyone in the room was shedding tears.

Preparations were being made to remove the child. When a few minutes elapsed my mother changed her mind and asked my wife to apply the Vibhuti to Neeta's forehead and also put a little between her lips. My wife obeyed and started rubbing Vibhuti on the child's forehead. Lo! Neeta opened her eye and uttered 'Baba'.

All the medical people and patients were wonderstruck, to see this 'Leela' of Bhagavan. The sacred Vibhuti was distributed to the other patients also. Neeta is now hale and hearty. She is attending school and studying in class IX.

The pace of His Grace is so fast that a mere prayer is enough to save us from imminent calamity. Jai Sai Ram.

—*Y. N. Chaturvedi, M.A., M.Ed. A.I.R., Gwalior*

Post Script for the Above

From Marlene Nicholls (Auckland, New Zealand)
Sai Saved Alfred's Life

Alfred, my brother-in-law, was born in the Cook Islands; he is now living in New Zealand. He is 29 and is married, with four children. In May of this year, he developed very swollen stomach and feet. Worried, his wife took him to several Taungas (Taunga—Big Chief), but, with no effect. Herbal medicines sent to him from back home had no effect either. In August, his wife took him to a doctor, who immediately admitted him to Greenlane Hospital, Auckland. There they gave him an operation to cut away cancer growth. But, he got worse each day; the doctors sent him to the main hospital, in Auckland. When he first entered Hospital, his weight was 14 stone; now, he was only 8 stone! He could not eat; he was barely conscious and was on drip feed. His one eye was closed, since he was experiencing double vision.

Having read one of Sai Baba's books some time ago, I approached a devotee of Sai Baba for some Vibhuti. Going to my brother-in-law that night, I put some in his mouth and prayed to Baba that He would cure Alfred for the sake of the children. I told Alfred to pray to God for help. I was told to tell him that he would have a dream.

Barely two hours after I left, Alfred called his family near his bed, knowing he was about to die.

Lapsing into un-consciousness, he had a very vivid dream, seeing faces of people and a big hurricane, which came towards him, having a cleansing effect. 12 hours later when he awoke, he passed lumps and growths, to the amazement of doctors. Asking for his first meal in four months, he started on the road to recovery. Doctors and specialists gathered around his bed in utter amazement, while Alfred was consuming meal after meal. To draw strength, he chanted 'Sai Ram'.

His family and relations were realizing the miracle that was unfolding right before their very eyes. He is now coming out of the hospital after observation has shown that he is totally cured. My husband was a sceptic—but, now he is a very strong believer. All Alfred could say was, 'Thanks to Sai Baba.'

The Yajna

When a full-grown tree blossoms during the flowering season, the fragrance fills the forest. The good man, the virtuous man, spreads light and love to all who are involved with him: he is an ornament to the community; and an inspiration to the nation. His example elevates and educates; people watch how happy he is when obstacles encounter him and how composed. They hold him up as an ideal to their children and adopt him as such for themselves. A bad man, a wicked man, influences people the opposite way. He drags the fair name of his family, his community and his nation down into infamy. Man has to elevate himself by his own efforts; he slips down the path of misery by his own negligence and sloth.

No one can escape the blows of fate or the bouquets of fortune. The degree and nature of the impact may vary; but, ups and downs are inevitable on the road from birth to death. Even Maharajas and millionaires are subject to this law of alternating joy and grief. The basic flaw in human nature which causes misery and deprives man of the quality of 'balance' is 'desire'. The flame of desire feeds on desire itself; when one desire is satisfied, ten crop up in its place. It is like pouring ghee into fire; the flames leap up for more. You cannot free the sea from waves, nor free the heart of man from desire. A little agitation there will ever be, to disturb the calm. The only method of preventing desire from affecting us is to concentrate all thought on God.

You are fundamentally Bliss; you have lost the awareness of this Bliss, and you clamour for its shadow and strive to get it from the outer world. Strive to secure Bliss where you have lost it and not where you hope it is present. Do not identify it with anything that adheres to the body, which encases you. Each one is at a different level of spiritual awareness; but, there can be no dispute of every man being basically Divine, with the Divine attributes of Sat-Chit-Ananda, waiting to be tapped and developed. When ten men gather, they may all be M. Sc.'s; but, they may be M. Sc.'s in different subjects—Physics; Chemistry, Mathematics, Zoology. Every one is human, but, the equipment of experience may be, has to be, different and special.

So, it is necessary to prescribe rites, vows, rituals, Sadhanas, and Disciplines that are as varied as the levels man has reached. The Yajna that is just being inaugurated is a lesson in Tyaga, dedication to the Gods that has great educative value: The Vedic mantras which accompany the offerings into the sacred fire are invocations to the compassion and power of the Gods; they can in their own subtle and mysterious way purify the outer atmosphere and the internal atmosphere of the Ritwiks and the listeners. The smoke that arises from this sanctified fire can purify the air and the vibrations of the Mantras have a sublimating effect on the minds of men.

The cleansing waves that arise from the Vedic sounds will spread over the world and have their impact on all humanity. That is the reason why the Vedapurusha Sapthaha Yajna is being celebrated here. This celebration will lead to the betterment of the world, the growth of harmony in human relations, and the prosperity and well-being of the earth. It will also instill faith in the Brahmins who are engaged in it, for, they have begun to lose confidence in the validity of these mantras which they oft repeat mechanically and from compulsion. My purpose is to demonstrate before the world how the ancient Vedic sacrifice has to be performed in order that we may derive the promised benefits. Listen to the mantras in this atmosphere of calm and you will experience deep blessedness.

Every word is meaningful, in the Vedas; every hymn is a prayer that has emerged out of the pure mind of a sage's heart, Unless you absorb from this place, during the Dasara Festival, the qualities of humility, fortitude, sincerity and love, your visit and stay will be sheer waste of time, money and energy. This is a workshop to which you have brought yourselves—as people take cars for overhauling and repair. The car has to leave the workshop, with nuts and bolts replaced, the engine reconditioned, the various systems corrected, and new paint and upholstery fitted, If it is taken out, just as it was brought in, it only means that no attention was paid for its improvement. It is as useless as when it reached the workshop. From the discourses the Satsang, and the significant events that happen here, like the Pranavopasana, the Nagarsankirtan, the Bhajans, the Yajna, the Teachings, learn to transmute your attitudes, aspirations, and activities into steps on the path towards the Divine.

—*Bhagavan: Dasara Discourse 15-10-1977*

THE PRISON

The Prison is not a wall with bars and a lock;

But, us, keeping our hearts closed, afraid to love,

Afraid of the World, denying God and His Presence in us.

Announcement

For the purpose of helping the people affected by the recent cyclone which hit the East coast of India, a Fund under the name " SRI SATHYA SAI CENTRAL TRUST FLOOD RELIEF FUND " has been opened and any one wishing to make a contribution thereto may send the same in the form of a crossed cheque or draft direct to the Manager, State Bank of India, Prasanthi Nilayam P. O.' Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh for being credited into the account relating to the Fund. Contributions are entitled for exemption from Income Tax and such of the Contributors who desire to have a receipt for this purpose may ask for it by addressing Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, 151- 1 R Block, Rajajinagar, Bangalore-560010.

Sri sathya sai central trust flood relief fund

List of persons who have contributed to the fund.

	Rs. P:
1. Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.	1,00,000-00
2. Sri Ramachandra Khoday & Family, Bangalore.	1,00,000-00
3. Sri & Smt. S. N. Singh.	51,000-00
4. Rajmata of Nawnagar	25,000-00
5. Smt. Sarla Indulal Shah.	25,000-00
6. Sri V. Srinivasan, Madras.	25,000-00
7. Smt. Mohini Sawhney.	20,000.00
8. Sri & Sint. Chopra, Calcutta.	20,000-00
9. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Indonesia. (£. 1, 000/-).	14,930-00
10. . Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Calcutta.	11,111-00
11. Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.	11,000.00
12. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, U. P.	11,000-00
13. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Madhya Pradesh.	11,000-00
14. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Maharashtra.	11,000-00
15. Sri Kulwant Rai, Delhi.	11,000-00
16, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Tamil Nadu.	10,000-00
17. Sri V. D. Prasada Rao.	10,000-00
18. Sri Ravindranath Punjab & Family.	10,000-00
19. Sri Ramanathan Chettiar.	9,999-00
20. Sri Sathya Sai College Hostel, Anantapur (Students).	6,000-00
21: Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Punjab.	5,100-00
22. Sri Sathya Sai College Hostel, Bangalore (Students).	5,000-00
23. Sri Y. R. Ghorpade (Rajah of Sandur).	5,000-00
24. Sri Arun Dua, Calcutta.	5,000-00
25. Sri C. L. Gandhi, Calcutta.	5,000-00
26. Sri Sohanlal, Delhi.	5,000-00
27. Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Gujarat.	5,000-00
28. Dr. & Mrs. Fanibunda.	5,000-00
29. Sri Sathya Sai Mahila Vibhag. Hyderabad.	5,000-00
30. Sri A. K. Dutta.	5,000-00

31. Sri R. R. Chatterjee.	5,000-00
32. Mrs. Rajagopal (U.S.\$500)	4,200-00
33. Total amount of other donations.	2,50,000-00
TOTAL	8,02,310-00

The Bhagavata says that Krishna was stealthily eating the butter that was stored by the Gopis in their homes. But, think for a while. Did He go about stealing butter, because He had no butter at home? It is not 'butter' that He coveted. It is the cream of virtue kept in the 'heart-pot' that He covets. That is the Atmajnana, got after vigorous churning of the dualities of life. And, was it 'stealing' that He did? No. He is Hari, the Person who robs, who appropriates, after awakening your Inner Consciousness. When awakened, you gladly offer Him the fragrance of your virtue, the courage of your heart, the wisdom of your Intellect. That is the 'butter' He accepts and seeks.

—Baba

Bethlehem and Brindavan

"Christ's Birthday is when he is born in each person's heart. It is only on that day that he is entitled to celebrate Christmas," says Sai Baba.

Centuries ago, the Apostle Paul spoke of the supreme importance of "When Christ is formed in you," because until that moment we remain asleep in the manger of the five senses, submitting endlessly to the demands of the lower self. But when the true nature of the Christ is perceived, an immaculate conception occurs, as the higher and lower selves unite, and, we know a moment of exceeding glory. Spiritual illumination is ours. At last we understand that the growth of the higher must always be at the expense of the lower. We begin to comprehend the nature of consciousness and its laws of gradual unfoldment, but, we know that never again must we lose sight of the truth that 'the Keys of the Kingdom' are found within a pure and compassionate heart.

Wherever we may be as the Spirit of Christmas approaches, we stir anew to its mystery. Spiritually, it is a time of 'renewal', as the archangels draw near to earth pouring their radiance and love upon the planet.

For those far from home, Christmas, 1976 was a day of unique delight, when bridging the years between Bethlehem and Brindavan, Sai Baba spoke of the Beloved Jesus, His purpose and His Life: "He came to propagate the Omnipresence of God, and His Might and Glory." He said, "Mary is the symbolic representative of the heart of man. Christ is the Joy principle that arises in the heart. That is the reason why the idea of Immaculate Conception is laid down. That is the reason also why Mary is pictured with the Child Jesus in her lap."

At this point, Sai Baba, to the wonder and delight of His listeners, materialised a medal with Mary and Jesus on the obverse, and Joseph on the reverse, to be passed around and touched with reverence by the assembled company who remembered, no doubt, the gospel stories of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Gold, it is said, symbolises the spiritual self; frankincense which activates the head-centres pertains to the mental world, while myrrh symbolises the essence of the refined soul after its many incarnations offered in the Love of the Christ, a truth demonstrated by certain adepts whose bodies emit fragrance. Thus the gifts of the Magi represent spirit, soul, and bodies relinquished by the ego to the newborn Christ. The Divine Mother embodies the gentler aspect of human nature, the compassion much needed on our earth-world.

"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." The ideal human society, that Baba, like Jesus, would have us fashion on this earth is built on the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Baba teaches today what the Rishis taught 5000 years ago in India. These are the changeless eternal values of discipline, service and love. These are the lasting qualities—all else is transient.

Baba said, "Today we must strive not for a new Religion, a new Society nor a new Code of Morality. They are already there, in each race and in each country. Also the basic plans for spiritual training are laid down in most religions. But, we need persons who have attained purity in all levels of consciousness. Man can reach perfect bliss, only if his heart becomes free from envy, egoism, greed and other evil traits. We need persons who can recognise, and relish the recognition of, the kinship and even the identity between man and man as well as between society and society. We have to move beyond the bounds of the limited 'I' and break loose from the entanglements of the senses. From the narrow vision of individual need, man must voyage out into the broad vision of the Universal." In parable, Baba reminded us, that when a drop of water falls into the ocean, it loses its narrow individuality, its name and its form and assumes the form, the name, and the taste of the ocean itself. If it seeks to remain separate as a drop, it will soon evaporate and be reduced to non-existence.

Baba said, "To acquire awareness of God, there is no need to journey, to any special region. It is enough to turn the eye inwards since that inner Reality is splendorous like a billion suns. Man, alas, remains unaware of this glorious heritage of immortality, and, blind to this truth, his life is lived out in sorrow and anxiety, Everyman is a messenger to men, entrusted with the task of spreading knowledge of the Joy that is being missed, If he fritters his years, he misses his mission. The more highly educated he is, the more the shame." Referring to Jesus, He said, "He who announced Himself as a Messenger developed, through the blossoming of the Divinity in Him and the expression of compassion and service activities, into a stage when He declared that He was the Son of God. Then, He rose to the status of 'I and my Father are One.'"

"When one declares that he is the Son of God, he becomes entitled to the paternal majesty and power. These he can claim only when he grows in himself the qualities that his Father has and appreciates. Jesus sacrificed His life, poured out His blood to instil love and compassion in the heart of man, so that each one should learn to be happy when another was happy and each would

be sad when others were sad. Therefore, it is not by festivity and fun that you may celebrate Christmas. Learn, rather, to celebrate it by resolving to put into practice at least one of the ideals Jesus enunciated, or by endeavouring to reach at least one of the goals He placed before man.”

Baba surrounded by the human family, at Brindavan, saw to it that both Joy and Brotherhood prevailed among the many Overseas devotees who gathered there for the Festival. Song filled the air that early morning. Devotees walked, singing through the streets, and as the familiar strains of "Silent Night" flowed, its harmony renewed again the wonder and peace of Christmas. Dinner, a festive time, was set around a Christmas Tree, but it was the Message and the Blessings that inspired all, to a deeper dedication to the practice of spiritual disciplines in the year ahead.

Brindavan, 25th December, 1976... a Day when the true spirit of Christmas prevailed, a Day to remember, a Blessing received; the priceless Grace conferred upon the ONE Family, to remind us once more, "There is only one Religion, the Religion of Love; and, One caste, the caste of Humanity.”

—*From "Heralds of the New Age"—Nov. 77 Auckland (N. Z.)*

Bharatiya Paramartha Vahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

4. The Immortal Atma!

The children of Bharat (Bharatiyas) believe that they are, each one, the Atma. They are aware that the Atma cannot be cut in twain by the sword, that fire cannot burn It, that water cannot wet It, and that the wind cannot dry It. The Atma has no bounds. Its centre is in the body, but, its circumference is nowhere. Death means the Atma has shifted from one body to another. This is the belief that every Indian has firmly in mind.

The Atma is not subject to material or worldly limitations or laws. By Its very nature, It is free; It is Unbounded; It is Purity; It is Holiness; It is Fullness. But, since it is associated with material, inert, bodies, It imagines that It is also a product of material composition. This is the wonder, the mystery, the miracle that It manifests! To unravel this mystery, and explain this miracle are beyond the capacity of any one.

How could the Full (Poorna) Atma get entangled in the delusion that It is 'not-full' (apoorna) 'a fraction', 'incomplete'? Some persons might charge the Bharatiyas who declare that the awareness of incompleteness itself can never arise, as persons who attempt to wriggle out of an impossible situation. They might say that this is but a stratagem to cover up their ignorance of the Truth. How can the Pure, the Un-partitionable, lose Its nature to the slightest extent? The Bharatiyas are simple and sincere, and their nature is seldom artificial. They would never attempt to wriggle out of a situation by resorting to specious arguments. They have the courage to encounter in a manly way any problem before them. Therefore, the answer to the question posed is: The delusion cannot happen! There is no basis for the error of imputing 'incompleteness' for

the 'complete'. The `full' entity called Atma can never imagine Itself as 'wanting' or 'less-than-full' or feel that It is limited or controlled by the material sheath whose core It is.

Every person knows that he feels he is the body. Can any one announce how this feeling arose and persisted? No one can offer to answer this question. For, to say, as some do, that It is the will of God, is no answer at all. The plain statement, 'I do not know' conveys the same meaning, as the statement, 'It is the will of God'. One is no wiser at the latter statement than after hearing the first. What remains is this: "The Atma in the Individual, the Jiva-atma, is Eternal, Immortal, Full. There is no Death; what appears so is the shifting of Its centre."

Our present condition and circumstances are decided by the deeds done in previous lives. In a similar manner, the conditions in which we have to spend the future are determined by what we are doing now. Between one life and another, one death and the next, the individual either progresses or regresses, expands or shrinks. Like a frail ship caught in a stormy sea, man climbs the froth-rimmed peak of some gigantic wave and, the next moment, he is hurled with terrific speed into the deepest trough. The rise and the fall result inevitably from his good deeds and bad. O ye! Children of Immortality! Listen! Listen to the answer given in the message of the Rishis who had the Vision of the Most Majestic of Persons, the Purushottama, who dwells beyond the twin realms of Delusion and Darkness: "O, Ye Human Beings! Brothers! For you to liberate yourselves from the succession of deaths, the only means is `knowing Him'. Do not imagine that you are sinners, for, you are heirs to eternal Ananda. You are `images' of God, sharers in undiminishable Ananda; you are by nature holy, ever-full; you are indeed God, moving on earth. Is there a sin greater than calling such as you, sinners? You are dishonouring yourselves, defaming yourselves, when you acknowledge the appellation, `sinners'. Arise! Cast off the feeling that you are sheep. Do not be deluded into that idea. You are Atmas. You are drops of Amrita, of Immortality, that know no beginning or end. All things material are your bond-slaves; you are not their bond-slaves."

These are the words of the Rishis. How can those who have not themselves delved into this Truth appreciate this Bharatiya interpretation? Indians are the fortunate ones who have achieved great strength in spirit holding God as father, mother, guru, friend, and the beloved. They have adored God as dearer to them than anything or any one, here or hereafter. How can those who are aware only of mere sensual pleasure know this supreme Truth? The craving for sensual pleasure veils the Truth from the inner eye. That craving manifests in multiple ways, creating more and more desires and laying down more and more urges to action. These hide the truth like a thick curtain.

The recognition of this curtain is a big stage in spiritual progress. This is the Maya Principle of Vedanta. From immemorial times, though the Truth was self-evident, this curtain has hidden it from man. This has been discovered as the prime obstacle by Indians, since ages. How to remove the curtain and cognise the Truth? Indians knew that the solution does not lie in the objective, external world, and so, it would be futile to seek it there. The search in the external world even for ages cannot ensure success. For, experience alone can guarantee conviction.

To gain experience, Indians entered into austerities and disciplined inquiry, until they `identified' the Truth, and announced it to the world. They discarded the urges of the senses and

the manifold attractions of active involvement in the objective world. They taught the world this lesson. The mind of man was the instrument for the Indian seekers to discover this secret, which is the basic principle of Wisdom as treasured by them. It became imperative for them to use the mind itself and study its nature and characteristics. They realised soon enough that the study of the external world led them nowhere. They diverted their attention to the internal 'regions' of their consciousness. Thus they laid the foundation for the Vedantic structure; this was the beginning of the Vedantic inquiry.

There is no need to seek Truth anywhere else. Seek it in man himself: he is the miracle of miracles. Whatever is not in man cannot be anywhere out side him. What is visible outside him is but a rough reflection of what really is in him! The ancient belief was that Easwara (God) ruled over the World, with Himself being outside it; this, the Indian seekers put to test through Sadhana and revealed that God was and is in the world and of it. This is the first contribution of Indians to the spiritual world—that God is not external to man, but, his very inner core. They declared that it is impossible to remove him from the heart where He has installed Himself. He is the very Atma of our Atma, the soul of our soul; He is the inner Reality of each.

Those who desire to grasp the supreme vision of Vedantic philosophy have to understand a few fundamental ideas. Philosophy is neither a book nor the work produced by one person. The supremely great Mann has named this Bharat as Brahmavarta, the Region of Brahma, the spiritual area where the quest of the ONE immanent and transcendent Principal originated and succeeded. The festive cavalcade of saints engaged in the quest began its march over the continents from this Bharat itself. Like mighty rivers from huge mountain ranges, the stream of spiritual Sadhana for the discovery of the Higher Truth sprang from this land itself. This land has announced to the world its Spiritual Message with the confidence and courage of thunder blasts emanating from the womb of clouds. When inimical forces blasted into Bharat, this holy land bore the brunt of the blow; it had to present its heroic chest before the attack and absorb the initial impact. Many times this land had to bear these invading thrusts and suffer fierce injuries. But yet, this land has not fully lost its fame and glory and its steadfast strength on this path.

From this land, the Embodiment of Equanimity and Compassion, Nanak the Great preached his highly wonderful message of Love. His all-embracing heart blossomed in this land. The Bharatiyas. Children of this Land, Inheritors of this Culture, spread their arms to receive in loving embrace not only the Hindu world but the Islamic world too. Among those who shone as heroic supporters of the Hindu culture unto the last, the foremost was Guru Govind Singh. Undeterred by tortures that forced him to shed his own blood and the blood of his own beloved, deserted by those for whom he had undergone such torture, he did not utter a word of blame against his compatriots, but, entered the Deccan and gave up his life, as the King of Beasts does when his heart is hurt. May that great person's fame persist forever on earth! Such eminent leaders render the whole of mankind indebted to them, for they serve the best interests of all men everywhere.

As each individual is a unique entity, so, each nation too has a unique individuality. Each person is different from others in certain matters and is endowed with some special characteristics which are his own. So too, each nation has certain special features, not found in others. Each individual has to play a role as part of the system decided by Nature; his own

previous Karma or activity has determined a special line or path for him. The history of nations too is the same. Each has to play a role already laid down by its destiny. Each nation has to deliver a special message of its own to the world community. Therefore, it is important that Bharatiyas must recognise, before everything else, the role that this nation has to play, the tone it must sing, in the World Orchestra of Peace and Bliss. You must have heard, while listening to childhood tales, that there are gemstones in the hoods of some serpents and that, so long as those gems embellish the hoods, it is not possible to kill those serpents. Keep this story in your memory; then, you can understand the most miraculous event in human history—the survival of Bharatiya Spiritual Culture.

(To be continued)

Crocodile Jaws

I am a Registered Medical Practitioner, engaged since years in my profession at Uravakonda, Anantapur District. Andhra Pradesh. As a result of some unforeseen circumstances and their effect on my mental condition, I got involved in a vicious habit, namely, taking injections of morphia. It began with two injections per day. Within eight days, more correctly, on and from the 20th of June 1968, I fell into the habit of taking four injections per day. In another fortnight, I needed eight, and within a month after that, I was 'forced to give myself 16 injections of morphia. In about a month more, the quantity the body clamoured for, increased to 20 injections. This continued for only three months more, for, later, I had to take thirty injections every day. I could not for the life of me discover any method by which I could reduce the intake.

My income from medical practice was about 800 to 1000 rupees per month. All that income proved insufficient for the morphia I had to give myself. I had to sell off five acres of my lands for 13,000 rupees; this amount plus the money I got from the patients sufficed only for 16 months for me. I sold another 3 acres for 10,000 rupees that pulled me through another 16 months. I had no money remaining with me at the end of that period. Then I sold the building sites I had in the town for 6,000 rupees and spent it on the morphia during the next eight months. The income from the remaining lands I clung to and every pie of my earnings were swallowed by this vicious habit that had 'possessed' me.

I have ten children—6 girls and 4 boys. My wife had died. I had never paid any thought during all these years on how the poor things were managing to exist. Of course, they suffered much for want of food and clothing. They went through manifold miseries. They used to wait outside my room and when they saw some patient giving me any little money, they would cry piteously for the same, 'Father! Give it to us. We shall purchase some grain with it, some snacks.' I used to drive them away with foul interjections. I never worried over what they ate or how they managed. Some patients who came to me used to pay them now and then part of the fees they had to give me and with this meagre source they kept flesh and bone together. Nine years passed thus. I was driven to such despair that I started tackling the problem, how to get rid of this vice. For, I could not even reduce the intake, by the slightest. When I had on some days, to take less than on previous days. I suffered extreme agony. Pain all over the body, yawning, sweating, fear,

effusion of saliva, stuttering cramps—these gave me great distress. How could I then stop the injections altogether? How could I escape from the coils of this drug? On account of the high cost of this habit, my family had been ruined. My medical practice declined and dried up. My physical, health also got deteriorated from day to day. Of course, I repented in my heart of hearts for this fault, but, what could I do? I found it impossible to escape.

One of my friends who had fallen victim to morphia had gone to Madras and returned after a cranial operation by which they said his habit could be got rid of. Another doctor friend too had gone to Madras and stayed there for four months; after undergoing treatment there, he had given up the morphia habit. But the first friend had spent Rs. 3500 and the second friend had to spend Rs. 5000. I too desired to go, but, I had no money at all. Yet, I had to continue the injections. I begged, borrowed, and visited hospitals and somehow managed to pull through, with the minimum quota of 30 to 35. Nine years passed by. I had run through Rs. 40,000, during that period. I could not free myself from this habit or even reduce the intake. I realised that one can free himself from the jaws of a crocodile, sooner than from the jaws of morphia.

Meanwhile, a Bhajan Samaja had started working in our town, by the devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba; they held their Bhajans at the Subrahmanyeswara Temple, near my house. My friend, Dr. N. Anjaneyulu, M.A., Ph.D. was its organiser. One day, a Thursday, (they did Bhajan there every Thursday) I went into that temple and sat in the far distant corner, listening to the Bhajan Songs. During Bhajan, a desire arose in my mind. That is to say, "Baba! You were my classmate, here, in the High School, years ago. You must be remembering me. You must be knowing the depths to which this habit has dragged me. There are some who doubt you and many who adore you as God. I am not involving myself in that controversy now. I want to find from my own experience, the Truth. Well. If you can bless me with the mental courage and strength to get out of this vicious morphia habit, I shall believe that you are God." With this vow taken with a full heart, I steadied myself. Within a few seconds, the Bhajan ended. They distributed Vibhuti Prasad to every one. Holding the packets in my palm as a precious gift, and resolving to rely upon Baba for the strength to free myself, I returned home. I decided that, whatever might happen, however hard the conditions, I would not take a single injection, of morphia, for full three days. If on the fourth day I am free from the tentacles of morphia, I shall adore Baba just as those people are doing, at the Subrahmanyeswara Temple, I told myself. The first day, I did not take any injection, no, not even one. I had no calls of nature, that day. I had profuse sweating, cramps in muscles, burning sensation all over the body, wild imaginings, streams of tears, cough; these gave me a terrible time. But, I swallowed small quantities of the Vibhuti and carried on, in spite of everything.

The second day was worse. The urine and faeces were full of blood; frightful thoughts of suicide haunted me. The third day dawned. I had determined and sworn that day too I would not take morphia. I felt that I may not survive the third day. When night came on, I began shouting and wailing aloud, in some kind of inexplicable pain. I hit the floor with my feet; I hit my head against the pillar; I blabbered wildly and loudly. The children wept and wailed, awakening the neighbours and the houses in the locality. Some friends of mine came in and seeing my condition, they too shed tears in sympathy with the children. A doctor friend came at about 3 a.m., and, realising that my pitiable condition was due to my not taking the morphia, he brought four injections with him. He told me, "I have brought these. Take the injections." But, I replied,

"Doctor! The promise I have given to Swami will lapse tomorrow. Keep the four safe, until morning." The time was then 3-45 a.m. My children were sitting all around me. I told my little daughter, Hafiza Begum, "Go and get me the Vibhuti of Swami I have kept in that shelf over there." She brought it and gave me. I took a pinch and placed it on my tongue and drank some water to wash it down.

In about ten minutes, I fell asleep! During sleep, I felt as if I was on a pilgrimage! I slept nicely, until 11 a.m., the next day, the fourth day. Exactly as promised, the Doctor friend hearing that I had awakened from sleep, came at about 12 noon, with the four morphia injections. When he came, I was reclining in my easy-chair, calm and collected, with no sign of any after-effect—no cough, no sneeze, no haw or hum. The Doctor asked me, softly, "Dear Friend! How do you feel?" I replied, equally softly, "By Swami's Grace, my mind is clear and calm." Then he said, "in that case, I believe you have no need of this morphia." I said, in a firm tone, "No. There is no need." The doctor was overjoyed. "Ah! What happy news you have given us! How pleasant to the ears! At last, after all these years, Swami has showered His Grace on you!" the Doctor said and going out into a fruit shop, he brought two apples and placing them in my hands, he left, with the morphia he had brought for me! Since that day, three months back, I have never had the slightest inclination towards morphia. My health has improved a great deal, and is getting better and better every day. My medical practice has also picked up fast. My children are happy.

The Wednesday after my recovery from the hold of the crocodile, morphia, I joined the Nagarsankirtan group that passed before my house and reaching the Subrahmanyeswara Temple with them, I related to all the devotees of Bhagavan, the story of my vow and its fulfillment. My friends, relatives, and well-wishers were all very happy when they came to know of Baba's Grace. I have now no doubt that the Divine Will of Swami can cure every one suffering from such vicious habits, provided they surrender to him. For myself, I am convinced that He is Divine and that His Grace alone has saved me and can save me.

—Dr K. Meeramohiuddian, Uravakonda

Petition

Lonely, I press my face to the glass;
Outside pounds Your Ocean of Mercy.
From here, the Pearls are hidden,
So I close my eyes to see the better
Now, within my gaze, twelve thousand miles into the Sun.
Is an acre of Your children, Humbly seated for Your Darshan.
You come out, Your Lotus Feet stepping
To the beat of my heart,
Your Lotus Eyes loving Your Own.
Your Left Hand soon fills with square white Hopes;
Your Right explores the air;
Has my Yearning reached a Lotus Fingertip?

Wait, Little Good Sai, Wait for me.
Quiet temple within, I fight through my quasi world,
Struggling to return to Your Holy Orange Peace;
Ultra—marine, ultra—montane, You are,
And I so far, but no longer Lost;
The needle of my Compass never wavers;
Your Divinity beams blessings
Into the purblind mist of my narrow night.
True, You inhabit my heart;
You move me in that murky place,
But I perish for Your presence; so wait, Lord of Love,
Just a little.

Advent of the Infinite

One November, in a village, isolated and remote,
Lay a Baby, Jay a Kingling, lay a Godlet, newly born;
Neath His blanket coiled a Cobra, the tamboura struck a note,
Which the maddala accompanied, so auspicious was that morn.
Came the neighbors to admire Him, stayed the neighbors to adore,
For the Infant had a Power in His Crown of Curly Hair,
And a warmth to challenge Sunlight curved the Smile the Godling wore,
So, unknowing His Divineness, yet the neighbors lingered there.
Little knew they in this dwelling crouching meekly by the road,
That a million praying Pilgrims would converge here from afar,
And the Softly Cooing Kinglet, Who illumined this abode,
Was the Firmament's Adornment, was the Baby Avatar.

—*Phane R. Tirone*

Samatwam Yogamuchyate

The Gita declares that Yoga must result in the acquisition of a mind charged with equanimity, an unwavering unaffected calm and quietude that can stand four-square against the storms of good fortune as well as ill-fortune. Bhoga or the ideal of Prosperity and Pleasure cannot guarantee this Samatwam (Equanimity). It can be acquired only by the practice of Yoga, especially, in the sense in which Patanjali used it, which means, the control of the wayward ways of the mind. When this spiritual exercise yields fruit, the equanimity can be experienced, in five fields of human activity. Each of these fields become richer and more fruitful, as a result of the equanimity.

First the physical: The Gita says that man should be immune to the waywardness of climate, that he should brave with equal unconcern, both the rigour of cold and the intensity of heat. Warmth is welcome at certain seasons and cold is pleasant at other seasons. The experiencer is

the same and it is only time that has undergone progress. The soul of men cannot be hurt by heat or frozen by cold. It is only the body that welcomes them at certain times and rejects them at other times. The Yogi who has attained the stage of equanimity is the same in all seasons.

Second, the social: One has to be engaged in some activity or other and each such activity affects society or is affected by society; it is either prompted by society or it prompts society. Every sound has an echo; every act has a reaction. The Yogi sees the many as One and so, he recognises no evil or good in the reactions from society. The common man sees many, where there is only One; so his attention is distracted by the varying reactions from the many. When you are able to recognise the one, who is playing the roles, equanimity reigns supreme.

Third, philosophical: The Jnani, the Panditha is acclaimed in the Gita as a Sama-Darshan, the person who looks on at the elephant, the horse, the dog, as manifestations of the One Life-Principle. When you hear me though you are at that great distance, through the loudspeakers, the essential base (Adhar) is the electric current that activates the mike and the speaker. When the fan here is able to give cool breeze, we must be aware of the basic requisite, the electric current, the Adhar. When the bulbs and tubes give us light enough to-see during this night, the base is again, the current. Every being in the Universe has the same Divine base. They are kin, through this basic kinship. Philosophical inquiry ends with the recognition of this Primal Seed of Creation. Lord Krishna declarers: Beejam maam sarva bhoothaanaam (I am the seed of all beings). The seed sprouts and grows into a big tree; its trunk, bark branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruits are different from each other in appearance, taste, properties and composition. But, yet, they have all emanated from the one seed that was once underground. The seed is the truth; the tree is the emanation from it. So, if attention is based on the seed the differences will not distract us. This is the philosophical attitude that can be called equanimity, Samatwam.

Fourth, the devotional: The devotee sings of God existent, as minute in the minute and vast in the vast, Anoraniyan mahatho mahiyan. God is incomprehensible, just as the Universe with its vast distances and its billions of globes is incomprehensible to the limited vision of man. The infinitesimal too is beyond human comprehension. Man cannot see the air that surrounds him and sustain him; he has to infer its existence, while enjoying its grace. How then can he experience the subtle, the minute, in which too He is manifest?

^The devotee must see God in himself, for, no inert matter can think or feel or desire or strive. The body is inert. It is the Chit the spark of Consciousness derived from the Divine Consciousness that prods him to think and act. When he speaks of himself as I, he is declaring that he is an image of the Universal I, God. His I persists in all three stages of his existence—waking, dreaming and deep sleep. In deep, sleep that I is enveloped in ignorance, but, on waking, man declares, "I slept soundly." When man awakes from a dream, the dream which while dreaming was 'real', is dismissed as 'unreal'. So too, when God is realised through devotion, the experiences of the waking stage are dismissed as 'unreal'. All the varied reactions of gain and loss of joy and grief, of attachment and detachment, are then evaluated as temporary and trivial. Perfect equanimity is established in the devotees heart. He sees them all as the Will of God, which he has but to accept and abide by.

Fifth occupational: Karmic equanimity. The occupations man takes up for spending his time and incidentally to earn his livelihood requires equanimity and can confer equanimity, provided man cultivates the Yogic approach. Man is a mixture, in varying proportions, of the three Gunas, or, strands of character. Guna means, in Sanskrit, 'rope' and so, strand seems to be the appropriate word in English for what is meant by 'Guna'. Most men are slothful, they prefer the line of least resistance, and so, yield to the first temptation and get steeped in it. They get used to the dullness, the slavery to the senses, the inactivity of the power of discrimination etc. These are the people in whose make-up the Tamasic strand predominates. Then there are Rajasic strands, which induce emotional upheavals, passionate outbursts, wild ambitions and wayward activity. This strand too cannot confer peace on the mind. The third strand is the Satwic. This quality is definitely the one that helps the Sadhaka to progress fast. This strand is the root of all virtues, all the motivation for service and all the inspiration for the search for God or Truth.

The Satwic person responds to the call of the Divine, from every living being. He recognises the Divine in each and reveres the visible-God, the Narayana in the parent. He is humble and patient. He knows that he is just a role in the Divine Play whose script is unfolding before his eyes. He knows that God is everywhere; that there is no vacuum in the Universe for God is immanent in everything. Those who say, how can something come out of nothing, do not know that there is no nothing anywhere. Their idea of the Divine is limited and circumscribed. A blind man heard a baby cry when it was being giving milk. He asked, why the child was crying and he was told that the mother was giving it milk. He asked, what milk was and how it looked. They told him, it was white. He asked what was 'white'. They told him that the f crane was white and he could easily learn the nature of 'white' observing the crane. He asked how the crane looked. He was then shown a hand (the neck) and the bent palm (the head) so that he could feel it by touch and learn what the crane was and what was meant by 'white', which was the property of milk. When his fingers contacted the hand with the bent palm, he said, 'I now know why the child cries. If you try to put this into that little mouth, what a torture it must be experiencing!' The idea that many people have of God and the Divine is as second-hand and as absurd as the blind man's understanding of the nature of milk.

The most valuable result from Sadhana that you must look forward to is the feeling of equanimity. It comes from the illumination of the consciousness, or Paramajyoti. This itself is the final flash of the luminous revelation, called Prakanti. Prakanti is the culmination of Prasanthi which, sathwic natures earn by Sadhana, through contemplation on the Ashanti or restlessness and confusion that prevails in society and in the mind of the individual.

—*Bhagavan Dasara Discourse, 19-10-77*

Swami's Room

Our small Sai Baba group here, in Florida, U.S.A., has been most blessed: When we first received word of Baba's proposed visit to the States, many of us speculated on His itinerary. We even talked about the possibility of His visiting our Center.

Days slipped by without Baba's arrival. The second month was almost past when my husband and I found our last child was leaving the nest and flying off to a new perch. The room stood vacant and forlorn for some time. Then, one day as I cleaned and began re-arranging the furniture, the idea came that was `Baba's Room.'"

From that moment on, the room smiled happily and the work of cleaning became worship. Now our Baba is mentally installed in His Room.

One day when we had a Member's Meeting, we all prayerfully asked Baba's permission to have our meditation with Him in His Room. One of the members had brought her little daughter with her. This five year old loves Baba so very much and is convinced that He lives at our house. Later, she asked her mother if they could have a Room just for Baba at their house. Her mother thought it was a good idea and they soon had Baba installed in a room of His own.

Of course, we all realize that God is everywhere present, but, sometimes it takes something concrete to make it internalized knowledge. As each member recognized the idea that actually making a room for Baba, not only involved the whole family, but, all began to realize that most family life was not always at its best. Then we began to think how many things we would do differently, how much nicer we would be, if Baba was really staying in our houses. What a beautiful revelation! Keeping His Home clean, and cooking His meals can become a delight. How beautiful life can be when it really is totally lived for our Lord!

Yes. We all want our Beloved Form, Baba, to come; but, all of us realize how much richer our lives have become because Baba did not keep his Promise.

Thank you so very much, Beloved Baba, we specially thank you for the tender, gentle, and loving care You give to each and every one of us, always. With the outward manifestation of Your Room, the Spiritual Room in each of our hearts will grow into a palatial mansion.

Merrit Island Cente

The Birthday festival

The 52nd Birthday Festival of Bhagavan delighted thousands of devotees with Triple joy. It all began with the wedding of more than 134 couples from the villages around Puttaparthi. When the good news of Bhagavan's Gracious gesture to the poverty stricken villagers was announced in the rural area by the village criers, a wave of grateful delight swept every home where there were likely brides and grooms. Negotiations were quickened and the prayers of the parents were rewarded by the opportunity granted to such a large number to enlist themselves at Prasanthi Nilayam. They belonged to all castes and communities and they assembled on the morning of the 17th in an atmosphere of unprecedented cordiality which only the Nilayam can confer. Age-old divisions and doubts were forgotten in the Love that Bhagavan showered on the villagers. Thousands of villagers gathered to witness the unique wedding rites. Each bride was given an attractive wedding Sari. She was helped by a "lady-in-waiting" from the students of the Sri

Sathya Sai College for women at Anantapur. For both bride and maid, it was a thrilling experience. Every bridegroom was presented a *jibba* stitched specially for him with love and care and also a *Zari Dhoti* and *Zari anga Vastram*, the traditional wear in the area.

The wedding pandal was erected on the open ground of Sri Pedda Venkapa Raju Kalyan Mandap in the village of Puttaparthi. It was decorated in magnificent style by the deft hands of the students of the Sri Sathya Sai College for Boys at Brindavan, Bangalore. Brahmin priests from the villages were invited to officiate.

The thousands of devotees who lined the road from the Nilayam to the Kalyan Mandap were singing Bhajans in ecstasy. Baba was at the Pandal, to bless the couples, at the very beginning of their new stage of life. The procession of the couples, each wearing a garland of fresh flowers, started from the Nilayam towards the Pandal at 10 A. M. They were preceded by folk orchestra groups from the villages and groups of folk dancers.

As soon as they were seated in the Pandal in regular rows the recitation of Vedic Hymns started and the rites were begun. Bhagavan moved along the rows giving every couple the coveted chance of Darshan and Sparshan; He gave to each groom the auspicious thread to be tied on the wrist of his mate and also gave him the Mangalasutra with the golden Mangalyam. Bhagavan showered from His Divine Hands the auspicious rice grains when the Mangalyam was tied as the mark of the bride becoming the *Grihalakshmi*, in the new house she was entering. They also 'exchanged garlands', which were given to them for the purpose by Bhagavan.

Then He went round once again gifting each bride with another attractive Sari besides bangles, kumkum and haldi indicating her new status, and each groom with the symbols of the new home—an eating plate, a cup and a tumbler. They also poured handfuls of rice grains on each other's head to symbolise prosperity and plenty in the family they are establishing. Each bride was helped to follow the instructions of the priests during the entire ritual by girl students. The sari ends and the angavastram ends were knotted together to indicate that they have been wedded for life. The entire group rose and arranged themselves, one behind the other and returned to the Nilayam in procession, each participant holding the precious gifts and the auspicious coconut, betel leaf, etc. It was an inspiring sight for all who pine for strengthening the unity and integration of the rural folk through the alchemy of Love. They reverentially went round the Mandir where Bhagavan again blessed them with his Divine Darshan.

Later they and their kith and kin and thousands of villagers were treated to a 'wedding feast' which all partook in common, as members of the Sai Family in to which they were led by the tender hands of Sai, the Universal Mother.

Many of the villagers stayed on at Puttaparthi to witness the Car Festival of the Village Deity, 'Venugopalaswamy', (the Lord who leads the cattle, with his entrancing melody of the flute.) The images duly consecrated at the Nilayam were placed by the devoted hands of the members of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal in the gaily decorated chariot in the immediate presence of Bhagavan. The whole day was a great folk festival of spiritual elevation in which devotees from all over India joined.

The second stream of Joy was the 8th All India Conference of the office Bearers of the Units of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations from all over India which was held on 20, 21 and 22 November, 77. As a preliminary to the gathering of more than 7,000 delegates, Bhagavan reminded the Seva Dal, at a meeting specially held on the 19th, of the basic spiritual attitude that must prompt all acts of service.

The Eighth All India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was inaugurated by Bhagavan on the morning of the 20th November, 77. The Delegates from all the States proceeded to Poornachandra Auditorium in procession and took their seats, State wise. In His inaugural address Bhagavan stressed on the need for Character as the basic expression of devotion and Faith as the basic need for service. He pointed out that the main purpose of the organisation is to carry the Message of the Divinity inherent in man, to every individual. All sadhana is to purify the mind in order to realise this fact. The entire day was devoted to a seminar on various aspects of service which the Organisation has to devote itself to (like Bhajan, Bal Vikas, Seva Dal etc.,) and Organisational matters relating to Rules and Regulations. The assembly was addressed by Sri Indulal Shah. Dr. S. Bhagavantam, Dr. V. K. Gokak, Sri A. K. Dutt, Justice K. Balakrishna Eradi, Dr. K. M. Mistry, Mrs. Shantha Nair and others thus providing useful guidelines for the deliberations of the six subcommittees that were constituted to discuss among themselves during the 2nd day of the Conference, the work achieved and the work ahead and to report on the guidelines for the future.

The programme of Bal Vikas being the very foundation of the Sai Movement for reconstruction of humanity received special attention during the conference. Seven pupils of the Bal Vikas Classes spoke about their experience and the impact of the classes on them and through them on their parents. This was indeed a revelation of the potency of this programme. A few delegates from different States also gave their experiences as active members of the organisation in the fields of education, rural uplift, service of the handicapped etc.

On the 22nd the Convenors of the six sub-committees presented their reports and more than fifty delegates (men and women) took part in the discussion that ensued. During the concluding session of the Conference in the evening, Sri Indulal Shah gave a resume of the recommendations of the Subcommittees as finally blessed by Bhagavan. Dr. Gokak gave an inspiring exposition of the path of Love that can lead man to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan in His valedictory discourse emphasised the importance of rules and regulations for canalising all activities towards the fulfillment of higher goals for both the individual and the organisation. He reminded the delegates that the organisation was designed for the spiritualisation of every activity of man and for emphasising the unity of mankind in the Divine Principle that animates every human being. The famous vocal music artistes Smt. Radha and Smt. Jayalakshmi delighted the huge gathering by their music, for over an hour and a half in Divine Presence of Bhagavan.

The stream of joy became a flood of ecstasy on the 23rd November, the 52nd Birthday Festival of Bhagavan. After the hoisting of the-flag and the visit to the Samadhi of the parents, Bhagavan proceeded in procession to the Poornachandra Auditorium where more than 25 thousand devotees cheered in adoration. The members of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and the State Trusts

and the State Heads of the Seva Organisations were privileged to offer garlands to Bhagavan. Bhagavan gave the same privilege to representatives of devotees from Overseas—New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Italy, Germany, Greece, U. K., Ghana, Trinidad U. S. A., Canada, Mexico, Iceland, Holland Nepal and Guyana.

Dr. Gokak offered the adoration and homage of the millions devoted to Bhagavan, in a moving speech.

Bhagavan drew the attention of the devotees to the good fortune of the people of India since God has of His Own Will incarnated In this land often in the past, as well as at Present, to enable man to become aware of his Divinity and to save him from the consequences of the ignorance of this truth. He said that man was not a prisoner bound by an iron chain of cause-effect or time-space. He was the eternal immortal Universal Atma. "The seed of Divinity in him remains unaffected and must reach its fulfillment in attaining the Divine, just as a seed though planted in the soil and fed with water and fostered with manure grows into the tree which is its inherent individuality." Bhagavan then walked along the thickly packed auditorium and the open spaces around it, distributing Laddus (Sweets) as Prasad, lighting up every face with this Gracious Gift of Love.

The devotees assembled again at 5-00 P.M. at the Auditorium. Bhagavan Graciously distributed Diploma Certificates to the top ranking students in the All India Bal Vikas Final Tests. Sri N. Kasturi and Swami Karunyananda spoke on the unique nature of the Sai Avatar and the Sai Revolution that was transforming mankind.

Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to cultivate purity of mind, by means of constant Sadhana and to attain Shanti. He spoke of three grades of Shanti—the material and worldly, the peace attained by control of the mind and peace which is achieved by the disappearance of the mind and the merging of the individual in the Universal. Speaking of the Divine Principle that has originated the five elements—Aakasa, Vayu, Agni, Jal, Prithvi—which constitute the Universe, the five Kosas that constitute the human being and the five Vital principles that activate man, Bhagavan stressed that each of these follow the pattern laid down for their operation; man has to understand this truth and utilise it to elevate himself. He referred to the behaviour of the elements which had caused disastrous cyclones which hit Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh and caused enormous loss of life and property involving many thousands of people. He called upon the members of the Seva Samitis and the Seva Dal to rush to the affected areas and to render immediate help to the afflicted. He was happy that members of the Seva Dal and members of the units of the Organisation in the affected areas are already serving to the best of their skill and resources depriving themselves of even the chance to be at Prasanthi Nilayam during this precious week. "Serving man is the best form of worshipping God. Let your adoration to me on this Birthday Festival be translated into service of these brothers and sisters recognising in them your kith and kin, for all mankind is one family."

The Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust is rushing to the areas, with large quantities of Dhotis, Saris, Rugs, and Garments for rendering immediate relief. In spontaneous sympathetic response to the

mention by Bhagavan of the distress of the bereaved and broken, more than Rs. 5,00,000 were offered for this sacred task of Manava Seva by the devotees present within a few hours.

Smt. M. S. Subbalakahmi, known and appreciated for her music surcharged with sincere dedication to the tradition and culture of India, gave a vocal concert—all the songs saturated with her deep devotion to Bhagavan.

—*Ed.*

The Inner Yajna

The deeds of man elevate him or engenders his fall. All deeds of his that are in consonance with the principles of righteousness deserve the dignity of the appellation 'Yajna'. There are two types of Yajna, mentioned in the sacred texts the external Yajna and the internal. The outer form is not so important or productive. It is mentioned only to be discarded and dismissed for what can a shell do without the kernel? Adoring the Lord while meditating on His name and glory is also a form of inner Yajna. In the Yajna animals were sacrificed at the sacrificial post, called Bali-peeth. That is the external act, but, it has an inner significance. The mind is the sacrificial post and the animal instincts still resident in the human character are to be slaughtered on the Bali-peeth of the mind. The megalomania in man which urges him on to a blind pursuit of power is the buffalo that has to be sacrificed; the foolishness that overwhelms man and renders him weak, and docile is the sheep in him that has to be offered as sacrifice. The slyness and stratagem-filled cleverness of man is the cat that has also to be sacrificed in the same manner. This is the inner Yajna of which the outer Yajna has to be the reflection. When the external rites are done, these inner meanings have to be kept in view. It is a sin to go through the outer gesticulations and formalities, without any knowledge of the significances, or even respect for them.

Man has passed through, many animal lives before he has come as such on earth. Strains of animal nature still persist in him, as cruelty, anger, greed, hatred, ignorance, of higher ideals, etc. Man is many, animals in one. He has the jackal, the buffalo, the tiger, and the elephant—all in him. He must cast off these traits from his composition. When he indulges in needless and useless controversy on matters beyond his understanding, he is announcing himself as a sheep; when he jumps from one idea to another, from one ideal to another, from one project to another, without fully involving himself in any, he is exhibiting the nature of the monkey.

The nature of the inner Yajna can best be understood if we examine the story of Emperor Bali. He was the grandson of Prahlada, the celebrated devotee of the Lord; Prahlada braved a succession of inhuman tortures inflicted on him by his father to force him to retract his faith. Bali placed at the Feet of the Lord as his offering to Him all the lands he ruled over as well as Heaven itself which he could claim as a reward for his piety. He decided to perform the unique Yajna named 'Viswajit'. One feature of this Yajna is that it can be undertaken only by an Emperor, as the Conqueror of his enemies and the Sovereign of their peoples. The Emperor announces by this Yajna that he is the unquestioned master of the empire that he has enlarged, and immediately after this announcement, he rids himself of the vast treasures he has earned and accumulated by

force of arms in lavish charity among all sections of his people. He was a ruler who placed the welfare and prosperity of his subjects foremost in his consideration. He was the symbol of discriminating talent, Prajna Shakti. And, the Lord who came to him as Vamana is the symbol of the Divinity latent in every one. When that Divinity manifests as omnipresent, It takes on the Trivikrama aspect, covering earth and sky.

The Lord's incarnation as Vamana and His Manifestation as Trivikrama happened at the place later called Siddhashrama; this was the place chosen by Viswamitra for his austerities, for, Siddha means Achievement. Viswamitra means the Friend of the Universe. He was not merely a great sage, he is the embodiment of the Higher Will, the Iccha Shakti.

The legend has it that the Lord sent the Emperor Bali down to the nether regions. This only indicates, the trampling of the ego into oblivion. The usual belief is that the performance of Yajnas according to Vedic regulations will confer worldly prosperity and heavenly joy. But, Emperor Bali renounced those material benefits and illusory happiness. That is the reason why he could get Divine Grace to such a large extent that the Lord Himself sought charity from him!

Any act that is performed as a dedication to Godhead is a Yajna. Manu the ancient lawgiver, has declared that the reverential prostration done before the mother, father and preceptor is indeed a Yajna; when the egoistic pride or greed is absent and when the object is the good of all, certainly the deed is a Yajna.

Throughout the empire of Bali, there was none so poor that he was forced to beg for alms. Those who came into his realm from outside were also well provided for. The Yajna is an exercise in renunciation; it should not emerge off and on, and then be submerged. The spirit of renunciation must be evident in every single act throughout life. Bali was an example of this type of consistent renunciation. Those who manage to live through without caring for honest living are akin to the crow and those who adopt devious ways to earn a livelihood are akin to the jackal.

Though Emperor Bali was born in a Rakshasa clan (known for its demonic nature, in spite of the one exception, Prahlada), he had acquired a pure heart, free from hatred and pride. He had mastered the waywardness of his mind. The Lord appeared before him as a mendicant; what a great tribute to his estimable nature! The Lord asked from him only three feet of ground. This was a symbolic request, for the three feet meant the Bhu, Bhuv and Suvar Loka, representing the gross, subtle and causal bodies of man. The Lokas or Worlds are not placed one over the other or one after the other. They are immanent, each in the other. The visible Loka or world is the Bhuloka, the vital atmosphere around it is the Bhuvarka, and the World of Ananda which envelopes the vital is the Suvarloka. Man has five Kosas or sheaths which encase him. The material and the mental comprise the bhuloka, the vital and the intellectual comprise the bhuvarka and the Anandamaya is the Suvarloka.

The Royal Preceptor of Emperor Bali was Sukracharya; he had, by his austerities and scholarship, attained a place of high honour among the monks. But, he stood in the way of the renunciation which Bali had set before himself. Sukracharya could teach; but, he did not himself follow what he taught others as desirable. He was a highly respected monk, but, he had this one great flaw. It is such people who call themselves 'theists' and 'believers' that promote atheism and

unbelief. They have no faith in the validity of what they profess; their actions are contrary to their declarations. Scholars run after possessions which they declare are 'trivial and temporary'. They preach devotion to God but are devoted to mammon. They accuse others for causing the decline of Dharma but they are themselves the cause.

When Bali came forward to offer to the Lord three feet of ground, He had come for, Sukracharya the all-knowing Preceptor, protested and pointed out that the Lord had come only to ruin Bali and rob him of his possessions. But, the pupil was greater than the preceptor. He replied, "Well. If He is the Lord Himself, who is extending His palm to receive the gift for which He has come, certainly I am the most fortunate being on earth. The Hand that creates and fosters the Universe is now held before me, and my hand held over it is dropping the gift into it. Do not prevent me. Be happy that it has become possible for me to do this. I shall renounce heaven, my empire and even my life for this one piece of good fortune."

Man falls by Apeksha (attachment); he rises by Upeksha (non-attachment) Bali has reached the acme of Upeksha and his prompter failed in bringing him down.

The Viswajit Yajna was the 'External Yajna' but, the 'Inner Yajna' was the great renunciatory surrender of Bali to the Lotus Feet of the Lord. In the consecrated 'fire' of the 'heart', he poured as offering the 'ego' nature; he rose, humbler and wiser, and saluted the Divine within Himself, manifest as Vamana Incarnation.

Veda-purusha-sapthaha-jnana-yajna Bhagavan's Discourse, 15-10--77, Inauguration Day

The Sai Path

It is with gratitude that I am sending this short essay—for, it is an example of the clarification of thinking achieved as a result of reading the words of Sathya Sai and listening to the voice of Sanathana Sarathi. This magazine has also helped us to come in contact with other Sai devotees in Sydney. So, it is in the hope that some more joy and peace can be spread, that the following words were written!

"Within the confines of this time-and-space-world all things are relative. And, to be sure, everything as such that happens to us, has just as relative a reason for existence. We tend to work out a scale of values for ourselves which is used to colour the experiences we come across from moment to moment.

But, what validity can this construction really have? Our reasoning itself has developed from reactions to the environment; as a consequence of our being just cogs in the turning chain on the wheel of this world! And, so, our personality insights, understandings, and feelings, which assuage' and assault us often change us drastically within the course of years.

Nevertheless, it is within everyone to remember to some degree, the unity and unchangingness of the Atma. So, we have the situation, where people in all stages of development are searching for equanimity. But through lack of correct training, they cannot succeed; for, they search in the wrong way and in misleading directions. In fact, they are blindfolded and do not know what they are. So the extent of their vision is accepted as normal and real.

Our scale of values, to become crystalline enough in its reflection of Truth, must accept the reality behind all manifestations of inner and outer relativity. Rather than placing greater value on a set-up of conditions, because they please the feelings and achieve a relative state of comfort, it is better to transcend the realm of duality where conditions are only temporary, limited, and unreal, beside the eternal spiritual values. Yet, if we are attached to them, their inevitable loss makes us believe a part of us has been destroyed. Such great pain caused by ignorance is relatively common in this world.

But all this experience of relativity has its value nevertheless. Having come to know through our lives in many ways the sting of impermanence, we are ready to understand the meaning behind such an experience. We will have gained the strength and the willingness to approach the true Reality, through realizing just which aspects of our lives and ourselves are temporary, and come to pass...

And, this is why it can be said that All things in this world are relatively important (vyavaharik sathya). They all play their part in helping the realisation of God.

Isn't it wonderful, how our Father, Sathya Sai, speaks only the Truth Everlasting? After we have become so used to hearing, in this many-coloured melting pot of humanity, so many relative versions of untruth, it is only slowly and after a long period of struggle, that we stumble upon the revelation of the Infallibility of Sathya Sai. Why, when our Lord speaks, it is never in vain. All effort, at listening to Him can lead us therefore only to the One True Reality. And, even if Sathya Sai were to say something strange or incredible, what should it matter? For, we know that it is within His mind to create. And, so we surely cannot forget that our Truth lies in His Hands. It is not lost on the flickering picture-screen of the world.

And when Bhagavan tells us that He is with us always, how could it be possible ever to doubt this? Even before our minds might have formally been introduced to the concept of God, in whichever form or degree, as babes, we arrived clad in a single robe (unseen to the world)—the garment sewn for us by angels of Peace, Truth, Light and Love. Is it any wonder, then that sensitive people immediately feel young again, at the sight of little children? For, this heavenly robe remains with us as an indestructible reminder of our One true Home. So, we are born to be instruments of the Lord, and no matter what false influences any individual may have become wrapped in, during life, they are just relative and not permanent, as seen by God using everyone to a purpose.

We are so fortunate, all of mankind, to be here now and be able to see the slow and sure fulfillment of the purpose of our creation: "Trust in, Me," He has said and "Never forget God." The more we consciously do this, the more will our scale of values become clear in its reflection of the Eternal.

And, right now, let us be thankful for the relativity of Time, as its existence has re-enabled us to experience just how the Love of God Is the Greatest of all, and how it supplies us with the chance to reach the treasured Goal. Let every shooting star be a symbol of our Path. At birth, we come, trailing a fiery light which appeared to be extinguished as we took on form. But, Truth cannot disappear! Join the Path of Sai and you will create, from this body and this life of yours, a new rising Light.

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