

Love—The Key to Human Unity

"Do not give room for differences based on language, religion, caste or nationality. Develop the feeling that all are children of God. You may worship God in any form of your choice, but always bear in mind that God is One. Cultivate love and promote unity and harmony among all," observed Bhagavan Baba, in the course of His Christmas message on December 25, in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bhagavan pointed out how the love of Sai had unified people from all countries and brought them to Prasanthi Nilayam.

There was a record gathering of overseas devotees from as many as thirty countries, from Australia to Venezuela.

Bhagavan began His discourse with a poem in which He called upon all to consider the One, who is worshipped by Muslims as Allah, as Jehovah by pious Christians, as the Lotus-eyed Vishnu by Vaishnavites, as Shambhu by Saivites, as the same Over-Self (Paramatma) who confers health and prosperity on all.

Bhagavan said that the root cause of all difficulties experienced by man is forgetting his spiritual reality and identifying himself with his body. The body is only the vesture of the Indwelling Spirit. By immersing himself in body-consciousness, man develops egoism and possessiveness, which result in promoting many bad qualities. He forgets his inherent divinity and fails to use the senses and organs he is endowed with for the sublime purposes of the Divine.

Two different characteristics are to be found among men. One characteristic, which is rather common, is for one to delude himself that he is a good man, with many virtues, intelligence and talents. The other quality, which is rare, is recognition of the good quality in others, their merits, abilities and good deeds and appreciate their ideals. Jesus belonged to the second category. He saw the good qualities in others, rejoiced over their virtues and shared his joy with others.

Swami related the story of Jesus's birth in a manger in Bethlehem and his early years in Nazareth. In his twelfth year, Jesus and his parents, Joseph and Mary, happened to go to a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. In the jostling crowds, Jesus got separated from the parents. After a frantic search, Mary found him in the temple listening to a speech of the High Priest. When Mary told Jesus about the anxiety they felt when they missed him, Jesus replied: "Why should you worry about me? When I am with God, who is my Father, why should you have any fear on my account?" Jesus thus revealed that he regarded himself as the Son of God.

Three prayers

Swami said that Jesus grew up at Nazareth till he reached thirty. After Joseph's passing, Jesus sought his mother's permission to embark on his divine mission. He got baptised by John the Baptist and spent forty days in penance in a forest. During the penance he prayed to God for three things: One: He should be blessed with the quality of loving equally everyone two: He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that he might be subjected to by anyone; three: He should be enabled to use his God-given body wholly in the service of God. After the forty days, Jesus emerged from his penance with the faith that his prayers had been granted.

Swami related Jesus's encounter with the fishermen, at Galilee, who became his first disciples. He told them that he had come to establish the reign of love on earth and that they would be His helpers in this mission. He spoke to them about the preciousness of human birth and urged them to seek the Kingdom of God within themselves.

By way of illustration, Christ told them the following parable (said Swami). In a river the water is flowing in a swift current. But even tiny fish are able to swim in it and move about merrily. In the same river, a huge elephant, caught in the rapids, is likely to get washed away or drowned in spite of its enormous size. Whatever the speed of the current the small fish are able to swim freely in the river and enjoy themselves. But an elephant is unable to survive in it. The reason is: What you need for survival in a river is not bulk but the ability to swim. Likewise, man, who is caught up in the ocean of worldly existence (Samsara) needs, not so much metaphysics, scholarship, or detachment, as the grace of Divine love. Without any knowledge of Vedanta, if one is blessed with God's love, he can surmount all problems of life. Without faith in God, all scholarship, wealth or name and fame are of no avail. He cannot experience bliss.

Christ also taught that the body should be used for recognising the In-dwelling Spirit and not to protect itself. It is the mark of ignorance to pamper the body and ignore the Spirit within.

Sugar and sand

Giving another example, Swami said: If a tiny sugar crystal is mixed in a heap of sand, even the most intelligent person will not be able to separate the sugar from the sand and recover it. But without any extraordinary intelligence, an ant is able to make its way to the particle of sugar in the sand heap and to relish its sweetness. The ant is aware of the sweetness of sugar and is able to get at the sugar even in a heap of sand. Likewise, man should seek to distinguish between the permanent and the transient and realize what is everlasting. Man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the evanescent, but unfortunately instead of using this capacity he is caught up in the delusions of the phenomenal world and is wasting his life.

You must adhere to Truth and not succumb to falsehood or unrighteousness. You must face with courage the vicissitudes of life. You must love even your enemies. Universal love transcends all other virtues. Love is the supreme virtue," declared Jesus.

“God is love”

Jesus taught that God is Love. Instead of recognising this basic truth, men are allowing hatred, envy and other evil qualities to pollute their love. Man is gifted with the quality of love not to express it for selfish purposes but to direct it towards God. Jesus declared that there was nothing great about returning good for good. They should do good even to those who harm them.

As Jesus went on with his preaching and drew multitudes towards him, some of the priests and those in authority grew envious at his popularity. This happens in all countries. They started persecuting him and charging him with treason. Jesus, however, continued up to the end to carry on his mission of Love and Righteousness, first, as the Messenger of God, and later as the Son of God. There is a reason for anyone coming in the human form. This may not be known to all. Only the Divine knows the real purpose. Everyone should regard himself as a Messenger of God

and try to lead an ideal life. This means that one has to give up selfishness and self-interest. This may not be easy. But with God's Grace, it should be possible to progress towards Self-realisation gradually.

Love is the means of developing devotion and achieving liberation. apart from other things. Only the love of God is real love. It is the royal road for man to realise the divinity in him and in everyone.

Unity in Sai love

Here is an example of the power of love. Today in this hall are gathered people from many countries. They speak different languages, and adopt different religions and culture and have different dresses, manners and customs. Forgetting all these differences, they are all moving here as brothers and sisters because of their love for Sai, which has unified them. They are expressing the joy of oneness because of the love in their hearts. Where there is no love, there is hatred. Faith in God promotes love. Love leads to peace. Peace prepares the way for truth. Living in truth man experiences bliss, which is Divine.

*Where there is Faith there is Love
Where there is Love there is Peace
Where there is Peace there is Truth
Where there is Truth there is Bliss
Where there is Bliss there is God.*

Hence, faith has to be strengthened.

Many forms, but one God

The Divine manifests Himself in many forms. God is worshipped in many forms for the joy to be derived from it. In ancient Rome, many gods were worshipped as in Bharat. At that time there was no belief in one God. Then came Christianity. The concept of unity in diversity came to be accepted. In ancient Greece, Plato, the disciple of Socrates, was the first to point out the immanence of the Divine in everything in the Universe.

Truth is one, regardless of nation or religion. Truth or Divinity cannot change according to place or circumstance. That is why it is said: Truth is God. That Truth is within us. Vedanta has described it as Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness -Bliss). The names and forms of human beings may vary, but the Supreme in them—the Sat-Chit-Ananda—does not vary. It is eternal and changeless.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Strike down the walls that separate man from man. Get rid of differences based on caste and creed. Develop firm faith in the oneness of humanity. Cultivate love in your hearts. Only then will the nation be united, happy and prosperous.

Look at the state of things in Bethlehem, the birth-place of Jesus. Christmas could not be celebrated there this year, because of the ill-feelings among the people. How unfortunate that while the rest of the world is celebrating Christmas there should be no celebration in the place where Jesus was born.

“Get rid of barriers”

God belongs to all. He is universe. All of you have to give up differences a every kind and give no room for narrow parochial and national loyalties. Consider yourselves as the children of one God. You may worship God in any form of your choice, but recognise the truth that God is only one. The observance of holy days like Christmas is an occasion for realising the importance of love and harmony among human beings.

It is not right to celebrate Christ's birthday by feasting, drinking, singing and merry-making. The ideals taught by Jesus should be put into practice. The is the right way to celebrate his birthday. Whomsoever you adore, you must try to live up to his teachings. What kind of devotion is it when the devotee does not practise what he professes. It is pseudo-devotion.

Remember the Lord with love. Worship Him with love. Sanctify your lifer with love.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho," in which the entire gathering joined.)

CHRISTMAS IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM:

“An Unforgettable Experience”

To the thousands of overseas devotees, who had started pouring into Prasanthi Nilayam from early in December, the Christmas of 1988 was "an unforgettable experience," as a Sai devotee from Adelaide put it. That remark sums up what everyone, including the large number of devotees from all parts of India, felt about the solemnity and deep devotion with which Christmas was celebrated, beginning with singing of carols on Christmas eve and concluding with an inspiring discourse by Bhagavan and a memorable presentation by overseas devotees, in the form of a musical play, of the birth of Jesus and the advent of Sathya Sai.

All the overseas devotees worked hard from December 10 to make the programme a success. They practised for a fortnight the singing of carols in chorus. Songs of Christ's story and glory were sung in many languages. The initiative for presenting a play on Christmas day was taken by devotees from South America—Venezuela, Argentina and other countries—who got the blessings of Swami for the programme. They got busy preparing the sets, making the costumes, writing the script and rehearsing over fifty children from overseas for the performance. While most of the children knew English, the Spanish, Dutch and German-speaking children had to be given translations for playing their roles. Bhagavan took keen interest in the play and visited the Poornachandra Auditorium from time to time to watch the rehearsals.

On Christmas morning, the overseas devotees gathered at 5 a. m. at the Ganesha Mandir. The young children led the Nagarsankirtan with candles and hearts ablaze with love of the Lord. Twenty one Aums were recited before the procession started. Then began the slow measured advance of a river of lights, wending its way through the Ashram, around the Poornachandra

Auditorium, to the Mandir compound for the eagerly looked for balcony darshan of the Lord. The full-throated singing of carols by the devotees filled the atmosphere with divine vibrations. After the children, women and men had taken their place in the semi-circle opposite the Mandir, Bhagavan, smiling radiantly, came out from the silver door on to the balcony and blessed the devotees, filling their hearts with ineffable joy. Arati concluded the darshan, but Bhagavan would not deny to devotees at either end of the Mandir's compound the blessings of another glimpse from the ends of the balcony.

Later in the morning, when Bhagavan came out for the regular morning darshan, He was greeted by students of the Secondary School with Christmas songs including some Negro spirituals like "Precious Lord, take my hand" and "GO, tell it on the Mountain." The Institute's orchestra provided the instrumental accompaniments for the recital.

Christmas "prasadam," blessed by Bhagavan, was distributed to all the devotees. The overseas devotees organised a special Narayana Seva for the occasion. Over 500 persons were fed. In the afternoon, the devotees gathered in the Poornachandra Auditorium for Bhagavan's Christmas message. The area all around the hall was packed with devotees. Bhagavan's discourse was preceded by speeches from three speakers—Dr. Thorbjorn Meyer, from Denmark, Dr. Victor Kanu, from the U. K., and Mr. Anil Kumar, from Andhra Pradesh.

From Jesus to Sathya Sai

After Bhagavan's discourse, there was a superb presentation by over 50 children, from 13 overseas countries, of scenes depicting the birth and message of Jesus and the advent and life of Bhagavan Baba up to His 16th year.

The children, ranging in age from 3 to 14 years, represented the countries of Australia, Malaysia, Holland, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Singapore, Venezuela, Italy, Argentina, Germany, Canada, France and the U. S A. All of them had worked so harmoniously and enthusiastically, out of their devotion to Baba, that they made the performance an ecstatic experience for the audience and a sweet offering of love to Bhagavan.

The play was written and presented by South American devotees. Its theme, "Two Mothers," was designed to highlight the birth of Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem and the advent of Bhagavan Baba in the obscure village of Puttaparthi and to bring out what is common in the message of Jesus and Baba—the message of peace, love and goodwill.

From the opening scenes, against a backdrop of Bethlehem, we were taken through Jesus' life to where he spoke of the Father: "This I say to you, judge not that you not be judged. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Love one another as I have loved you. Let your heart not be troubled. Be not afraid. He who sent me among you will come again. His Name will be Truth. You shall know Him for He dwells within you. He will be short with a crown. He will wear a blood-red robe."

In the next sequence, a scene in Vaikuntha was depicted, with Vishnu on Adishesha and the gods and rishis gathered around the Lord eager to know the birth-place and the chosen mother of the present Avatar. The scene shifts to Puttaparthi, with Easwaramma drawing water at a well. The

mysterious playing of mridangam and veena herald the advent of Sathyanarayana Raju. The play concludes with the young Sathya Sai announcing to His mother and the world: "I am no longer your Sathya. I am Sai Baba. I am going. My Bhaktas are calling me." Baba is shown teaching to devotees the lines of His first song: "Maanasa Bhajare Guru Charanam." The entire cast gathers round Him.

The whole audience was in rapture when Bhagavan went up from His seat in the auditorium to bless all the children who took part in the play and take photographs with them.

Significance of the Sai Advent

—Sir George Trevelyan

The whole assumption that the planet is there for us to exploit is false. *We are not mere observers of nature. We are nature.* The human being is that point where nature becomes self-conscious and can lift out in thought into the universe and think God's thoughts again, can reflect God's thoughts, and receive the ever present God into heart and into mind. We are making this discovery, this greatest of all experiences, that God is wherever there is life, light and love, wherever we allow love and light to come into our hearts and into our thinking.

It is wonderful to realise that God is there within our own thinking. *"I am with you always, closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."* What is closer than breathing? The answer surely is thinking. "I AM there in your thinking." Look at the implications of this. This is the message. This is the thought for our generation and our time. This is the point which we have got to apprehend and make conscious and utilise. *God and all His creatures, your guardian angel, your higher self, speak within your own thinking.*

Man in God's image

Will you try this little experiment? Look into another person's eyes. You need not smile, need not respond for this idea goes beyond individual personalities. Just realise the wonder of this organ which enables the angelic world or God to look out from within nature and see creation from the inside, not merely looking down upon the planet in its beauty, but entering it through that organ of perception in nature which we call Humanity. *It is God looking out of your eyes at Himself in mine.*

We are looking through into that vast being of which God said "Let us make man in our own image." This immense spiritual being of humanity is everywhere and Earth, this gem of a planet, is the chosen point at which this divine experiment can take place. It involved the releasing of a hierarchy of spiritual beings into this chosen planet, and giving them freedom, which involves freedom to err. It is the great gamble of the gods, the great experiment to create a hierarchy of spiritual beings, who, having freedom, are ultimately able to come back again to God out of free choice.

The forces of light are forbidden to interfere with human freedom, and therefore the great guiding beings must watch and wait until a human being out of its heart rededicates itself to service of the Lord. When it has really made that choice in action, it is possible for that force of light to be flooded through the human being. Without interfering with freedom by free choice, you have elected to become a warrior for God in the great period of coming change.

Higher forces at work

Think what is happening now in this room. Here are gathered dedicated followers of God, recognising in *Sai Baba a true manifestation of God upon earth*. When a company comes together in such a setting as this, the whole force field of vibration is raised. A higher frequency is created in this setting. This is indeed the task of every cathedral, or temple, whatever the religion. A point of ethereal space is created within the temple, into which a divine being can descend into the heavy slow vibration of the earth plane without being contaminated. The noble architecture of any temple, of whatever religion, is enclosing sacred space and when we come into it in a mood of prayer and dedication, we are entering a force field of high frequency linked with the spiritual sun. As we meet here today dedicated in the service of Sai Baba as a true manifestation of God in the human layer, we may be certain that these energies are in fact flooding golden light into this space on a level which our ordinary vision of course cannot as yet see.

"Droplet of God"

Remember the great truth—as in the macrocosm so in the microcosm. The human body is the temple. That which can say "I" in you and me, is a droplet of God, housed temporarily in a very beautiful and compact mobile temple that is the body. You are not your body. You, the thing that can say I, is a spiritual being, part of God and therefore axiomatically immortal and imperishable because God is Life. For that being there literally cannot be any death. The temple can of course be destroyed burnt, drowned, frozen, smashed, but that does no more than release the immortal droplet of God back to source.

Humanity is really still in a pre-birth condition. Consciousness in all of us is awakening to the divinity of the totality of humanity of which we are each cells. At this time the divine world is so close. The manifestation of God that we call Sai Baba has entered the Earth and not only is there in Puttaparthi but is everywhere and is here and knows all that each one of us is thinking. This is a most wonderful thought, but as the Greeks said; "knowledge begins with wonder." So wonder at this.

Take the idea that we are each a droplet of God and we are therefore one great being of Humanity. Thus if I hurt, criticise, rob or kill you, I shall be hurting myself.

I will put this lovely idea in my heart and in my thinking. I know that I am a divine droplet and so are you and we are therefore One on this level. Glory be! I know that God is not far behind the stars. He is everywhere. He, in this case, Sai Baba, is in this room and in the thinking of every one of us. Wonder upon wonder and privilege beyond all privileges! We have been given freedom and the forces of light will not take us over without our consent, which the forces of darkness are prepared to do. They have no compunction about direct attack to get hold of the human being. Therefore, what we can do is to surround ourselves with a protective shield, or

Cloak of higher light vibration. Now, knowing that there is no true protection but in God, you would then have absolute protection in rededicating self to this adventure of the in-flooding of the God power. This is truly the greatest adventure that the human being can undertake.

All of us here now are droplets of God and identifying with the one great being which is humanity. With us in this ethereal space is not only Sai Baba Himself, that Universal Being, but the angelic world in force. Take that thought and live as if it were true. You need not believe, because these ideas are themselves living beings and therefore such an idea as I have tried to describe will draw certainty to itself. As you live with it you come absolutely to know what is true beyond any argument. Never argue about these things. Remember when the great Karl Jung, in one of the last press interviews before he died, was asked "Do you *believe* in God?" he replied, "No, I don't *believe* in God, I know." That is a great thought. We know and we can act on this inner knowledge. *So in that sense we know validly that Sai Baba is a universal manifestation of God and that He is present with every human being and therefore knows everyone of our problems.*

I will close with one little quatrain by James Elroy Flecker,

*"Awake! Awake! the world is young
For all its weary years of thought.
The starkest fights must still be fought.
The most surprising songs be sung."
Let us sing together!*

(From the address given at Guru Poornima celebrations in London on July 16, 1988)

Animal Inheritance

Consider how far man has succeeded in overcoming the animal inheritance of lust, greed and hate, when he spends time, money and energy for the so-called "adhyatmic" exercises. What progress does he make by listening to exponents of texts? Has man become any less bestial? This is the enquiry, this is the assessment for man to be engaged in, but this is the very task which is ignored by him at present! The spiritual exercises and discipline now adopted, promote only pride and pompous display, envy and egoism. They do not uproot them in the least. People proceed to the House of God as pilgrims, but pray to Him for more money, fame and power, for their thoughts, words and deeds centre only around these transitory and trivial tokens of worldly success. The world and all its trappings encourage the fostering of the quality of ignorance and inertia; they can never raise man to a higher level of purity, balance and equanimity.

—Baba

The Spirit of Service

"Social service does not mean merely going out into the streets and cleaning them. Whatever work you are engaged in, whatever duties you have to perform as an official or as an employee. to do your duties efficiently and with diligence and devotion is also social service (Seva). Those in authority who discharge their functions well enough to justify the salary they receive are rendering real service. But such persons are rare. Employees agitate for more wages but do not render commensurate service to justify the incomes they receive," observed Bhagavan Baba, in the course of an inspiring discourse to a vast gathering of devotees in the Poornachandra Auditorium on November 21. A large number of office-bearers in the Sai Seva Organisations were present.

Bhagavan began His discourse with a poem in which He said that Service (Seva) and Love (Prema) were like the two wings of a bird, with which man could reach speedily his divine destination. Bhagavan said:

Disinterested service will ennoble man and raise his stature. It endows man with the intelligence and the skills required to refine human nature. Doing one's duty diligently is not enough. Man have to cultivate other qualities like love, sympathy, fairness, compassion and forgiveness. Only when one has these qualities will he be able to render dedicated service.

It is the sense of dualism—of "mine and "thine"—which accounts for all the joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes experienced by man. This dualism rooted in selfishness, which makes one think that as long as he is all right, it does not matter what happens to the world. Such a self-centred person, who regards his body, his wealth and his family as all that matter for him, looks upon truth as untruth and the false a true. To get rid of this deep-seated malaise, men have to engage themselves in service. They have to realise that the body has been given not to serve one's own interests but to serve others.

Service should not be done in a spirit of condescension or to achieve some ulterior selfish objective. Not recognising the sacredness and purifying power of service, people hesitate to embark on social service. It should not be imagined that one is promoting the well-being of the nation by one's service. One should realise that he is bettering himself by rendering service.

Gratitude to society

Service should proceed from an awareness of what one owes to society. One's name and fame, all the comforts one enjoys, are derived from society. One finds fulfillment in society. That being the case, if one does not serve society, whom else can he serve? Sheer gratitude demands that one should serve soc which is the source of all benefits enjoyed by man. Men without gratitude are worse than wild animals.

What are required for service are not money and materials. A loving heart is the first requisite. All service done without a love-filled heart is dry as dust. Fill your hearts with love. When you are filled with conceit, everything looks misshapen. When you are immersed in the Spirit, everything looks good and beautiful. Forgetting this higher destiny of man, people are ceasing to be human.

The money obsession

Men are engaged today in the all absorbing occupation of acquiring money, more money. They are obsessed with the feeling that through money alone they can get all they want. This obsession is the root cause of the crisis facing mankind. Although money is needed for certain purposes, it is not the main source of security and happiness for man. Men should learn to lead good lives with modest incomes. Ostentation and pride are the enemies of spiritual progress.

The spirit of sacrifice (tyaga) is essential for rendering dedicated service. Pride is the first evil trait that has to be renounced. Getting rid of bad qualities is real sacrifice; it is also a spiritual discipline (yoga). This is the message of Bharatiya culture. As this is not being properly conveyed to the people, they tend to go astray and take to wrong paths. They do not realise that to whomsoever they may be doing service, they are indeed serving the Divine in various human forms. Those who serve have to cherish this sublime and sacred feeling. They must strive to see God in everyone.

Embodiments of the Divine Spirit! You must realise that your service activities are done for the sake of your own spiritual purification and uplift and have nothing to do with Swami. All actions should be performed with a view to purifying the mind and removing all the dross from it. This is Swami's teaching. It is wrong to think that through actions alone you can attain liberation or redeem your lives. Actions have to be done only for the purification of the Chitta (Will). Without purity of Will, life cannot be spiritualised. Human birth is the result of Karma (action). Right action leads to Dharma (Righteousness). Through Dharma, the Divine has to be realised. Birth-Action-Righteousness-Brahman are inter-related in this manner.

Duties and service

To plead that one has no time for service activities because of official duties or other preoccupations is an utterly lame excuse. Even in your official work you can render service. There is no need to go to bazaars for street cleaning. That is not the only means of serving the public. Whatever your official duties, whatever your profession or occupation, if you discharge your duties properly and efficiently, that is also social service. The right attitude for officials in authority towards service should be to ask themselves whether the services they render are commensurate with the salaries they receive. Seldom do we see persons in employment, whether they are workers or officers, doing the amount of work that would justify the salaries they get. They all want more remuneration, but are not prepared to work more. They should realise that this kind of attitude is a betrayal of the nation. Whose money are they receiving as wages? It is the public's money. To fail in the discharge of one's duties to the public is a grievous disservice. If a teacher imparts education on right lines, he is rendering real national service. Likewise, if a merchant conducts his business on the basis of earning not more than what is needed to meet his reasonable needs, he will be rendering public service. When this attitude prevails, there is no need to claim that one is engaged in service. He should be content to abide by the dictates of his conscience.

Set the example

What will please Swami is the proper performance of one's duties. This constitutes Seva (dedicated service). Avail yourself of every possible occasion to render service to society. It need

not be limited to individuals. It is important to do national service. You need not seek to know what kinds of service should be done. Whenever you find that you can render help to anyone in need, offer it. Do not make distinctions between rich and poor or the deserving and the undeserving. Offer service according to the needs of the situation. Today, the needs of the poor in the rural areas are great. In this situation, you must go out into the villages, organise service activities and encourage the rural population to participate in them. The village folk should be told about the importance of health and hygiene and how to keep their homes and villages clean and healthy.

The Sai Seva Organisations have to set an example to service organisations all over the world. There is no place in them for differences of caste, creed or community. Character is greater than caste. All your activities should be based on love and sacrifice. "Speak the truth. Act righteously." These Upanishadic injunctions sustained Bharat's way of life for centuries. When people live up to them with sincerity and zeal, Bharat will once again stand out as an example to the world.

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on November 21, 1988

Teach Me

*Teach me to feel another's woe
To hide the faults I see
That mercy I to others show
That mercy show to me.*

—Anonymous

DEEPAVALI SANDESH

Inner Significance of Festivals

Bharatiya festivals and holy days are designed to reveal the greatness and integrity of Indian culture. Failing to recognise the inner significance and power of this immemorial culture, the nation has drifted into a purposeless existence. All these festivals have a profound meaning and purpose. But no earnest effort is made to understand their inner meaning and deeper objectives.

These holy days and festivals are intended to celebrate the birthdays of Avatars and saints and to mark the destruction of evil and wicked forces. The ancients observed these occasions to honour the memory of the great souls and to remember how the demoniac forces were vanquished. The advent of Sri Rama, the embodiment of Dharma, occurred on Suddha Navami in the Chitra month. That day is observed as the sacred birthday of Rama. The Bahula Ashtami in the month of Sravana is observed as the sacred day on which Sri Krishna made his advent for the establishment of Dharma and propagating Dharma as the Gitaacharya (the teacher of the Bhagavad-Gita). The Navaratri festival, Sivaratri and Sankranti are observed as memorable days marking the destruction of demoniac forces by the Divine. Vijayadashami is the day when the

evil-minded Ravana, who was well versed in all the sciences and was very powerful, was destroyed. The Shuddha Paadyami in the Asvayuja month was the day on which the combined powers of the three goddesses, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati, (Ichcha Shakti, Kriya Shakti and Jnana Shakti) put an end to the evil forces represented by Mahishaasura (the buffalo-headed demon). Vijayadashami is also the day when the Asura king Ravana was destroyed and Sri Rama was crowned at Ayodhya. It is the day on which the great emperor Vikramaditya ascended his jewelled throne acquired as a boon. It is also the anniversary of the passing of the founder of Jainism, Mahavira.

Bharatiyas have been observing in this manner the birthdays of avatars and the days marking the destruction of the wicked. When Sri Krishna installed a king in Mathura after destroying the wicked, evil-minded Kamsa, Narakasura invaded the city several times. When the residents of the city were apprehensive about their safety and security, Krishna founded a city at Dwaraka to provide a place of refuge for them.

Naraka Chaturdasi

The city in which the demon Narakasura had his capital was known as Praagjyotishapuram. The nama consists of four syllables: Praag, jyoti, sha and puram. "Praag" means "former"; "jyoti" means "light"; "sha" means "forgetting"; and "puram" means the body. Together the term refers to the heart. The inner meaning of the term is that man in his body is forgetting the light, the Atmajyoti, in him. "Nara" has various meanings. One is "Atma." Another meaning is "that which is not permanent." As "Nara", man has forgotten his true spiritual state. When bad qualities enter the city of "Nara", man becomes "Narakasura" a demonic being. The term Narakasura also means one who carries people to Naraka or hell.

The life-story of Narakasura reveals the magnitude of his wickedness. His entire realm was plunged in darkness. No lights burnt in the homes or in streets. No woman could be seen anywhere in the open. He imprisoned thousands of princesses and tortured innumerable women. Unable to bear these indignities, the women appealed to Krishna for succour. As Narakasura had inflicted suffering on women, he had to be punished by a woman. For this reason, Krishna took Sathyabhama with Him and destroyed him in battle. Vijayadashami celebrates the victory of Krishna over Narakasura. It is also known as Naraka Chaturdasi.

WHY THE LAMPS ARE LIT

The following day is Amaavaasya (New Moon day). Krishna freed from prison 16,000 women and asked them to go back to their respective homes. But all the gopikas fell at Krishna's feet and pleaded that it would not be possible for them to live in dignity in their old home after having been prisoners of Narakasura and they would prefer to end their lives at His feet rather than go back. "You who are the protector of the Universe can't you protect us?" they pleaded. Krishna agreed to protect them. Because of the pledge He gave to them that He would bear the responsibility for protecting them, He was called their "Bhartha" (Supporter). This has been wrongly interpreted as meaning that He was their husband. It is a libel on Krishna to say that He married 16,000 gopikas.

This Amavasya day is the day of liberation for the gopikas. It is a moonless day, when the night is utterly dark. The gopikas prayed that as on that day they had got the light of freedom. It should

be marked by illuminations which would make everyone rejoice as on a full moon night. It is for this reason that the day, which is a New Moon day, is illumined by lamps and fireworks and turned into a Full Moon night.

There is a scientific reason also for this celebration. With the end of the rainy season, water stagnates in many places and the surrounding areas team with mosquitoes and other insects. The smoke from the crackers and fireworks destroys these insects and disinfects the atmosphere.

The inner meaning underlying the Bharatiya festivals should be rightly understood. Note, for instance, the fact that a whole array of lamps are lit by the light from one lamp. That one lamp symbolises the Supreme Effulgent Lord. The others symbolise the light in individual selves. The truth of the Vedic saying, "The One willed to become the Many" is exemplified by the lighting of many lamps with the flame of one. The Deepavali festival thus bears out the profoundest spiritual truth.

The lamp points to another significant fact. Wherever it may be placed, the flame goes upward only and never moves down. Likewise the flame of Wisdom (Jnana) leads one to a sublime level through the path of Righteousness.

The inner lamp

If you want to light a lamp, you need four things. First, a container; second, oil; third, a wick; fourth, a match box. If anyone of these is lacking, you cannot light the lamp. This lamp, however, can only remove the outer darkness. How is the darkness in the heart to be removed? It can be removed only by the Light of Wisdom (Jnana Jyoti) and by nothing else. How is this Light of Wisdom, this spiritual light, to be lit? This also needs four elements. Vairagya (detachment or Renunciation) is the container. Devotion (Bhakti) is the oil. One-pointed concentration (Ekagrata) is the wick. Knowledge of the Supreme Truth is the matchstick. Without all the four, the Light of Spiritual Wisdom cannot be got.

Of the four, the primary requisite is the spirit of renunciation (Vairagya). Without this detachment, all knowledge of scriptures is of no avail. What is this detachment? It is the absence of attachment to the body. The ego-feeling which makes one think of the "I" all the time should be given up. The sense of possessiveness ("Mamakara") and the ego-feeling are the cause of attachment (raga). How is this disease of attachment to be eradicated! By the process of self-enquiry. When you realise the impermanence of the body and of all sensory experiences, you acquire the sense of detachment (Vairagya). It only means that you should discharge your duties, treating the body as the God-given instrument for this purpose. "Paropakara artham idam sareeram" ("This body is for the purpose of helping others.") It should not be used solely for selfish ends.

Deepavali has to be observed as the day for getting rid of all the bad qualities in us, symbolised by the demon Narakasura. The gopikas who were freed on that day represent the imprisoned good qualities in us. They should be manifested effulgently. This is the inner significance of the festival. As long as demonic qualities remain in man, he will be immersed in darkness. Bad qualities and thoughts have to be got rid of altogether.

I desire that our festivals and holy days should be observed in the right spirit, with an understanding of their deeper significance. The destruction of Narakasura symbolises the destruction of evil and the restoration of what is good.

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on November 9, 1988

THE STUDY OF MANKIND:

From Fragmentation to Synthesis

When Socrates heard that the Delphic oracle of Apollo had pronounced him the wisest person in Greece, he concluded that it must mean that he was the one who best realised how limited was his knowledge of the Cosmos. Rather, he taught "Know thyself." This is also likely to be the correct interpretation of Alexander Pope's view that the proper study of mankind is man; a call for the individual *primarily* to pursue self-knowledge.

Generalised information and theory about mankind as a species, such as the various 'human sciences' seek, is thus seen as a secondary result. Such types of knowledge can be useful but are no substitute for direct insight gained of and by oneself.

Only if we know the nature of the actual experiences can we know what is really experienced! Thus, self-knowledge determines all knowledge. The better I know myself the better I can 'subtract' any subjective distortions from my viewpoint. Yet the better I know myself, the greater I see my limitations as a knower: I am unable to know the full nature and cause of things with finality. The better we grasp this truth, the more wonderful the mystery of creation becomes. Each new discovery brings ten new inexplicable marvels with it.

The fallacy of objectivism

Objectivism is the thesis that reality can be known entirely as it is in itself, quite independently of the biases of any observing subject. Popular though it is, this doctrine has long been rejected by the deepest philosophers and by scientists in the very forefront of physics since Eddington; yet it is, alas, an entrenched dogma held to doggedly in practice by academic tradition, by teachers and also by most scientists the world over. However, as the physicist Max Born pointed out:

"We may compare the observer of a physical phenomenon not with the audience of a theatrical performance, but with that of a football game where the act of watching, accompanied by applauding and hissing, has a marked influence on the speed and concentration of the players, and thus on what is watched." (The Scientific Monthly Vol. 82, No. 5, 1956)

This follows from the fact that in modern micro-physics one cannot observe the atomic world without interfering in it, exciting it by shooting particles into the field one observes and so on.

Since one cannot regard even matter as a completely independent 'objective' entity, how much less can one do so towards the human being, who is composed of matter, mind and spirit ?

The natural scientist cannot communicate with the 'objects' of his research (unless it be with certain animals) while the psychologist and sociologist can and ought to do so. The human beings who are 'objects' of their researches are *primarily* subjects ... able themselves to adopt an attitude towards the researcher and to the published results.

Interactive relations

This opens for interactive relations between researcher and researched, such as in the form of debate. This itself can lead to change of the very conditions purported to be studied! People are free either to accept or reject the assumptions or the results of social scientific studies, because value judgements—which are necessarily beyond the scope of science to assess—cannot be avoided in this field.

Dilemma of the social scientist

"I told him about scientists who had begged to come with me, some because they wanted to measure Bushman heads and behinds... others to study his family relationships, and one to analyse his spit, but when I asked them if they were not interested in the Bushman's mind and spirit, in the man as a living whole, they replied: 'That is not our department of science'. (Laurens van der Post: 'The Heart of the Hunter')

This illustrates the dilemma of much 'modern' social science: it studies humans physically, as psycho-physical entities. An established type of research the social sciences hopes to understand human behaviour by inference from the study of monkeys and rats. Ought there not to be, instead, genuine *Psychology*, 'science of the soul'? Shall it regard people only as organisms or as living persons, not to mention embodied souls?

Not wishing to lose its claim to methodological status as science adhering to the empirical principle on a line with the natural sciences, psychology studies the mind only from outward physical appearances (i.e. *extrospectively*). Thus it tends strongly to exclude normal ways of understanding people. It often aims at a misunderstood sort of 'objectivity' using most ingeniously-contrived interviews, statistics, behavioral and semi-physiological tests so as to uncover factors that are mainly irrelevant to gaining real insight into human nature.

Depersonalisation

Studying only observed behaviour and interpreting its meaning according to some theory or other which is not explained to or shared by the subjects of the study can lead towards the self-alienation and depersonalisation of both researchers and society. To regard anyone as a passive stimulus-response system (however complex) or as an 'object' of research without the power awarely to transcend or alter the given conditions of life negates the person and is an unfortunate result of the scientific materialism that rules much of social scientific thought.

Those forms of investigation that rely upon *introspective* methods (such as phenomenology) can approach direct description of the psyche insofar as this is encountered *in and by the mind* of the Basically, established individual person. Basically, established academic psychology tends mostly to undervalue such work, which should be its very backbone.

Quality, not only quantity

One can measure and *quantify* the human as a physical body and study the artifacts of human work as material products; one can investigate the mind indirectly by observing its effects on a person's behaviour, but none of this approaches the essential character of humanity. Doubtless such study increases the amount of information available about the factual world, but it overlooks the very foundation of all experience: *qualitative* personal experience of being.

Our acquaintance with ourselves as human subjects arises in self-awareness, which can only properly be investigated further by the direct method of self-Inquiry. That way alone is primary and ultimate.

This basic truth has been known through the ages to those who investigated reality through spiritual theory in practice; that the intelligent subject is the actual starting point of all knowing. The universe is not just something independent of the human spirit, an objective quantity in itself, but it is the cosmos-as-experienced-by-myself.

Body or soul?

The crucial problem of empirical scientific psychology is, in a nutshell, that it actually denies the existence *per se* of the very entity of which it originally claimed to be the science, namely, the *psyche* or soul.

Scientific psychology assumes that physical existence alone is what is real. It sees, for example, the mind as a mechanism of the brain. It cannot use empirical research methods even to investigate, say, the imaginary or the abstract idea, despite the fact that what is 'in' our minds is evidently inseparable from our personalities. The world of the soul or spirit simply doesn't exist for modern science at large even today, despite the oft-quoted personal beliefs of great individual scientists.

Such facts or realities as love, charity, compassion, hope, devotion, purity in short, all of the qualities that make us truly human beings, are intrinsically inaccessible to physical measurement or empirical research methods. They are all too seldom made the direct subject of studies in 'official' modern social or human sciences. Just open any psychology or sociology textbook and see!

No unifying vision

In the European tradition from Greece to the Renaissance, the human being was still regarded as a whole and as part of a very broad reality in which the moral and the spiritual were at the focus of most thinkers view of man. The present situation reminds more of the nursery rhyme about the big egg called *Humpty Dumpty that fell to pieces: Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, but all the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't put Humpty together again:-*

Firstly, the human sciences are divided against themselves into many disparate schools because any unifying vision of the wholeness of man and humanity underlying and giving synthesis to research policy is rejected by all empiricism. Secondly, the vast mass of researches in the social sciences are uncoordinated and non-comparative because each one thus aims to know 'more and

more about less and less' (as Schopenhauer said of academicians). The end result; our unitary being is compartmentalised and divided mentally into parts.

The method of all science involves splitting large problems into the smallest manageable units, then handling them piecemeal. Such analysis of a problem presumes that a final synthesis be made, or else one has forgotten the whole purpose of the enterprise.

That purpose must surely be to forward the understanding of humanity and the human being as a whole entity within the perspective of our highest aspirations and deepest motivations, including our visions of the purpose of our lives in relation to God and Cosmos. All too commonly, though, the sciences of man try to analyse him without any overall guiding theory. They reject any such leading philosophy as mere metaphysics. Thus they concentrate independently and unrelatedly on different parts of his makeup as though they were really separable features.

Holistic understanding

Rejecting personal experience and people's own accounts of it, the human sciences try to deduce the factors that influence behaviour from their abstract statistical measurements. The human sphere is thereby conceived as some system of coordinates or as made up of 'multi-variable factors.' However, just as with the Bushmen that van der Post re-discovered in the Kalahari desert, it is our minds and spirit that make us what we are! These are quite accessible self-investigation, intelligent and honest discussion.

While there are those whose work in the humanities is genuinely holistic, they are a relatively tiny minority. This sad state of affairs at most Western style universities is upheld by pressures to make the humanities more evidently profitable to the social economy of the particular State, say by stimulating a more competitive workforce and industry.

Only by the holistic understanding of persons and groups can such studies become meaningfully fruitful. This must include in principle seeing as relevant personality, character, ('biography') backgrounds, individual tendencies, abilities and aspirations, beliefs, conflicts and so on. We have each our well-known model of such understanding, namely, our personal understanding of ourselves and our society. However incomplete this may be in some respects, we do not regard ourselves only piecemeal and partially, but as integral persons. The very word 'integrity' loses meaning, apart from this.

We can regard ourselves as a whole precisely because we are made in God's image, which is perfect wholeness and holy wholesomeness itself. To try to reach understanding of the human condition 'strictly by analysis' from a neutral 'value-free' position is self-defeating as it fails to take into account all the underlying values and assumptions that make us who and what we are. The researcher's whole understanding of what it is to be, a person himself—and all that follows from it—is the basis he overlooks and fails to penetrate when trying to be scientifically neutral.

The overall answer

The perennial teachings that Sathya Sai Baba has again given us in the clearest possible form show how man is part of God, who is the Whole, and also how We can come to recognise and know this ourselves. Further, the part played by every aspect of human existence and its

significance for the whole of life and the Cosmos is demonstrated and explained by Baba in the fullest possible way. In His teachings we have the essential contents and the overall; plan of synthesis both of the theory and practice of any of the humanities of which the world is in need.

—Robert Priddy, Oslo, Norway

A Prayer

On this day of rejoicing
what gift can we
offer you,
who are the dispenser
of endless gifts
to the entire creation,
O Lord?

Our loving Father,
and gracious Master,
allow us to bring you gifts
on this festive occasion,
not with our hands,
but with our hearts.

May we offer you fruits,
precious and delicious,
in the shape
of selfless acts
of kindness and compassion
that will make the world
a little better,
a little happier
place to dwell
for our fellow-beings.

May our pious sentiments
and noble thoughts
blossom out
into a thousand flowers,
fit for your worship,
and sweeten the air
with celestial fragrance.

Let our hearts be filled
with true love for you,

our beloved Lord,
and let our love flow
like the river Ganga
and wash your lotus-feet.

—Adapa Ramakrishna Rao,
Prasanthi Nilayam,
23rd November, 1988

"Get up! Get up!!!"

On the morning of December 1, '88, I sat watching in ecstasy, as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba made the rounds of the darshan area, accepting a letter or two here, manifesting vibhuti for someone there, giving joy to all who could witness His graceful walk and loving glance.

It was my seventh visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, the first having been in 1981, but each visit is as thrilling as the first.

Having only arrived the previous afternoon, I was caught completely off guard when I looked up to see my husband signaling me from the verandah to come up. Before I could quite comprehend what was happening, the volunteers had taken hold of my wheelchair and pushed me up to the verandah. Baba greeted me, spoke to the friend with whom I had travelled, then came toward me with His arms stretched out as if He were going to take hold of my hands, but then, without touching me, He said, "Get up, get up!" I got up. It would never occur to me not to do anything Baba asked. The reaction of the group assembled for darshan surprised me everyone clapped.

His remarks during the course of the interview seemed to me to center around the theme of Self-confidence. He spoke of the importance of having faith in God, faith in one's Self, and faith in the Self as God. I am sure that many of the devotees from Holland, Germany, India and the United States, who were in that same interview, heard different things but for me, these were the central points. As the interview came to a close, Baba walked out and I followed. The wheelchair was waiting for me there on the verandah, and I realized that I had a choice. I could return to the chair, wait to be pushed back to Round Building One (a distance of about two city blocks, part of which is uphill and uneven with the additional hazard of loose stones), or I could accept the healing which had been offered. It was up to me. I chose to go forward, leaving the chair behind. My friend brought the empty chair as she left the verandah.

Power of faith

The questions I asked myself were: Do I have faith in Baba as God? Do I have faith in myself as God? Faith is the key issue. All Avatars, Masters, and healers have recognized the power of faith as the healer. Even allopathic physicians acknowledge the healing effect of the placebo and recognize the importance of the faith of the patient in the physician. Jesus told those that He

healed: "Thy faith has made thee whole." Baba's mission, like Jesus', is not to do our work for us but to show us how to become master of the body and the senses.

Baba's recent fall in which He fractured His hip was a vivid example to all of us of the importance of rising above pain. When asked, He said that His pain was great. He stressed the fact that His body was subject to the same natural law as ours. When we fall, the body reacts with pain. His does the same. But He was able to get up immediately, to unlock the door of His room and to stand for two and one-half hours only a few days later in order to serve the devotees who had come to celebrate Onam at Prasanthi Nilayam. It was, He said, a matter of not allowing the mind to dwell on the pain.

"Growing pains"

I have suffered from painful knees since birth. The doctors called the condition "growing pains" when I was child. They removed my tonsils and adenoids in an effort to alleviate the pain, but no treatment was ever effective. Many times in my teen years I had to withdraw from activity and retire to my bed doubled up in agony. During college, motherhood, and a career as an educator, I was not bothered a great deal by the condition. However, about twelve years ago, the pain and weakness increased to the point that I was barely able to walk. A team of specialists at Kaiser Permanente Hospital, California, U.S.A., took a series of X-rays and made extensive tests. The diagnosis was deterioration of the knee-joints which would progress with time. They recommended immediate surgery to replace the defective joints with artificial ones. However, they also told me that the success rate for such surgeries was low. (I understand it has since increased.) It was my decision to accept the crutches which they offered me, rather than to have the surgery. As the condition worsened I went from crutches to a walker and finally to the wheelchair.

On my first visit to Baba, I asked only for His love and for the opportunity to be His instrument. It was not until the third trip that I mentioned my physical problems to Him, and His response at that time was: "Forget it!" As I look back to the events of the past seven years, I see that there has been a steady and easily definable programme of regeneration which has been going on in an orderly way. I estimate that the same amount of progress might have taken lifetimes to achieve without the benefit of Swami's grace.

Learning the lessons

There were mental confusion, emotional problems, and ignorance to be overcome. These were brought to the surface one by one—sometimes through Baba's direct intervention and at other times through what appeared to be just the coincidences of life experience. These experiences are described in detail in my book, 'Life is a Game, Play it!' To quickly summarize, they involved learning to surrender the ego-will to the Divine Will (humility,) balancing the male and female qualities, learning to love the Divine in others, even when appearances might make them seem to be enemies, and many other developmental tasks easily recognizable by pilgrims on the spiritual path.

Last year, when Swami asked my husband what he wanted, he asked that Baba heal my knees. He indicated that He would do as Raye had requested, and said, "I will give her a lingam before you go." We thought that he meant He would manifest a lingam for me, as He had done for

others. However, in a second interview, He manifested a crystal japamala for me, but no lingam. This was a mystery to us until several months later we saw this quotation in *Sanathana Sarathi*:

"Swami is the very embodiment of compassion. He will pardon all errors. This principle which guides and guards you along the spiritual path is the lingam that is in the center of consciousness, clustering around the inner and outer senses."

—Chinna Katha, page 155

I realized, then, that the lingam which Baba had given me before I left was the pardon of my errors. They were not forgiven so that I could be free from punishment, but they were being corrected in order that I might not repeat them. The process was dramatically difficult over the past year. Two major crises occurred which forced me to give up longstanding mistaken behaviours. I see these now as two major obstacles which it was necessary to surmount before the healing of the knees could occur.

The miracle of miracles

Over the past few days, since Baba told me to "Getup!" I have been questioned by physicians who were witness to the event, and photographed standing, walking, and sitting. The major question asked is: Was this a genuine miracle? I have attempted to answer each question as factually as possible. In terms of any physical change, since there has not yet (and probably will never be) any comparison of before and after X-rays, I can report only this: Prior to December 1, whenever I walked only a few steps, inflammation of the joints was so great that there was considerable heat and greatly increased pain for several days following. As of now, after walking more than I have walked for the past several years, there is no inflammation of the joints at all—no heat. Muscles which are being used after years of relative idleness are reacting with soreness but this is not at all out of the ordinary. Whether the condition will return or be permanently vanquished, I feel, depends strictly on me. Swami has done His job. Now it is up to me to do mine.

I am, of course, extremely grateful for every aspect of this experience but I know that Baba wants us to understand His adherence to and fulfillment of the law. He has continually stressed that He is God, and that each of us is God—that whatever He does is possible for us to do also. If rearranging molecules or exchanging one substance for another is considered miraculous, then He does perform miracles. Many hundreds of people can testify to witnessing such events. That He is able to regenerate a badly deteriorated knee joint is not more difficult than causing a ring to slip on the finger easily when seconds before no amount of force could push it on.

However, the miracle of all miracles is the unwavering, unchanging love which he pours out freely to everyone who will open his heart to receive it. What has happened in my experience is only a tiny speck of what has happened in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Each one has been healed of his diseases, pardoned of his errors, and freed from his addictions as rapidly as he would permit. The miracle of miracles is a life regenerated. Baba's mission is to regenerate lives—and through such, to guide us into the realization of Advaita and the experience of peace on earth.

—Joy Thomas, Cherry Valley, California

Living with God

To live with God is a different proposition altogether. He is human and yet so divine and Divine yet so human. We find in scriptures different paths laid down for reaching Him. Sages have given unto us the correct prescription to see Him. When you come face to face with Him, almost unexpectedly our holy scriptures are silent as to what should be the next step.

Life at His lotus feet has been a liberal education in its true sense. Every moment there is a new revelation. Every time He speaks to you there is a renewal of hope and revival of strength that equips you to face the challenges of life in a better way. Setting right the faulty educational structure is an important part of His mission for this purpose He has established educational institutions. With the sole instrument of love He has been imbuing the student community with a high sense of duty, devotion, and discipline.

We find in Swami a God who counsels and corrects man, motivates and inspires us, and who is our eternal guide and guardian. He has not come to preach idealism but to be the ideal for humanity and to give man a refreshingly new philosophy of life that is physically less demanding, mentally inspiring, spiritually elevating.

Thousands of devotees flock to Him for the sheer joy of being in His presence, having His darshan and touching the hem of His robe, if possible. Such spontaneous expressions of pure love for Divinity are unparalleled in the annals of human history. The transformation He brought about in us is testimony to the greatest miracle He has performed. He has a distinct method of approach and an appropriate message to give to each individual who comes within the ambit of His grace.

Universal love is His life and His message. He is the authentic exponent of this love. We can never hope to reciprocate the love of Bhagavan. Human love wanes and withers. Divine love forgets, forgives, fosters and remains unchanged for ever.

We are in one of the epoch-making periods of human history. We are in an era in which the Divine principle has made its descent into this world and has taken upon Itself the great task of remodelling man. Blessed are we to live in such an age which is to undergo this transformation at the hands of the Lord. Each one of us has to play the role assigned to him. Let us offer ourselves to our Lord in a spirit of total surrender and pray to Him to accept us as humble instruments in His Divine hands for His Divine mission.

—Ananta Rao, M. Com., Prasanthi Nilayam

Two Dreams

I would love to tell you a story true,

About the dreams I had but two.
In the first dream I saw a plane,
Landing slowly on its lane.
There was a crowd, singing bhajans about,
Watching Sai descend the stairway
From the plane unto the runway,
He walked up to me and said,
"You are not what I expected."

In the second dream I saw a lake,
It was a lake no man could make.
Down the lake floated a raft,
Bigger than any other craft,
On the raft sat Swami,
singing sweetly to me.

But unfortunately I awoke,
Because my little sister spoke,
It was time to go to school,
Late-comers would break the rule.

—Shamini Naiker

(From "Sai Blossoms", a collection of writings by Bal Vikas Children is Sai Centres in Natal, S. Africa)

India is the land, where the dichotomy of 'that' and 'this', of 'creator' and 'creation', of 'energy' and 'matter', was resolved in one grand unity, by both theory and practice, in philosophical schools and in hermitages. The Tree of Life, with its countless branches proliferating into thoughts, words and deeds, attitudes, tendencies, and impulses, is known by the sages of India to have its roots in heaven! So, every rule and ritual was made sacred and holy, suffused with purity, humility and love.

—Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam constantly springs surprises on devotees who come after short or long intervals. The hillscape, which lends so much charm and beauty to the Nilayam, is continually changing. There are more trees on the hillsides. Vidyagiri has one or more new statuesque figures reminding the devotees of the great messengers of God. The majestic and kindly figure of Christ is followed by a towering figure of Zoroaster. There are more galleries to accommodate the growing spate of devotees making their pilgrimage to Bhagavan's lotus feet all the year round.

Above all, the events that are the greatest attraction to the devotees become more varied, more colourful and memorable from year to year. This was certainly the case with this year's Sports and Cultural Meet, when thousands of devotees and a large number of distinguished visitors were treated to a delightful and unforgettable programme of physical feats, dances, tableaux and mass drills which revealed the varied skills of the students, boys and girls, and their devotion to Bhagavan that had inspired them in the pursuit of excellence.

It was a beautifully cool morning when Bhagavan inaugurated the festival on January 11. All the galleries to the west and south of the Hill View Stadium had been occupied well before Bhagavan's arrival.

Starting from the Mandir at 7.20 a.m., with seven outriders on motor cycles (5 boys and 2 girls) in front, Bhagavan left for the stadium in His gleaming motorised chariot. Bhagavan's arrival in the stadium was heralded by the firing of a 21-gun salute.

On reaching the western gallery of the Stadium, Bhagavan was received by the Vice-Chancellor and others. With the Institute's band, in their splendid white uniforms, heading the procession, Bhagavan proceeded to the Santhi Vedika for the inaugural ceremony. Two groups of dancers—one group, wearing colourful Panjabi costumes, doing the Bhangra dance with vigour, and the other, presenting for the first time the Chakka dance of Andhra Pradesh—came behind the band, performing their dances all the way. A contingent of students of the Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, carrying colourful banners, and two contingents of students of the Institute in their smart uniforms, providing a guard of honour for the Chancellor, formed part of the ceremonial procession to the Santhi Vedika.

The march past

After Bhagavan had taken His seat on the stage, the grand March Past of all the students from the three campuses—Anantapur, Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan—began. It was a cheering sight to watch thousands of students, boys and girls, from tiny tots of the Primary School to senior students doing their M.B.A. or doctorate, marching in military style to the lilting beats of the Institute Band. Each group, led by a captain carrying a distinctive flag, paid homage to Bhagavan as they passed the Santhi Vedika, dipping the flag and turning "eyes right," with beaming faces full of devotion. The rally took nearly half an hour to get through.

Bhagavan came down from the Vedika to hoist the Institute Flag and light the "Olympic" torch. He released two white pigeons, symbolising Love and Peace, and let loose a bunch of colourful balloons which floated up into the air. The "Olympic" torch was carried by relays of pairs of runners to the top of Vidyagiri Hill where the "Olympic" flame was lit. The urn on the hill was guarded by four students in shining red uniforms.

After the "Olympic" oath was administered to all the participants, they dispersed to their respective places.

Then began a programme of exhibition items by students of the participating institutions, which revealed not only their proficiency in athletics but their capacity to innovate and produce remarkable ensembles calling for superb team work and high aesthetic imagination.

Girl students excel

Girls from the Anantapur campus earned the highest kudos for the varied items they presented from monocycling feats, equaling circus performers, to the formation of pyramids and "ladders" of various kinds, presenting a variety of dances, demonstrations of skills in shooting and archery, enacting a parable of Bhagavan, with figures of animals moving on skates, and getting up two very colourful and attractive floats, one depicting Indra and other deities coming down from heaven to offer homage to the Avatar, and the other, presenting an array of prophets and messiahs to bring home the Sai Message of unity of all religions. Every one of the items was executed with professional thoroughness and invested with aesthetic appeal. The most memorable item was the "Dharma Stupa" in which the girls erected a human column at the top of which girls in pink costume blossomed out into a lotus from which arose the benedictory figure of Bhagavan Baba. It was an ecstatic and thrilling moment for all the spectators.

The last item in their programme was a train, the Ananth-Prasanthi Express, which rolled into the Stadium, with five bogies attached to the engine, carrying the names, Service, Sacrifice, Satisfaction, Sanctity and Surrender. The "Express" was designed and manufactured by the students themselves in the college workshop.

A comic touch was given to the programme by two clowns rolling on drums and performing all kinds of antics. The girls who had been dressed up to look exactly like circus clowns did their part extremely well.

The young children of the Primary School gave a fine display of mass drills in different formations, with sticks, lazzims, pots, and as elves, peacocks and angels with wings. The drills were colourful and pleasing.

Students from the Brindavan campus gave an impressive display of aerobics exercises, besides a Bhangra dance. In the cultural programme, they presented two short plays: "The Triumph of Truth" in English, and the "Transformation of Ratnakara" in Telugu, and a musical concert.

Students of the Prasanthi Nilayam campus performed a series of gymnastic feats. They formed the Institute Band, which provided the continuous marching tunes for the day's programme.

The participation of nearly eight hundred boys and girls of the Secondary School in the various sports and cultural items was notable for its rich variety and excellent presentation.

The last item of the programme, before the Beating of the Retreat, was a "go-cart" demonstration by a student of the Institute who had produced the vehicle himself. Driving it wildly over the field, he turned and twisted and spun round the track, kicking up a lot of dust, and leaving the spectators wondering how he kept himself in his seat.

Students from the Brindavan campus did the Beating of the Retreat in perfect military style.

It was a memorable day for everyone. Though the programme lasted five hours, no one noticed the passing of time. Bhagavan enjoyed the entire programme and gave Padanamaskar to hundreds of participants who came up to Him after their part in the display was over. The Institute Band had been playing all through the five-hour programme.

At the end, a group of students unfurled before Bhagavan a banner carrying the sign: "FOR EVER YOURS." It was a touching expression of the devotion and love the students had for Bhagavan.

Bhagavan left for the Mandir, with the seven outriders going before Him.

For three days, from the 11th to the 13th, contests in games and athletics were held for students in different categories. On the 14th, Bhagavan gave away the prizes to the winners in various competitions. Hundreds of them went up to the dais in the Institute Auditorium to receive the prizes and certificates and offer their Namaskars to Bhagavan.

A total number of 378 prizes were given away to 142 students.

Eighteen shields for different games and team items were also given away.

A rolling shield was awarded to Sri Sathya Sai Primary School for all-round excellence, including their performance in the march past, the mass drills and exhibition items.

A rolling shield was awarded to the Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur campus, for the best all-round performance among the Campuses of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute in regard to the exhibition items at the inaugural function.

A rolling shield was awarded to Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School for the best performance in gymnastics.

A special shield of Grace was awarded to Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning Campuses for men for the performance of the Institute Band and the cultural programmes presented during the three-day festival.

The individual athletic championship for Post-Graduates was jointly shared by G. R. Praveena of 11 M. Sc. and S. Hariharan of I M.B.A. The championship award for Undergraduates was won by K. S. Girish of III B.Com.

The percentage of participation in the meet was 98% among PG students and 95% among UG students.

After the prize distribution, Bhagavan delivered His discourse (report of which is published separately).

- N.

Songs for Sathya Sai

As an offering to Bhagavan Baba on His sixty-third birthday (November 23, 1988), the Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Adelaide, South Australia, brought out a finely produced volume entitled "Sathya Sai Song Book ". It is a veritable treasure-house of songs in English and bhajans in the Indian languages, printed in the Roman script with their English renderings. Altogether, there are 147 English songs and 234 bhajans, besides the Mangalam. Gayatri, Asato maa and Vibhuti songs. The songbook will be a welcome handbook for all bhajan centres overseas.

The devotional fervour inspiring some of the English songs may be understood from the following pieces from the book:

Chanting the Name

When the world is filled with darkness and
evil has taken hold,
When people die and children cry, without
ever knowing the Lord.
When the hearts and minds of every one
have forgotten how to sing the Holy Songs,
When saints and sadhus pray night and day,
for the children of the Lord to be shown the
way.

That's when the Lord ...comes back to Earth,
To dwell in human abode,
To walk among His children, to raise up His
children,
To set the feet of His children on the way
back to blessedness
The road back to blessedness.

When Jesus walked upon the Earth people
didn't recognise His Holy birth,
The One who sent Him, now has come, Sai
Baba is His Name

His Life is His message and His Path is
Love,
He's wise as a serpent, yet, as gentle as a
dove,
He walks every day, beneath the Indian sun
Yet dwells in the heart of everyone.

The Family of Man

I am a Hindu, I am a Jew, I am a Catholic,
Protestant too;
I am a Muslim, I am a Sikh, I am a
Buddhist, Yes, I am unique.
I belong to the family of man and I walk
hand in hand with the folk of our
land...
The family of man.

I am One with Thee

I am one, My Lord, I am one with Thee
I am one in the Truth of Reality
I am one with Your Love in the heart of me
I am one in peace and serenity.
I am one, My Lord, I am one with Thee
I am one with the beauty in all that I see
I am one with the grass, the flower and the
tree
I am one with all life in harmony.
I am one, My Lord, I am one with Thee
I am one in Your light of Divinity
I am one with the sky, the earth and the sea
I am one with God for eternity.

I am the River

I am the river, You are the sea,
Let Your Love flow right through me.

I am the river, You are the ocean,
Come and fill me with devotion.

I am the bird, You are the sky,
Let Your Grace flow as I fly.

I am the Earth, You are the Sun,
I am many, You are One.

I am the darkness, You are the light,
Shed Your Wisdom into my night.

Across the Seas, in other Lands

Across the seas, in other lands
Hearts are longing to hold your hand
They've heard the word, the word is God
And to see You is life's reward
There's an ocean of souls, all waiting for
You
Everyone's wondering, can it really be true?
Lord Sathya Sai Baba, please won't You
come,
To everyone, to everyone.

Away in Puttaparthi....

Away in Puttaparthi, Ere the breaking of
dawn,
Lord Sathya Sai Baba, in Glory was born.
For, He has descended to redeem us again...
With joy and adoration, let us whisper
"Amen".

***Copies of the Songbook can be had from: Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Adelaide, P.O. Box
1883, G.P.O., Adelaide, South Australia 5001***

Prasanthi Birds

What will you be?
How will you take
Your Love and offer
It up to the Lord?

Are you like
The Crow,
That cries out
With full throat
All its sins,
Its problems?
Calling loudly
To the Lord
To grant relief
From suffering;

Or will you be
Like the pigeon,
Cooing softly
Under the Mandir
Eaves?
Crooning your love
For the Lord
Who dwells within;
Preening your plumage
For the Lord's pleasure.

Maybe you would
Rather be a swallow
Swooping and diving
Serving those who
Come to see the Lord
By keeping down the flies,
The pests that worry
The vagrant mind.

You could be
A little sparrow
Darting your way
In and out of the Mandir,
Chirping a chorus,

Singing to the Lord.
In dulcet tones
Of beautiful melody.

Or would you be
A still, stone bird
Of legend
Adorning His Dwelling?
Silent Guardian
Of Ancient wisdom
And vibration pure.

All of these
Are offerings
At His Feet;
But I would rather be
The majestic eagle
That soars up into
The heavenly skies
Of the Heart of the Lord,
Heralding His Arrival,
Spirit lifted up,
Calling—Calling
Across the winds
Over the valley;
Drifting when He alone
Wills, never losing sight
Of Him.

I would be the eagle,
Spirit bird of wonder,
Knowing that when
I have need of rest,
My place is upon
The Crown, the Gold-topped dome
Of the Temple of Peace,
His Home
And mine, forever

—*Phillip Cottingham, New Zealand*

"Perseverance—the Key to Achievement"

"Learn to love your country, without hatred for other countries. Get rid of differences based on community, creed or caste. Regard all mankind as one family;" observed Bhagavan Baba, Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, in the course of an inspiring discourse in the Institute Auditorium on January 14th.

Bhagavan held forth to the students the great example of Thomas Alva Edison, who through sheer perseverance and tireless energy gave to the world the greatest inventions of our times.

Bhagavan's discourse was given after prizes had been distributed to the winners in the Sports and Cultural Meet held during the previous three days. A very large gathering was present in and outside the Auditorium.

Bhagavan began His discourse with the following poem:

*Verily the light that illumines all arts is the Divine,
The love that emanates from each call is Divine
Break not the Divine command in your intellectual conceit
For pride surely goeth before a fall.
All education that is devoid of spiritual purity
Is replete with hatred and envy,
Like a dark dwelling infested with bats,
Know this to be the truth.*

Dear students, teachers and lovers of education!

For the accomplishment of any aims in life man needs an unflinching mind, tireless endeavour and unshakeable determination. Young boys and girls pursuing their studies have to cultivate these qualities if they wish to ensure for themselves a bright future and an honourable and worthy career. In facing different situations in life, students have to learn to practise equanimity and amiability.

Equal-mindedness and the sense of oneness with all are the marks of a true human being. In this vast country, everyone has an important role to play. Everyone as a citizen has a social responsibility. The world indeed is one human family. The true student should be able to experience this oneness. Sports and games enable students to develop this feeling of oneness.

Sports and games and physical exercises contribute directly to physical fitness and good health. But man is not merely the gross body alone. He has a subtle element in him, namely, the mind. It is only when man achieves purity of mind and develops unselfishness that he can

purity are essential for man.

Students should realise that the determination and perseverance which they show in seeking to win laurels in sports and games are also equally necessary in other spheres of life, especially in those of morality and spirituality.

The first quality you have to cultivate is gratitude to the Divine. People are thankful for even small acts of service done to them. Is it not necessary to be grateful to the Divine who has provided us with so many essential benefits through Nature and the five elements? The air you breathe, the water you drink, the earth on which you walk are all gifts from God. How grateful are you to the sun, who provides light, which cannot be equalled by all the electric bulbs in the world? Can all the pumpsets in the world provide as much water as is offered in a single downpour of rain? Can all the fans in the world provide as much breeze as you get when the wind blows? Without being grateful for these divine gifts, man goes after the trivial and wastes his life. The great sages of yore who adored God in various ways considered devotion as a means of expressing gratitude to Providence.

The Puranas have described the lives of the great exemplars of nine forms of devotion (Bhakti). They are Parikshit (for Shravanam or listening to the glories of God), Narada (Kirtanam or singing the praises of God), Prahlada (Vishnunama smaranam, remembering the Lord's name), Prithu (Archanam, or offering worship), Akrura (Vandanam, prostration) Hanuman (Seva or service), Arjuna (Sakhyam or friendship), Lakshmi (Padasevanam, worshipping the feet of the Lord), and Bali (Atmanivedanam, total surrender).

Students should bear in mind that from the point of view of the individual or the community, they have to cultivate good qualities along with the pursuit of their studies. Virtues alone can help one to elevate himself in life. A man without virtues or gratitude is bound to fail in life.

During the war in Lanka, Rama saw one day a powerful, effulgent figure before him. Vibhishana told Rama that he was none other than Rama's enemy, Ravana. Seeing him, Rama felt that but for his bad qualities Ravana, who was so powerful and great, would not have come to such a pitiable end. Whatever may be one's scholarship or intelligence, without the strength of character, they are likely to dehumanise man. You must fortify yourself with the strength of character, along with the acquisition of knowledge. There is nothing that cannot be achieved by a righteous person.

Self-confidence is the first requisite. You must cherish some ideals. To lead an ideal exemplary life, education is not essential. One seeks education for earning a living. But one cultivates virtues for sublimating life. It is only when education is combined with good qualities that you can experience the bliss of fullness.

Students need both faith in God and determination (deeksha) for success in life. There is the example of the great American scientist, Thomas Alva Edison. He was born in a poor family on February 11, 1847, in the State of Ohio. Although he made no progress in his studies, he became a great inventor, thanks to his supreme self-confidence and his perseverance and determination in the pursuit of his experiments. His early experiments had untoward results, which provoked his parents to punish him and ultimately to send him out of the home. For a time he earned a living by selling sweets in trains. Once, a guard slapped him for causing an explosion in the closet of a train. His hearing was affected thereby. A benefactor came into his life after he had saved a child from being run over by a train. He got a job in a telegraph company and was free to carry on his experiments. From such beginnings, Edison became the greatest inventor of our times because of his tremendous perseverance and tireless experiments. The world owes to him the electric bulb, the gramophone, the telephone and many other inventions. If without any regular schooling, Edison could achieve all this, it was because of his confidence in himself, his firm determination and tireless energy. In addition to their academic studies, these are the qualities the students should acquire. They should associate with right-minded persons, whose company will improve their minds and character.

What Swami expects

The advances in science and technology have enabled man to roam in the sky like birds and move in water like fish. But he has not mastered the art of living well on the earth. If man has not learnt how to lead a worthy human life, what is the value of his existence? Make your life meaningful by doing your duty to your parents and your Motherland. The man who is not proud of the land of his birth is worse than a corpse. Learn to love your country, without any hatred for other countries. Get rid of differences based on community, creed or caste. Regard all mankind as one family. Give up all feelings of hatred and aversion. As alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute, you have to stand out as examples to the world. Your conduct should be ideal and exemplary in every respect. That is what I expect from you and this is what will give Me joy. Even in your sports and games you must strictly adhere to the rules and be good sportsmen. You must raise the standard of sport and develop the team spirit.

It is a good habit to get up early in the morning between 4 and 5 a. m. and complete your morning ablutions. That is described as Rishi-snanam (the bath of the sages). Your mind gets purified when you take part in the Suprabhatam in the morning. This may seem a little hard at first, but after some practice you will discover how good it is for you physically and spiritually. The pre-dawn vibrations in the atmosphere will help to improve your memory power. Sports and games are designed to promote physical fitness. They should not be commercialised and turned into a form of business. Our Institute students have to take, part in games and athletics for the sake of the joy to be derived from them and to develop their abilities and skills. There should be no trace of self-interest in them. Develop equal regard for everyone and promote mutual respect and affection. The concept of divine love must become your watchword and goal in life.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajans: "*Prema muditha manase kaho*" and "*Bhajana binaa sukha santhi nahi.*"

"Eschew envy: Uphold Truth"

The scriptures have declared that it is difficult to acquire a human body. Human life is the highest among all living beings in creation. With all these endowments, if man lacks wisdom (jnana) he is no better than an animal. It is jnana that distinguishes man from other animals. In spite of possessing a human body, with its many sacred capacities, man pursues wrong paths and indulges in misdeeds, thereby degrading his precious heritage. One who ought to dedicate himself to the pursuit of the Divine (Nivritti marga-the Inward Path) and experience bliss, makes himself a slave of his senses and wastes his life in the pursuit of the external (Pravritti marga). All his efforts are directed towards the cultivation of sensual pleasure instead of aiming at realisation of the power of the Spirit within him. Of what avail is the human form if one's actions and thoughts are not conducive to the realisation of his inherent divinity? By concerning himself only with the demands of the body, man today is forgetting his divine essence and is immersed in material pursuits. It is this preoccupation with the mundane that is at the root of all the insecurity and unhappiness experienced by man. He is perennially filled with discontent and dissatisfaction. Discontentment affects man in two ways. One is lack of peace of mind. The other is unhappiness resulting from lack of peace.

How to banish envy

What is the root cause of discontent? It is envy. This has been the besetting vice of man from the beginning of time. Only when envy is eradicated from the human heart will man have self-satisfaction. The contented man enjoys peace. How does envy arise? When one compares himself with those who are better off, or who hold higher offices, or score higher marks, or are more handsome, and suffers from a consciousness of his own inferiority, envy arises. Discontent over what he lacks gives birth to envy. To get rid of this evil quality, one has to look at those who are worse off than himself. For instance, when you look at those who have got lower marks than yourself, you can derive comfort from the fact that you have done better than many others. Likewise, when one views the state of those holding lower jobs, he can feel satisfied with his own position. Thus, if envy has to be got rid of, this sort of comparison with those who are worse off has to be undertaken. In due course, one develops a sense of equal-mindedness both towards those who are better off and those who are worse. Such equal-mindedness is a divine quality. There is nothing wrong in aspiring for higher positions. But one should not feel envious about those who are in such positions. It is a crime to entertain such feelings.

The triple purity

Students should bear in mind that for achieving anything worthwhile in life a healthy body and a healthy mind are necessary. To realise such a doubly healthy state, purity in thought, word and deed is essential. In Vedantic parlance this is described as "Trikarana Shuddhi"—purity of the three instruments of mind, speech and hands.

The Vedas are divided into three Kandas (sections)—the Karma Kanda, the Upasana Kanda and the Jnana Kanda. These three are associated with three types of yoga: Karma yoga (the yoga of Action), Bhakti yoga (the yoga of Devotion) and Jnana yoga (the yoga of Knowledge or Wisdom).

First, there is Karma yoga. For performing any action you need hands. All the actions you do with your hands should be sacred, pure, helpful to others and purposeful. The hands become sanctified by such actions. Hence, the first step is to make the hands pure and holy.

Sanctity of the promise

By pure actions, the mind also gets purified. But mere purity of mind alone is not enough. The mind has to develop concentration. For cultivating concentration, Bhakti (devotion) is of great value. Bhakti means getting rid of the separation from Bhagavan. There must be the realisation that the Divine is omnipresent and that you cannot separate yourself from God. To remember the omnipresent Divine, to chant His glories and adore Him, you need the tongue (the power of speech). Jayadeva hailed the tongue as the God-given instrument for glorifying the Lord. This sacred instrument should not be misused in any way for speaking ill of others or causing unhappiness to them. As enjoined in the Gita, you should avoid unpleasant speech and use only words that are true, comforting and good. Harshness in speech should be avoided. Only when the tongue is used in this way can it become pure and sacred. When your speech is sanctified, your life itself becomes sanctified. There is no Dharma higher than Truth. "Truth alone triumphs." The Emperor Bali asked: "Is there a greater sin than going back on your word?" Once you have given a promise, you should not go back on it in any circumstance. This was the truth demonstrated by Bali. When you take a pledge or give a promise, you should uphold it even at the cost of your life. Once you give your word, you must make every effort to fulfill it. Nowadays, there is little respect for the plighted word. Promises are made freely and broken freely. Pledges are made and buried from moment to moment. Such persons are no better than living corpses.

*Truth is the life-breath of speech
An army is the life-breath of a fort
Justice is the life-breath of society.
The signature is the life-breath of a pronote.*

You must remember that once you begin to treat your promises lightly, it will become a life-long habit. Harishchandra gave up his kingdom, his wife and son and even became a pitiable watchman in a cremation ground for the sake of upholding his plighted word. His supreme example as the votary of Truth shines like a beacon-light across the millennia of human history.

If you wish to earn a name for truthfulness, you have to adhere to truth steadfastly. Among the attributes of God Truth is foremost. God is hailed as the Protector of Truth (Sathyavaak-paalakaaya Namah), the Propagator of Truth, the Embodiment of Truth. "Truth is God" goes the saying. Purity in speech is the second purity that has to be ensured.

Students! This is a crucial period in your lives. It is the stage in which your divinity can blossom forth. It is the right time for you to strive to sublimate your speech and learn to honour your word. Most people are content to use words to suit the needs of the moment. They attach no lasting value to what they say and therefore do not live upto their words.

"Yogakshemam"

In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord gave a promise that He would take care of the "yogakshemam" of all those who are devoted to him exclusively and without any other thought. What is this "yoga"? You can see for yourself what a sacred privilege you are enjoying, what extraordinary opportunities you are getting here. Every day innumerable persons are coming here from many remote countries, spending many thousands of rupees. They wait for long periods just to hear one word from Swami, which is enough to fill them with bliss. There are lakhs of such devotees. Here you are receiving the blessing of Swami's company without any expenditure on your part, with no effort at all and without spending any time. How indifferent are you to this great opportunity? You are taking it all for granted and are unmindful of its infinite value. You have got this blessing thanks to merit earned in some previous lives. This itself you should regard as "yoga". It is not the fruit of this birth. This is yoga and when you try to protect it you have "yogakshemam". "Kshemam" means protection of what you have. Bhakta Mira prayed: "Oh Lord! I dived into the depths of the ocean and found a pearl, will you let me lose hold of it?" Mira and Sakkubai secured God's grace through many ordeals and difficulties and they prayed to the Lord to see that the grace was not taken away.

"A golden opportunity"

It is by a stroke of supreme good fortune that you have come to the Lord. You must not let slip this opportunity. This is the chance for you to ensure your physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Not realising this, you are wasting a golden opportunity. It is easy to lose a precious thing. You are not aware of what is ahead of you, what the future holds for you. What pains Swami is the thought of the difficulties you will have to face in the future, of which Swami alone is aware. You may imagine that you can make whatever promises you like while you are here and pursue whatever courses you choose after going out from the Institute. This is a grievous mistake. Sooner or later you will have to reap the fruits of your decisions. You must see that these consequences are not untoward. What you regard today as a laughing matter may prove tragic later.

Keep a strict watch over what you say. If the foot slips, you may suffer a fall and sustain a temporary injury. But a slip of the tongue may cause lasting harm. Never go about criticising others. When you point to the mote in another's eye, you are forgetting the beam in your own eye. With plenty of faults in yourself, you have no right to point out the faults in others. It is a grievous sin to indulge in such fault-finding. He alone is wise who is conscious of his defects. The one who is looking out for the faults in others will acquire those faults himself by a process of reflex action.

The example of Churchill

through sheer self-confidence and self-education, became the Prime Minister of England. He enlisted in the army at a young age. When he later entered politics, he trained himself to become an effective public speaker. Before going to a meeting, he would practise before a mirror how he would address the meeting and what kind of Impression he would make on the audience by his gestures and movements. By correcting himself in this way, he developed great self-confidence and acquired an impressive public personality. He became a master in the art of repartee. At an election meeting he was railing against the opposition without mincing words. A woman in the audience, who was greatly provoked by Churchill's attack, got up and shouted: "Shut up." She remarked: "If I had been your wife I would have administered poison to put an end to your life." Churchill coolly replied: "If I had been your husband, I would have thrust the cup of poison down your throat." The woman was put to shame and remained silent thereafter.

On another occasion, an opposition MP was replying to Churchill's speech. Seeing that Churchill was keeping his eyes closed during the speech and appeared not to be listening to him, the Opposition member complained that Churchill was asleep while he was replying to Churchill's speech. He said that this was unparliamentary. Churchill immediately got up and said: "I would have been immensely happy if I had gone to sleep. It was because I could not get sleep, I had to endure the member's speech." That reply plunged the House in laughter. You have to practise the art of silencing criticism by humorous replies.

After the hands and the tongue, you have to learn how to purify the mind. The mind is said to be constantly wavering and getting out of control. But when it is directed in the right way, it will be in the proper state. The rectification of the mind is Jnana Yoga.

You have to aim at achieving this triple purity ("Trikarana Shuddhi"). This will enable you to get rid of all evil qualities and make you unselfish. Today you tend to be self-centred even with regard to simple matters like looking at a group photograph or seeing the examination results. You are only concerned with locating your picture in the group or your number in the results. You must develop a broader outlook and derive joy from the successes of others instead of being concerned only with your own result. Our Institute students must learn to transcend such narrow attitudes and develop a wider outlook.

*—From Bhagavan's address to the students of the
Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 19-1-1989*

Being a Bal Vikas Teacher

—Sarada Subramaniam, Fiji

A wise man once said that the best way to learn is to teach. Paradoxical as this may sound, no one said a truer word. When one is a student, one can pick and choose what one wants to

knowledge is a dangerous thing for a teacher as there can be embarrassing situations when a person doesn't know what he/she is talking about and can become the laughing stock of the class. This can be more so when teaching religion. A science teacher, for example, can be confident in the knowledge that he knows his facts and can face the class armed with his knowledge. Religion on the other hand, is an abstract subject, founded mostly on faith or belief. Also religion and spirituality begin where science ends.

A lot of things in religion cannot be explained and no teacher can answer all the questions. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that our scriptures are all written in Sanskrit which is an alien language to most of us. So one has to make a special effort to read and understand the Sanskrit text to be able to explain and interpret it to the students. This poses an additional burden on the Sai Vikas teacher who has to be careful about his pronunciations, intonations and explanations. It will be a sin to try to explain things away thinking that the students will accept anything as they themselves do not know. A Sai Vikas teacher, therefore, has to approach this task with extreme humility. In the first sloka in Raghuvamsa, Kalidas puts his problem so succinctly. "With my limited intellect, it is indeed rash of me to try to describe the glories of the Raghus of the solar dynasty. I am like one trying to cross the mighty ocean in a small leaky canoe." This is the sort of humility with which one must approach the task of interpreting religion to children.

Ever since I started teaching Sai Vikas children, I have learnt a great deal about Sanathana Dharma, a little about other religions and something about Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His teachings which are only highlighting and reiterating the age-old principles of Sanathana Dharma. In fact in the 12 years I have been a Sai Vikas teacher, I have learnt more about the Hindu religion and spirituality than in the previous 50 years of my existence. I have to read a great deal and discuss my doubts with people more knowledgeable than I am. I have to seek and find out more about Sanathana Dharma, the Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata and the other holy scriptures. This pursuit of knowledge and constant research, needless to say, are extremely rewarding and stimulating indeed!

I love communing with children in my class. Together we are embarked on a voyage of discovery. There are vast treasures lying hidden and together we are exploring the unknown regions for our mutual benefit. They learn from me and, in return, I learn from them. The ant, it is said, taught Solomon wisdom. We can all learn from one another as no one is perfect. Life is a continuous process of learning.

I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to be a Sai Vikas teacher. I find the experience stimulating and enriching.

(From the Sathya Sai News Letter of Fiji)

Aspirants for mental peace have to reduce the luggage they have to care for; the more the luggage, the greater the bother. Objective possessions and subjective desires, both are

and without free movement of fresh air, it will be stuffy and suffocating. The human body too is a house; do not allow it to be cluttered up with curios, trinkets, trash, and superfluous furnishings. Let the breeze of holiness blow as it will through it; let not the darkness of blind ignorance desecrate it. Life is a bridge over the sea of change, pass over it, but, do not build a house on it.

—Baba

THE STUDY OF MANKIND: II

Back to the Source

"Had we a science with the courage and authority to concern itself with mankind, instead of with the mere mechanism of vital phenomena, had we something of the nature of an anthropology, or a psychology, these matters of fact would be familiar to everyone."
(*'Steppenwolf'* Herman Hesse)

The deepest and most comprehensive insights in recorded world culture into the nature of the *psyche*—of soul or spirit—appear to be found in the broad Vedantic tradition, and most particularly as this is again being illumined so thoroughly in practice and theory by Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba.

The exact distinctions between sensory, mental, spiritual and *Atmic* reality have been worked out somewhat differently in the different systems of Indian philosophy of varying epochs, from Sankhya to Buddhism. A central feature of all these teachings, evidently inspired directly or indirectly by the Vedas, are their *values*.

The role of evaluation

Explaining human behaviour only in terms of past-oriented theories such as those of evolution, of the unconscious or of social development is quite insufficient. To examine the conditions of life as facts is less than half the task, for *values* must also be accounted for. Values cannot simply be studied neutrally or in a scientifically 'value-free' manner without doing violence to their distinctive character.

The engaged evaluation of values in their influence on the actions of the growing individual and their importance in the many and varied cultures involved, must be the concern of any relevant future-oriented studies in the humanities.

Human values

The overall meaning of troubling to carry out any study must be that it is itself purposive and of value. It must lie in helping people to realise the positive values in their practical lives and in society. It is only from this sort of orientation that meaningful and coherent theories in the humanities can be developed to cope with the varying circumstances of culture and life. The

relevant by empirical and historical research.

They must be seen to be universally held precepts, though articulated differently in different cultures and situations, not some abstruse philosophy or closed ideology. Such a comprehensive system of overall common values is provided by the five cardinal human values' that Sathya Sai teaches.

The *psyche* is no object but precisely the subject that 'I' am. If one seeks the truth about it one must be prepared to make efforts oneself. However, practice must be informed by theory, which is itself improved through practice.

The practical purpose of such work is to provide a means to understanding ourselves as human beings, to help shape sound educational methods for our children and, not least, to guide those who would offer aid to mental sufferers of many kinds.

Attempts must always be made to formulate such insights in a contemporary form that makes them intelligible in the particular culture. For most Westerners an appropriate form must be developed, one which can also account for and illumine the mainstream beliefs of the era. Bearing that in mind, then, the perennial teachings can come to expression by renewing and vitalising the traditional disciplines of the humanities (or 'human sciences' if one insists).

Spiritual Psychology

The basic study of individual man as a whole entity can, for example, be called 'spiritual psychology', so as to distinguish it from other types of psychology and different branches of the humanities besides. It must be unbiased as to religion, race, class and so forth. The great world teachings on human nature as exemplified and renewed most recently by Baba provide us with the integral approach required for any such organised discipline.

Its studies would be in a conceptual framework and in terms that are clear and otherwise acceptable both to trained therapeutics or other workers in psychology and to parents or informed laymen.

The term *psyche*, for example, is taken in a sense akin to ancient and traditional ways of understanding the soul, such as in various theologies of the introspective sort and as encountered in much of world culture and literature, not excluding what have often been grossly misnamed 'primitive' cultures.

Here follow some themes as example of how Sathya Sai's teachings at the universal level may be applied in the context of Western thought. They are psyche, mental structure, environment, conscious and subconscious activity and self-observation. Many others can be developed.

The *psyche* is multi-faceted, it's many aspects being witnessed by consciousness in such a way that it has a consistency and continuity of awareness that enable it to be integrated. This integrity or unity of the *psyche* is expressed as normal personal identity. An important area of spiritual psychology would clearly be the systematic study of the development of a stable, happy personality (i.e. of character) and the outward and inner conditions under which this is achieved, hindered or destroyed. This subject also naturally includes understanding of how or why egoism develops as well as to what it leads.

Mental structures

The mind is ordinarily 'programmed' much of the time. This means that it is made up of patterns of memory and associations of ideas and that it has formed habitual ways of seeing, hearing or sensing things. These patterns are often largely pre-set in that they are learned and have often become ingrained at an early age. Where a person is not fully aware of them, such patterns or configurations tend to sustain themselves as negative thoughts or 'neuroses'. Many personal and social problems arise from such unreflective responses that need re-modeling so as to cope positively with changing circumstances and relationships.

Environmental influence

Habits of mind are often very intricate and are always somehow individual, but they are nonetheless strongly influenced or conditioned by the family and social environment. The mind has the *tendency* to respond according to rules or within given limits expressing both inborn and acquired traits, all of which are themes for observation and general theory. When enough is known of the circumstances in each case, studies in modern psychology already sometimes achieve fruitful explanation of them. Yet the role of human values in learning processes is mostly overlooked.

Subconscious and conscious activities

For a large number of circumstances, unthinking reliance on mind-patterning is necessary and effective, such as in practical life and work activities, in sport, music and so on.

At a high level of mental operation -the mind freely organises and evaluates quantities of information. It organises, compares and weighs situations of greatly differing qualitative contents against memory and one's personal principles etc. One form that patterning takes we call 'rational'. To do what is reasonable is also to follow a mental configuration. What is widely regarded as reasonable is very often not rational in the strict sense of following logically from certain premises. It may rather be doing what one has learned, mostly from the example or advice of others. Just what one learns is therefore a crucial matter in life. It also leads to what one subsequently teaches.

Self-observation

Many events that influence us may be perceived subconsciously having become an 'automatic' process, or else by conscious evaluation, for example when one sees alternative possibilities.

In deep reflection or contemplation one can learn to observe and evaluate one's own perceptions of a situation and one's immediate mental responses to it. This amounts to recognising one's own habitual responses, a necessary first step in gradually controlling or altering the set patterns. New and better ways of understanding and interpreting people and events can result. Unwanted configurations are reformed and one is gradually no longer controlled by one's mind, but becomes more fully the user.

This process of progressively freeing oneself from the bounds and bonds set by background and environment is possible because of one overriding truth: that *in essence we are nothing but Universal Consciousness*. Our temporal *existence* (i.e. our presence as persons incarnated in bodies in a material and social environment) is not the fundamental reality, for it lies instead in our transcendental *essence*. Many names have been given to that essential Reality, such as Universal Consciousness, the Eternal Soul, the *Atma*, the Selfless Self, the Overself and so on *ad inf.*

Can we only know of this essence through what realised persons tell or what scriptures reveal? Firstly, reason itself—when finding the relevant facts to start from and when taken far enough—shows us the necessity of this essential Consciousness.

Starting from the facts of self-observation we see that we are conscious of various types of phenomena, from the material and bodily to those of the mind, intelligence and spirit. Whatever the 'object' of which we are aware, our consciousness receives its imprint, so to say, much as wax receives that of a seal. Consciousness has no difficulty in 'taking in' any number of unrelated forms or objects, whether real or imaginary. So our consciousness can be said to be *formed* by whatever it is presented with, but only temporarily so.

Consciousness as the formless

Yet what form, one may ask, does this consciousness (which is variously 'formed' or informed by its varied objects) itself possess? The only answer must surely be that, because it is capable of taking on any form, it must itself be *formless* in essence. It is not in existence but nonetheless it is. In these terms it would be referred to as fundamental Being, rather than temporal Existence.

We witness existence in its many material and mental shapes and forms by virtue of this unformed, universal awareness that we are. Yet this Being remains the indeterminable and unchanging essence of inner self.

Hislop: Swami says, "The heart is the reflection of the Atma." And also that "the heart is the best mirror for reflecting truth." What is the heart) What does Swami refer to?

Sai: Heart is the Consciousness. (Conversations ...P. 117, by J. Hislop)

devotional opening of the heart (*bhakti*) run together. Consciousness is identified with the heart. Thinking extends the mental range but does not itself expand inner awareness. Through opening up to the fact of our universal identity with all creation, the intensity of being expresses itself as love, from which Consciousness is inseparable. Mental activity alone is insufficient of itself to motivate us to action. Restless though it is, thought is static compared to universal love (*Prema*), which is ecstatic.

To the same extent that we have any realisation of this Consciousness as true self, as all embracing and as that which alone is in essence, to that extent we are in a position to understand whatever can (and what cannot) be known of the whole of existence. The Avatar helps us in many ways to realise more and more how this Consciousness is the source of and is itself truth, love and peace. Again we are reminded of the eternal goal: *Satchitananda (Truth-Being-Bliss)*.

—**Robert Priddy, Oslo**

The first part of this article appeared' in our issue of January, 1989

"Awaken the Divinity within Us"

"Our goal is to awaken the Divinity within ourselves and to serve our fellow men and women so that they also will aspire to realise the same Divine Heritage that the Lord God has bestowed upon all men and women from the beginning of time," observed Dr. Michael Goldstein, addressing the inaugural meeting of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Council of Latin American Nations at Buenos Aires in July.

During July 22 to July 25, 1988, a conference of all Sai Organizations in Latin America (Central and South America) was held near Buenos Aires, Argentina, at Via Marista Catholic Monastery. The conference was presided over by Dr. Michael Goldstein, Central Coordinator for Region I-Latin America, and attended by 234 delegates from nine Latin American countries with observers from Spain. There are at present 57 Sai Centres and 42 Sai Groups in 15 different Latin American Countries with Coordinating Committees in Mexico, El Salvador, Argentina, and Venezuela.

The purpose of the conference was to affirm the Unity of all Sri Sathya Sai Organizations and to establish a Central Council of all Sri Sathya Sai Latin American Organizations. With the unanimous consent of the delegates, Dr. Goldstein appointed the members of the Central Council: Lic. Leonardo Gutter, President, Dr. Luis Muniz, Coordinator of publication, Mrs. Monica Socolovsky de Zalzman, Coordinator of devotion, Dr. Daniel Coifman, Coordinator of education, Mr. John Behner, Coordinator of service, and Mrs. Gail Muniz, Mrs. Rosita Behner, Mr. Ugo Baldi, Mr. Alberto Vasconcelos, and Mrs. Ana Elena de Fernandez as members.

clarify and define the Sai Programmes and to establish the uniformity of excellence and purity that must characterize any group or programme bearing the name of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. 2. To give proper accreditation to all genuine Latin American Sai Centres and to develop a plan for maintaining proper supervision and rendering appropriate assistance to all Sai Centres in Latin America. 3. To develop a plan to translate and publish all of the Divine writings of Bhagavan Baba into the Spanish language which have not yet been translated. 4. To establish a Sri Sathya Sai Journal of Latin America in order to enhance communication and cooperation among the members of the Latin American Sai Community.

In the course of his inaugural address, Dr. Goldstein said: We are not here to create a new religion or cult. Our religion is selfless love and the eternal truth that is the real basis of all religions. Our church is the whole world. Our congregation is all of humanity. Our Holy Scriptures are the Scriptures of all religions and the sacred writings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Bhagavan Baba tells us quite simply, "LOVE GOD, FEAR SIN, OBSERVE MORALITY IN SOCIETY!" How do we love God? Since Bhagavan is the Divine Incarnation, we can find the answer by analyzing our feelings toward Him. On a superficial level, we are delighted with Bhagavan Baba's beautiful Form, and enchanted by His Divine Personality. Is this not love? Yes it is, but it is not sufficient. On a deeper level, we are inspired by the noble words and deeds of Bhagavan Baba, and we aspire to emulate His heroic actions. Swami is the epitome of nobility, austerity, and virtue and He acts to alleviate the suffering of mankind and to restore righteousness in the world. We, His devotees, want to be as He is and to act as He acts. Is this not love? Yes, it is love, but it is still not enough. On the ultimate level, we recognize that the Lord God, in the Human Form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Baba, is the embodiment of the highest, noblest, and truest aspect of ourselves. We turn our minds inward, and we see the Divine Light of Truth and Love. We understand that this, our spiritual heart, is our true identity, and that it is one with the Lord. The duality of God with ourselves ceases to exist. We merge in the Lord. We must strive to love God in this manner.

We must control our minds so that we may strengthen the inner voice of conscience, the reflection of the Divine within us. We do this through our sadhana. Bhajan, meditation, repetition of the Lord's Names, recitation of mantras, study of the Divine writings, selfless service to our fellow man, all serve to help us control our minds that we may attain higher levels of consciousness.

We must let the activity of the mind be reviewed and evaluated by the higher intelligence, the conscience, which emanates from the God within ourselves. If a thought enters our minds and it is unworthy, we must discard it. If a thought enters our minds, and it is noble, pure, and practical, we must act upon it without procrastination. In this manner, our thoughts, words, and deeds will become consistent.

Divinity within them. This is the meaning of the BROTHERHOOD OF MAN AND THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD!

We devote all of our thoughts, words, and deeds to the Lord. We recognize that the Lord is the doer and that we are the observer. As we observe our actions, which become increasingly compatible with Divine Will, we learn and we progress spiritually. We become instruments of Divine Will. Then, in the end, the observer merges with the doer, and there is no longer duality.

Through faith in God, intense yearning to know Him, self-confidence, diligent and sincere practice of our sadhana, and selfless service to our fellow man, we will contact and become one with our Divine identity. We must listen to the inner voice, speak with the inner voice, and act upon the inner voice. This is the Message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Following the conference, a public meeting was held in Buenos Aires on July 26. The public meeting was sponsored by the Sri Sathya Sai Foundation of Argentina. The programme, a spiritual drama entitled "Who Am I?" demonstrated, in the form of a musical drama, the nature of man, His Divine Essence, and the Divine Purpose of Human Life, as taught by Bhagavan Baba. The actors were famous personalities in South America, who, while not Sai devotees, nevertheless subscribed to the ideals represented by the Divine Message of Bhagavan Baba. The stadium was filled by thousands of people and many were unable to attend due to lack of space.

On October 8 and 9, a conference of all Sai Centres in Venezuela was held at Caracas. More than 500 Sai devotees attended and Dr. Michael Goldstein, Leonardo Gutter, and John Behner, with the unanimous consent of the delegates from Venezuela, appointed a Coordinating Committee for the Venezuelan Sai Organization.

"Universal Appeal of Sai Message"

Sir Timoci Tuivaga, Chief Justice of Fiji, in the course of a message to the Sathya Sai Organisation in Fiji, on the occasion of the celebration of Bhagavan Baba's sixty-third birthday, said:

It is with considerable humility that I approach this task of writing a message on the occasion of the 63rd birthday of the God-Man Sri Sathya Sai Baba. To millions of His devotees worldwide, He is Bhagavan or an incarnation. While some may dispute this claim to Avatarhood, His life and message, nevertheless, have a universal appeal, extremely relevant to modern times and conditions.

The five pillars of His teachings are: Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Righteousness), Shanti (Peace), Prema (Love) and Ahimsa (Non-violence). These teachings are not different from those of Lord Jesus Christ or the Holy Prophet Mohammed and others.

mere precept. If all of us try to emulate the great ideals set by this great spiritual personality, there will be truth, righteousness, peace, love and tranquility in the strife-torn world. Let us all, therefore, hearken to the message of this great spiritual teacher and ensure for ourselves and coming generations a just and equitable life founded on love, mutual trust and universal brotherhood.

Animating the Idol

Swami, in one of His discourses, related the story of a student who worshipped in turn the pictures of Saraswati, Gayatri and Rama to be successful in examinations and removed them when he did not fare well in them. Finally he installed a picture of Baba and lit the joss-stick before it. He noticed that the smoke from the joss-stick was curling towards the cupboard in which the rejected pictures had been kept. Provoked by the feeling that the incense was reaching the deities who had let him down, he took three pieces of cloth and covered the noses of the deities with them so that they would not benefit from the incense. Immediately, he had a vision of the three deities standing before him. When he asked how they could appear when he had put them away, he was told that when he worshipped them he had regarded them as mere figures. But when he sought to bind their nostrils to prevent them from taking in the incense, he had treated them as live entities. It was this that made the deities appear before him. They told him: "When you worship us as real live entities, we reveal ourselves to you."

The inner meaning of this story, Swami said, is that the forms of the Divine are endowed with life and are not inanimate objects. Even in the apparently inanimate images, the Divine exists. The Divine is immanent in all things. But, for man the most accessible form is the human form. Hence the Divine should be adored in the human form. All the forms worshipped from ancient times—like Rama and Krishna—are human incarnations.

PRASANTHI CHRISTMAS:

An Australian Scientist's Experience

As one of many "foreigners" present (of course, there are no foreigners, as we are all brothers) my first Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam was an unforgettable experience.

Here was I, on my second visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, still trying to reconcile the fruits of a lifetime working as a scientist with my urge towards acceptance of, and surrender to the claims of Baba's Divinity, Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence.

discovered in the process that Baba's teachings found echoes in some new conclusions of modern physics. But I was still confronted with the big questions—"Who is Baba, and who am I?"

My experience of Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam changed all that I such experiences (as opposed to book-learning) are the way life teaches us about Truth.

The spell of the Nilayam

To come to Prasanthi Nilayam is to fall under a spell, the spell of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, that is, in other words, to surrender to Him in realization of the ageless truth of His message, which we experience fully for ourselves in the atmosphere of service, emanating from Swami, at Prasanthi Nilayam. That service to man is service to God cannot be doubted when one experiences the courtesy of, say, the canteen staff who patiently provide for the needs of thousands of people, untiringly, day after day and year after year (and there are no strikes at Prasanthi Nilayam).

Perhaps even more impressive is the experience of seeing one's temporary neighbours, and, yes, oneself, becoming increasingly aware of the ever-present need for altruistic service by each member of the human race to every other member, without which the race would surely wither and die.

All of this adds up to an experience upon which one can base a surely founded conclusion. Without that experience, one is merely theorizing. With the experience comes a sure conviction of the absolute necessity that Baba so emphasizes, and which was also stated by another great teacher nearly 2000 years ago in the words "Love one another as the Father has loved you."

In this spirit, the traditional Nativity play was produced by the "foreigners" and was brought up-to-date by the inclusion of the story of Swami's own birth in his present form. A dramatic and charming production with young devotees taking all stage parts, it underlined well the theme of Christmas and the peace which is spreading from Prasanthi Nilayam in an ever strengthening wave, by the growing realization of men and women that inner peace is the basis of a happy life and of realization of God in Self.

Inner and outer peace

The concourse of thousands of people to celebrate Christmas with Baba produces an atmosphere unique for the westerner. Peace, both outer and inner, is the keynote. By experiencing and absorbing the abundant goodwill which is present one is naturally led towards inner peace.

Of all these personal experiences the most important of all was, of course, the experience of Swami. I saw, at first hand, Baba's warmth and gentleness, His never-ending patience, (and His firm discipline when it was necessary). I saw what He means when He says "My life is My message." I saw His increasing and untiring dedication to helping all humanity, rich and poor, high and low. I saw the absolute devotion He inspired, both in the workers at Prasanthi Nilayam and the visitors who sat in the prayer hall compound day after day. I saw the brotherhood which

different race, language and background faith living together in a beautiful peace and harmony, often under stressful conditions due to the crowds, all purposefully and positively practising the words of Baba that we are all one.

Above all, I saw Baba's devotion to the cause of leading all humanity towards a saner and happier way of life than is led by many of us today, and pointing towards "Salvation". I saw His single-minded purpose to instill truth, righteousness, peace and love into an oft-errant human race.

Thus I found my answers and my peace this Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam Baba is us, and we are Him. God and man interpenetrate and are at once complementary and integrated. All is One, and universal recognition of that fact will bring peace to men of goodwill.

—*Lester Soden, Adelaide, South Australia*

STUDENTS' CORNER:

The Divine Alchemist

As I sat in the darshan line, reading a Bal Vikas Children's Magazine, a beautiful translation of a poem often sung by Bhagavan Baba attracted my attention. Its title was: "I know the Hold". It ran as follows:

*You know the hand; I
know the hold
You prayed for something good
I overheard it.
Be praying, don't stop
Until you get the boon.
At your persistence
I may yield at last.*

*You asked for something in your heart,
I know it.
Ask either this or that,
But never give Me up
To give up half-way
Is no devotion at all.*

Soon my thoughts went back to events that had gone by and I began to recall how my parents were first transformed into Baba's devotees by His own subtle ways. Under His Divine influence, we realise our errors and give up all our undesirable habits like smoking, drinking,

with the discarding of bad thoughts and practices.

My parents, after having met many Sai devotees, went to the abode of Baba—Prasanthi Nilayam—in 1975. Here, they not only experienced inner bliss but also found that Baba had planned something rare and precious for them. Baba chose me for the Ooty school in Standard I. As I left for Ooty in the year 1978, my elder sister too was eager to join His school. Every day she prayed and cried before Baba's picture at our altar. Baba, out of His Divine compassion, chose my elder sister the very same year. Baba told her to join the Ooty school in Standard III. Baba knew the hold, for she "prayed for something good". So often we hear Baba saying, "If you shed one tear for me, I shall wipe away a thousand tears of yours." Baba gave her admission after interviewing her Himself. He questioned her and blessed her by saying, 'Bangaru' (Gold). Then He chose my youngest sister also for Ooty school after two years. She was admitted in the III Standard.

When I try to reflect on the events of those precious years that have gone by, the days when I used to talk and play with Baba almost every day, my heart is filled with unspeakable bliss. I remember Baba throwing laddus, sweets, chewing gum, etc. to the children with such love. He taught us bhajans, songs, and many other things.

I remember once our school was to present a cultural programme in the Poornachandra Hall for Baba's birthday, 1978. With full devotion, love and enthusiasm, we had prepared very well for the function, including a few devotional songs to be sung at the end of the programme. My parents had come for the function. My mother was sitting in the second row on the ladies' side. She was filled with joy when she saw her children acting on the stage. But she also prayed that Baba should do something to transform me since I was known to be mischievous. After we sang the devotional songs, Baba, being very happy with our performance, came up to the stage to let Himself be photographed with us. He came right up to me (standing in the second line) and put His Divine transforming hands on my shoulders. I showed no movement, but my mother, who was sitting in the auditorium, was deeply moved and her eyes were filled with tears of joy. She didn't know how to thank Baba. My father and my brother too were filled with joy and could only express their gratefulness to Baba. After that Baba gave us prizes and blessed each one of us.

My mother had asked "for something in her heart," Baba had overheard it. He knew it, and "He yielded at last." My mother felt supremely blessed. She really felt that she need no longer worry about her children, for she had the faith that they would become real gold (Bangaru) by the Divine touch of Bhagavan Baba. In fact, from that moment onwards I became *a* transformed girl.

The more I try to unravel my past life with Baba, I am conscious of a single overruling power—BABA. Behind everything He stands as the source, the Hand.

—*Sarmishta Sahoo, Class XII,*

On quiet paths beside the river I walked my dog in the early morning. All around me beauty and Baba's presence. Surrounded with love and filled with His Glory I found myself singing—words and melody flowing together. Although not knowing one note of music from another, I had made a bhajan for Baba.

We went to India and I took a letter for Swami, "Here are the words of a bhajan I wrote for you—there is also the music but I don't know how to write it."

At our first Darshan at Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami passed me by; at our second unbelievably we were given an interview.

I sat holding my letters in my lap and Swami leaned forward and took them from me. He asked me my name and repeated it after me. Now I know that He knows my name and everything about me—but, what a precious gift He gave me. In my quiet times, I have the joy of reliving that moment when Baba said my name.

Our group met that evening as usual for prayer and meditation. I told them about my bhajan. They asked me to sing it and they all liked it. Then one of them made me completely happy by offering to write the music.

The next day we were told that Baba has said we can sing in the Mandir on the following Thursday. My heart nearly leapt out of my body. Would it—could it be possible that we could sing my song? But of course not—it was too much to hope for and in my case the programme had already been arranged. But some one spoke about it and then they came to me. Had I got the words? —Yes. I had also got the music. The choirmaster liked it and, yes, we would, sing it for Baba.

Many gruelling hours of practice followed and then it was Thursday. How lovely it was inside the Mandir and there was our beloved Swami smiling and welcoming us all. He looked so beautiful. I shall remember always the joy of being, so close to Him and experiencing the love and light that flowed from Him. He spoke to several of those in the front row, (I was in the second), and then He, came tome. I was so overpowered. I just didn't hear His first remark but those about me did. He said, "You can sing; too." Then He said, and this I heard, "very happy". And so I felt He was aware that my song was going to be sung and He was very happy that I was among those who were going to sing it.

We sang our hearts out for Swami and, oh, the thrill of seeing Him a few paces away sitting in His chair beating time to our music and obviously enjoying it all. It was a truly wonderful experience and looking back I can hardly believe that it happened but it did and all through Baba's Grace.

—Pat Hathaway

From the quarterly magazine of the Sathya Sai Baba Centre, Hatfield, U.K.

Every visitor to Prasanthi Nilayam cannot but be thrilled when he listens to the Omkar recited twenty-one times in the early hours of the morning in unison by the hundreds of devotees assembled in the Prasanthi Mandir. It sets up intense vibrations in the innermost being of our self. 'Aum'—the Pranava, is a symbol sacred to the followers of Hindu religion as well as to those of other major religions like Buddhism and Jainism, which originated in this land of Bharat. Even the sacred Gayatri is considered as the elaboration of the Pranava. Almost all the major Upanishads speak of the importance of Pranava. The whole of the Mandukya Upanishad is devoted to the explanation of the significance of Pranava. The Taittiriya Upanishad says, it is the name and symbol of Brahman—'Om iti Brahma'. The Chandogya Upanishad deduces everything from 'Aum', both the personal God and the unmanifested Brahman. In the Kathopanishad Lord Yama tells Nachiketa that 'Aum' is the goal which all Vedas proclaim and which all Tapas aims at.

Our scriptures abound in descriptions stressing the importance of Aum and explaining its significance. Swami says, "Omkar is as important to the world as is the engine to a train. It is the life-sustaining force. When a temple is built and the Idol is installed, and Prana-Pratishtha is done by installing the Sri Chakra at the base of the Idol, it is believed that life is instilled into the Idol to make it 'living God'. The Omkar is the life force of the Sri Chakra and it enlivens and divinises the otherwise inert and insentient Idols. Omkar is thus the foundation of all divine powers."

Primordial sound

This Aum is the cosmic sound ceaselessly going on as the primordial creative force of Brahman. Hence, it is equated with Brahman. Itself and referred to as "Shabdabrahmam" or "Nadabrahmam". The Yogasikshohanishad says, "Aksharam paramo naada Sabdabrahmeti Kathyathe"—"the indestructible transcendental sound is known as Shabdabrahmam."

The significance of this cosmic sound is explained by Swami thus: "Every little movement or incident results in sound; only you may not be able to hear it because the range of your ear is limited. The falling of the eyelid over the eye makes a sound; the dropping of the dew on the petal makes a sound. Any little agitation disturbing calm is bound to produce sound. Omkar signifies the original primordial sound. Every action is followed by or gives rise to vibrations which produce sound. Om is the primal sound that emanates from creation. Sound also generates movements. Thus the sound caused by creation also gave rise to movement of the earth and all movement in the cosmos." The drum, damaru, held in the upper right hand of the cosmic dancer, Nataraja, symbolises this primal sound of creation. Not only everything in creation is permeated by this sound but creation itself flows from this sound. As a Buddhist Lama said, "Each atom perpetually sings its song and the sound at every movement creates dense and subtle forms."

Science and the scriptures

Modern physics characterises subatomic particles as energy waves and according to its field theory, each particle perpetually 'sings its song' producing 'dense and subtle forms'. The

sound coming from all directions. Science also corroborates the scriptural view that creation of matter originated from sound. The Big Bang which preceded creation generated besides heat and light, an enormous sound. When the vibration of the primordial energy exceeded the velocity of sound, condensation into matter took place. This sound is said to still vibrate through the universe and perhaps continue to create new matter in space. It is "the anahata-dhwani" as Swami says, "the primal sound, the undistinguished, indistinguishable sound emanating without effort, irrespective of the conscious will."

As beats on a string, all letters and sounds are strung on the Pranava. It is considered as a Beeja-akshara, the seed of all sounds. According to Swami, "Sound is present everywhere. All the sounds are related and connected in some way with one another. All other sounds are variations of the primordial sound. They are vikaras." This applies to the human voice also. The spoken word distinguishes man from all other animals and music is considered as the highest achievement of human voice and is an elaborate modification of the sound 'Aum'. Om is the essence of all Saamans (Vedic hymns) according to the Taittiriya Upanishad. The same is asserted by the Chandogya Upanishad: "Saamna udgeetho rasah."

SYMBOL OF THE ABSOLUTE

The meaning of the word 'Aum' is elaborated in many scriptures. Though it is equated with Brahman, it is not the goal by itself. It is meant to point out something beyond. When we utter any name, it brings to our mind the named object. A word and its meaning are inseparable. Aum is such a word and the only thought that follows its utterance is God and it cannot refer to any other entity except God. Here one is reminded of the opening lines of the Gospel according to St. John: "The Word was with God and the Word was God." Why did the ancient seers select the Pranava as the symbol to indicate the Absolute? In their intuitive mind, they conceived that Aakasa and Prana, space and energy, are intimately related to sound. When they wanted to give expression to the universal, they had to decide upon something universal and the sound 'Aum' qualified for this universality. The first of the guttural sounds which man can utter, 'A', significantly forms the first letter of all languages of the world. As the Tamil saint-poet Thiruvalluvar says, "akara mudal ezhuthellaam aadi Bhagavan mudattre ulagu"—"as the letter 'A' forms the beginning of all letters of the alphabet, the world begins with God." This first sound united with the second lingual sound 'U' and the third labial sound 'M' represents the combination of all sounds that the voice apparatus of man can possibly utter. Thus Pranava acquires its universality. The ancients did not stop with this. While the uttered Omkar represented the Brahman immanent in creation, the unuttered soundless silence into which the Pranava merges finally, the amaatra aspect of it, was postulated to represent the transcendental aspect of Brahman.

Manifold significance

The significance attached to Omkar and the three sounds that constitute it are many and varied. They include the Jagrata-waking, Swapna-dream and Sushupti-deep sleep states besides identification with creation, sustenance and dissolution of the universe. The amaatra aspect is equated with the Turiya state where the consciousness merges into awareness. The Mandukya

the fourth aspect is that which is immeasurable, which cannot be spoken of, into which the universe resolved, the One Existence into which all merge. The Tantriks equate 'Aum' with the seven chakras, the bindu or point being referred to as the Brahmarandhra of Sahasrara. 'Aum' is also considered as the subtle form of 'Soham', the ajapa (unspoken) mantra which goes on unconsciously with every breath.

Our scriptures advocate Aum as the object of meditation since its repetition brings about concentration. The Amritabindu Upanishad says:

svarena sandhayedyogamasvaram bhaavayetparam
asvarenaanubhaavena bhaavo vaa'bhaava idyate

One should practise meditation on Aum first through its letters, then meditation without regard to its letters. Finally with this latter form of meditation when realisation is achieved, the idea of world with name and form disappears and Brahman alone remains. The Mandukya Upanishad portrays this meditation with the beautiful analogy of the Aum as the bow, the self as the arrow and Brahman as the target. By this meditation when the arrow finally hits the target the individual self merges with the universal Self.

Swami in His inimitable way declares, "The best upadesha is Pranava, the sacred syllable which summarises the many principles of theology, philosophy and mysticism. Little children just learning to toddle about are given a three wheeled contraption which they push forward holding on to the cross bar. The Om is such a vehicle for the spiritual child. The three wheels are A, U, and M, the three components of the mantra." No wonder when a toddler seeking aksharaabhyasa—initiation into the three R's—stretches out a little hand holding a slate, Bhagavan writes on it Om as the first lesson

—**M. B.**

The Power of Music

No man can escape the influence of the pollution of the air he breathes. The sounds that we produce, with good intent or bad, spread throughout the air around us. This is our daily experience. The sounds produced at radio stations pass through the atmosphere and reach our homes when we tune in. The vibrations travel vast distances and affect the nature of those who inhale them.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

It is hard to appreciate the importance of music and singing as a teaching device in moral and value education, until we fully realize how significant sound is to the basic make-up of the world around us.

is not so hard to imagine when 20th century scientists explain that all matter, however dense, can be broken down into smaller and smaller particles which are no more than vibrations, and what is sound other than vibration in a medium like air or water?

Children growing up today, especially those in urban areas, are subject to almost incessant noise. The jarring sound of traffic, the banging and crashing of construction, the whirring of machinery, loudspeakers and so on; the list is endless. Country children are more fortunate for they are surrounded by the harmonious sounds of nature. With the rapid encroachment of the media such as radio, television, videos and films, however, most people's everyday consciousness is disturbed by loud and harsh noise pollution that promotes restlessness and violence.

It is a curious feature of modern history that the increased use of dissonance in Western music, dating from about the time of Richard Wagner roughly coincides with the rapid increase in the social and moral breakdown of society.

There are many stories from ancient times in both Eastern and Western traditions, claiming the almost magical powers of music. India is full of legends of musicians so skilled in their art, that by singing certain notes to a point of perfection they could light a lamp or make rain fall at will.

Music and plants

Though the Indians of the subcontinent, both ancient and modern, appear to have been the first to produce a significant effect on plants with music and sound, they are by no means the only ones. In Wisconsin in the U.S.A., a florist, Arthur Locker, began piping music into his greenhouses in the late 1950s. The difference he observed in flower production before and after the broadcasts was sufficiently marked to convince Locker that music powerfully contributed to horticulture. "My plants grew straighter, germinated quicker, bloomed more abundantly," he said. "The colours of the flowers were more striking to the eye, and the blooms lasted longer than usual."

The experiments conducted both in India and America show quite clearly that music, sound and vibrations have significant effects on the vegetable kingdom. So what effect does music have on humans? H. A. Lingerman, teacher, minister and counsellor, has been doing careful research over the last twenty years on the effect music has had on his students and patients. In his book "The Healing Energies of Music," he gives countless examples of how different types of music help to heal physical, mental and emotional disorders.

Effects on children

Let us summarize some of the benefits music can confer on the child. According to H. A. Lingerman music can

- Increase physical vitality, relieve fatigue and inertia.

- Pierce through moods, calm anxiety and tensions, uplift feelings.
- Focus thinking, clarify goals, foster courage.
- Stimulate creativity and sensitivity.
- Strengthen character and constructive behaviour.
- Expand consciousness of spiritual attunement."

Music can be introduced into the classroom in many different ways. If we agree with the theory that sound and music have a profound effect on the human organism, we must also admit that the music to which the majority of youngsters are exposed nowadays is not the positive kind. Apart from the loud rock music most children listen to, they are also exposed to many other harsh and abrupt noises just living in the modern world. To cultivate equanimity within children, playing melodious and beautiful music for short periods during class is very beneficial. One technique which is highly successful especially with young children, is to play a piece of music, preferably classical or semi-classical, whilst the children are sitting or lying down with their eyes closed. The teacher can "lead" the students through the music in the form of an imaginative walk in nature for instance. At other times the children can listen freely and create their own images.

Group singing

Let us look at group singing, which is one of the five teaching devices in Human Values Education. Singing itself has many beneficial effects on the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development of the child.

Physically, singing promotes deep, rhythmical breathing which is good for the health. It also helps with physical discipline as one must sit or stand straight and still for the voice to open fully. Group singing teaches children to cooperate with each other and work together as a team.

On the mental level, singing develops concentration and strengthens the memory. It is so much easier to remember a set of values or a lesson which we set to music. Especially if the tune is melodious and "catchy", the song will continue to play through the mind long after the class is over, reinforcing the value that was taught.

On the emotional level, singing develops self-confidence. It helps the child-overcome shyness and inhibitions. Many children who hardly dare open their mouths to answer questions, forget themselves and sing loudly and joyfully as a group.

Spiritually, singing and music help develop intuition. To sing properly, there must be co-ordination of melody, words and rhythm which creates a sense of balance and harmony within the personality.

hard to find a child anywhere in the world who does not enjoy singing.

—**Lorraine Burrows, Bangkok, Thailand**

So long as you are in Avidya, so long as you are untrained and ignorant, you cannot taste the Bliss; you cannot; attain it. You are still bound by the three-corded rope—the black cord of Tamas, the red cord of Rajas and the white cord of Satwa. Hence, regulate your life in such a way that you do not harm your inner nature. That is to say, live in the constant contemplation of your kinship with others and with the Universe. Do good to others, treat all nature kindly, speak soft and sweet, become a child devoid of envy, hate and greed; when your ego crosses the threshold of your family or group and takes kindly to those beyond, you have taken the first step to cross the threshold of Maya.

—**Baba**

The Message of "Mirdad"

When Bhagavan went to Anantapur on January 19th to distribute prizes to the girl students of the Anantapur Campus of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, who had participated in the Sports and Cultural Meet at Prasanthi Nilayam, He witnessed a play entitled "Mirdad", staged by the girl students. The play was based on a dramatised version of Mikhail Naimy's famous work, "The Book of Mirdad" by Dr. P. Ramanand.

The theme of the play relates to the corruption that overtakes an avowedly spiritual institution—the Ark—when its chief is more concerned with the acquisition of wealth and power, and to the role of the divine reformer—Mirdad—in bringing about a radical change in the members of the institution. All the sets and costumes for the play—in which all the characters are males—were prepared by the students, who acquitted themselves well and brought home the profound message of the play to the audience.

Bhagavan was so much impressed with the play that He arranged for a repeat performance in the Institute Auditorium at Prasanthi Nilayam when a group of educationists and administrators from Haryana came to the Institute to study the working of Sathya Sai educational institutions. All the members of the group, besides a large number of devotees and students and staff of the Institute, who witnessed the play, were deeply impressed with the presentation of the theme and the excellence of the acting by the students.

The following passages from the play are reproduced from the final exhortation of Mirdad to a gathering of pilgrims who come to the monastery for its anniversary celebrations. In the context of Bhagavan Baba's mission and message, readers will recognise the contemporary relevance and significance of Mirdad's call to "the pilgrims":

Beloved pilgrims, what seek you of Mirdad?
Seek you from him a golden jewelled lamp
To decorate the Altar? But Mirdad is not
A goldsmith, nor is he a jeweller,
Albeit he is a Lighthouse and a Haven.

Or seek you light that you may freely walk
In your appointed paths and not stumble
along?

But of what avail is the eye that keeps the
foot

From stumbling in its path, but leaves
The yearning heart to stumble and to bleed
As it gropes blindly for a path? Of what
Avail is the light that overfills the eye,
Yet leaves the spirit void and unilluminated?
What seek you of Mirdad? If your clamour
Is to see your hearts and spirits bathed in
light,

You clamour not in vain. For my concern
Is with the spirit and the heart of Man...
What offerings have you brought unto this
day,
Which is a Day of glorious Overcoming?
Brought you here he-goats and rams and
bullocks
For sacrifice? How very cheap the price
You pay for your deliverance! Or, rather,
How very cheap the deliverance you seek
To buy! It is indeed most shameful for
A man of any honour to offer thus
A poor goat's blood in ransom for his own.

Know that each one of you is a flood, an ark,
And a commander. Till you reach the day
When you can safely disembark on to
A freshly washed and virgin earth, be not
In haste to celebrate your victory.

Would you know, O pilgrims, how it came
about
That Man became a flood unto himself?—

When Holy Omniwill clove Adam into
twain

That he might know himself and realise
His Oneness with the One, he then became
A male and a female—a he—Adam
And a she-Adam. Thus was he deluged
With desires, the offspring of Duality,
Desires so numerous, so profligate,
So infinite of hues, so prolific
And great in magnitude, that to this day
Man is a piteous derelict upon
Their stormy waves. No sooner does a wave
Lift him up to dizzy heights than another
Dashes him down to the very depths.

Images and likenesses of God Himself
Are you, but you have well-nigh blotted out
That glorious image and that noble likeness

Your countenance divine you have be-
smeared
With slimy mud and masked with clownish
masks.
Your godly stature you have dwarfed so
much
That you no longer see your real selves
In it. How then will you face that Flood of
Fire
Which you yourselves will soon unleash, my
waifs?

Again I say to you, you are the flood,
The ark and the commander. Your passions
Are the flood, your body is the ark. Your
faith
Is the commander. And penetrating all
Is your will. And hovering over all of them
Is your understanding. Make certain that
Your ark is fully staunch and sea-worthy,
But do not waste your life on that alone.
Burn out your passions ere they burn you
out.
Sift them not into good and bad, for that

Without the bad. The bad cannot strike root
Save in the good. The pap from which you suck
The milk of Life is the same that yields the milk
Of Death. The hand that rocks you in the cradle
Is the very hand that digs for you a grave.

That, my waifs, is the nature of Duality.
Be not so vain as to attempt to change
Its inherent nature. Be not so foolish
As to try to split it into halves—to keep
The half you like and throw the other out.

But would you be masters of Duality
And free yourselves from its stranglehold?
Then treat it as neither good nor evil.
Has not the milk of Life and Death turned sour
In your mouths? Is it not time you rinsed
Your mouths with something neither good
nor bad,
But surpassing both? Then pluck that tree—the tree
Of Good and Evil—out of your hearts,
That in its place the seed of Life Divine,
The seed of Holy Understanding,
Which is beyond all Good and Evil, may sprout
And grow into the tree of Life Everlasting...

A cheerless message is Mirdad's you will say,
It robs us of the sweet, delicious joy
Of waiting for the morrow. It makes us dumb
And listless witnesses in Life, whereas
We would be clamorous combatants in it,
So say you in your inmost hearts, I know,
Forgetting that your hearts are never yours
As long as all your good and evil passions

foremost
Possess your hearts again and keep them pure
By kneading all your passions, good and bad,
In the single trough of Love, and baking them
In the oven of Holy Understanding,
Where all Duality is unified in God.

And what is that, which when accorded you
By all the world, would help you ride your flood
And make you disembark upon an earth
Divorced from pain and death, and joined to heaven
In everlasting Love and Understanding?
Is it possessions, power, fame?
Authority, prestige and respect?
Ambition crowned and hope fulfilled?
Each one of them is but a fountainhead
Alas, which only nourishes your flood!
Away with them, my waifs, away with them!

All that the world can give you is a body—
An ark in which to sail upon the sea
Of life, your dual life. The universe
Is in duty bound to furnish it to you,
And to sustain it. But to keep it trim
And staunch to breast the flood, as trim and staunch
As Noah's Ark was, to leash the beasts therein
And have them well controlled, even as Noah
Controlled his beasts, and at the helm to have
A faith bright-eyed and wide awake, a faith
Unshaken in the Omniwill, which is
Your guide to Eden's shining portals, that
Is your business, yours alone. To have
A dauntless will for a commander, a will

Of Life, that is your work, yours alone.

God-bound is Man. No destiny short of that
Is ever worthy of his strides or pains.
What if the way be long, if it be strewn
With squalls and gales? Shall not true Faith

That is always pure of heart and keen of eye

Ship-builders and sailors are you all! For
that

Is the task assigned you from primordial
time

That you may sail upon the boundless
ocean,

Which is but yourselves, and find therein
The voiceless harmony whose name is
GOD.

***The passages published above are taken from the book, "Mirdad", published by Bharatiya
Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-7.***

The Hills of Puttaparthi

*Behold the rising sun unveil
The hills and valleys along its trail;
What splendour in a new day's birth,
In this remote part of the earth!*

*,Flowing along Puttaparthi
Is my Ganges, Chitravati;
Busy in selfless serving role,
She uplifts so many a soul.*

*Though sorrow dwells in every eye
During those seasons when she's dry,
In rainy months I watch her flow.
Joyfully with a silvery glow.*

*And in these hills of Puttaparthi
The Glory of Kailash I see,
And in humble reverence I kneel,
At the Divinity they reveal.*

*Though rocky in many a part,
Their Seva overwhelms my heart;
How they care with affection deep
For their inmates, awake or asleep.*

*Nature's work is only to give
So that others may happily live;
Nature reveals from earth to sky,
The Glory of the Ageless Sai.*

*Of all places, go east or west,
Puttaparthi by far is best;
What Wonder World for man awaits,
Within Prasanthi's Sacred Gates.*

*There, Time is told by Temple Bells
And water comes from holy wells,
And Earth, luckiest of planets nine,
Smiles at the Lord's Presence Divine.*

*What incredible fortune is ours
To offer ourselves as flowers,
To the Eternal Lotus Feet
And the Lord in Person to meet.*

—Chandrabhan Singh, South Africa

AVATAR VANI:

“Live in the Divine”

"Remember always that you have come here to experience sacred thoughts and to sanctify yourselves. You should observe the discipline of this place," observed Bhagavan Baba in the course of a discourse exclusively directed to devotees from overseas countries, on February 17th, in the Prasanthi Mandir.

Besides the hundreds of men and women devotees who filled the Mandir, a very large number had to sit outside for lack of space. Bhagavan spoke for an hour on various aspects of devotion. Referring to the fact that devotees from various countries lived in Prasanthi Nilayam as members of "the Sai family," Bhagavan said that this indicated "unity in diversity ". They should have this attitude wherever they might be.

In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

There are five requisites for developing true devotion. The first is Dedication (offering everything to God). Egoism is the bar to developing the spirit of dedication. It manifests itself in various forms of pride: pride of physical strength, intellectual pride, the arrogance of wealth, and the like. But as all these are impermanent and may be lost at any time, it is unwise to make the body, the mind or property the basis for one's conceit. Hence, egoism should be renounced as the first offering to God.

Next, Devotion should be regarded as an expression of gratitude to all that one receives from Providence—the air that we breathe, the light and heat that we get from the sun, the water we drink and the food we consume. All the essential necessities of life are got by the grace of God. The expression of gratitude through devotion is a primary obligation. All that is done by way of bhajans, japa, meditation and prayer must be done in a spirit of gratitude.

The third requisite is discipline. In almost every action in life, the recognised limits and regulations have to be observed. This applies equally to the spiritual field. You must observe discipline in matters relating to dress, your general behaviour outside the Mandir or during bhajans in the Mandir, the way you speak and the food you eat. All your actions should be filled with sanctity and purity.

Discrimination is the fourth requisite. Discrimination has to be used in every aspect of daily living—in what you see, what you listen to, what you speak, and what you consume. Avoid eating all kinds of food in strange places.

Last comes Determination. Without firm determination no great thing can be achieved in life. It is all the more needed in the spiritual field so that you may face all difficulties and obstacles and overcome them. You must hold fast to what you consider as good, what you regard as sacred and what you recognise as the truth. That is real penance.

True freedom

People in the West talk about freedom. What is this freedom? Does it mean acting as you please, doing what you like? Not at all. True freedom consists in keeping the senses under control. A man wants to drink. But he gets tipsy after a drink. What happens to his freedom? He has lost the little sense he had. Freedom does not consist in indulgence. Real freedom comes from realisation of the Self. The end of wisdom is freedom.

Of the different kinds of knowledge, that which really matters is the knowledge that is put into practice. All other knowledge is either verbal or pompous scholarship. When people are asked, "Where is God?" some give the reply, "He is everywhere." But these are mere words. No doubt the statement is correct. But how real is the answer to the persons concerned? Does it arise from their experience? The consciousness of the omnipresence of God should be based on the feeling that everything and every being is in God. You must feel the presence of God wherever you go, whatever you may do, whether you are eating or speaking or working. When you cultivate such an attitude that is the highest form of devotion. Look upon the body as a moving temple. Wherever you go, God is with you. Do not indulge in debates over what is God and where is God. God has to be experienced through faith and confidence. Where there is confidence, there is Love. Where there is Love, there is Peace. Where there is Peace, there is Truth. Where there is Truth, there is Bliss. Where there is Bliss, there is God.

Bliss is everywhere. The bliss that is in you is limited by your body-consciousness. You must extend that bliss and make it all-embracing. When a child is born, he is a lone individual. As he grows, he has wife and children. When the children get married, the kinships get wider. This widening of relationships occurs in a single family. You have to widen your outlook to cover the entire human family.

"The Sai family"

Here in Prasanthi Nilayam there are people from many countries. You have Italians, Australians, Indonesians, Americans, Argentineans, and people from scores of other countries. The countries from which they come are different. But they consider themselves as belonging to one family—the Sai family. This is an expression of unity in diversity. Human beings may be diverse, but God is one. The concept of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man should inspire your daily life.

You have all come from distant countries, at great expense and trouble. You do not seek any personal favours. You are not concerned even about your comforts. You are content if Swami talks to you or grants you an interview. Be steadfast in this attitude. Having come all the way, you must attend the bhajans, whether you are able to follow their meaning or not. Avoid strolling

outside the Nilayam. If the body wanders, the mind also wanders. Consider what a great waste it would be to wander away from the sacred atmosphere of Prasanthi Nilayam even for a moment. I am speaking out of concern for your good and your well-being. Remember always that you have come here to experience sacred thoughts and to sanctify your lives. You should observe the discipline of this place. You have to behave with decency and respect towards everyone. Self-realisation can be attained only through sacrifice. But some are not prepared to give up smoking or non-vegetarian food. If you cannot give up even small things which are undesirable, how are you going to develop the spirit of sacrifice?

The voice of conscience

When you go back to your respective countries, your conduct must be such that your countrymen have high regard for you. They should recognise the transformation wrought in you by your visit to Prasanthi Nilayam and seek to follow your example. When you constantly remind yourselves, "I am God," you develop Godly behaviour. Listen to your Inner Voice—the Voice of Conscience. Your conduct will then be spontaneously Godly.

It is because of your devotion and earnestness that you have come all the way here. You must make full use of your stay to realise your goal. Do not think only of the weeks and months you spend here. What matters is how you use your stay. Swami judges you not by quantity but by quality. To what extent you have transformed yourselves and advanced spiritually is all that matters. How far have you given up your old ways and practices? It may be cheaper to live in Puttaparthi than in your own country. But that does not mean you should spend money as you please. Misuse of money is evil. Don't waste money. Don't waste food. Food is God. Don't waste time, because time wasted is life wasted. Don't waste energy. Energy is wasted in idle talk and meaningless wanderings.

I know how deep is your devotion. Do not dissipate it by indulging in unbecoming activities. Conduct yourselves in such a way that it pleases Swami. Thereby you can earn the love and grace of Swami. When you are happy, I am happy. Remember that your goal is nothing less than realising, your inherent Divinity. It is difficult for any one to get an opportunity like this. Among the billions of people in the world, how many can come here to experience the Divine? You are among the blessed and fortunate few. Make the best use of this supreme good fortune and transform yourselves into godly persons and help to transform others. Be always happy. Share your joy with others. This is true spirituality. Remember: Love is God; live in Love. Truth is God; live in Truth. Bliss is God; live in Bliss. Be fearless. God is with you. When you go about with the conviction, "God is with me; I am in God," you will have no fear. I hope by acting in this way, you will spread peace and harmony in your respective countries.

Liberation

*Did lust come on to you,
With all its fire and might?*

*Remember, it is the mind in you
That brought the lust to sight.*

Fight that lustful thought and be free.

*Must anger darken your heart,
And weaken your soul part by part?
Remind the self that anger's seed
Resides in your own endless greed.
Fight the thoughts of anger and be free.*

*Must you for ever count on wealth,
And hold on dearly to tinsel and trash?
When you can't buy life from death,
Does wealth not leave you in just a flash?
Fight the thoughts of miserliness and be free.*

*Your ancestry is now just a last name.
There is no use chanting that for fame.
To you, kith and kin will soon become
unknown.
That verily is the truth well known.*

Fight the thoughts of 'I' and 'Mine' and be free.

*You spend a lot of time looking in to
mirrors,
Never caring to see your image in others.
Of what use is all this transient pride,
Clouded with life's finiteness on the side?
Fight the thoughts of pride and be free.*

*Has envy invaded your mind unseen
With its enveloping colour of green?
Know that it is but the envious thought
That made yourself distraught.
Fight the thoughts of envy and be free.*

*What is the source of thought?
Why do you think what you think?
Must you not become a hollowed flute,
For Him to breathe the Divine note?
Contemplate, meditate and be free.*

—Banoji Rao

**(From "Sat Vahini", published by the
Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Singapore.)**

Someone had a query: What does Bhagavan possess as His property? Swami answered, "Students are my property. I have no other property." His unspoken message was, "O! Dear children! I am doing so much for your sake. I need no gain or dread any loss. You are all Divine children of immortality. You have the capability to become Madhava, Master of Maya. Why do you love to be just funny little men?"

The agony is feigned by the Avatar to awaken our faith. If Swami sometimes feigns anger, that too is out of His love. He expresses sorrow and disappointment that all we students do not realize what we are missing. He has nothing but our highest good in His mind.

We all know that we are not supposed to talk in the auditorium or prayer hall or in the dining hall. But still we do it. Why? Because we are not conscious of our actions. One thing can help us to avoid such mistakes. We should always keep on thinking of Swami. We will always feel His presence. We will always feel that He is watching us. When Swami is watching us, we cannot do any mistakes. We will not do a thing which He will not like. Thus to some extent we can avoid our mistakes. We should also take a resolution that at least when we realize our mistake we will not repeat it.

We can often remind ourselves that, we are Swami's children. Swami says, "You come here for getting education. You will get a degree. I have not established this institution to help you to get a degree. That you can get anywhere else also. I long to give you something more than what any other college in the world can give you. I want to give you self-confidence—the realization of your inner Self."

Often we go to Parthi. Swami showers His love on us. Through His discourses He always tries to show us the right path. We also hear so many discourses of His! But how many of us and how far do we follow them? We are so near to Him, still we fail to reach Him.

Once the Lord said, "Beautiful flowers bloom in the pond: The frogs in the pond do not enjoy the fragrance and the nectar. They hop, leap and croak. Bees know the fragrance and the sweetness of the nectar. They come in swarms from afar. The frog uses the lotus only as a perch." Let us be like the 'bees' enjoying the nectar of Swami's Love.

Swami wants us to be His instruments. When we go out, we should project a picture of His teachings through our behaviour. Sai's instruments have so much to do. But when the instruments are not perfect, how can one use them? A blunt knife cannot be used to cut vegetables. It is of no use though it is called a 'knife'. We are just like blunt knives. Let us sharpen ourselves with discipline by following His teachings.

**—Anita Chandrakant Boga, II B.Sc., Anantapur Campus.
(From a talk given at a prayer meeting)**

the Divine, it will see all as God. It is foolish to try to shape the world. Shape yourself as the embodiment of Peace, Love and Reverence. Then, you will see all as Love and Compassion and Humility. Correct your vision, clarify your eyes, enable them to see God in every one; then, that awareness will transmute every word, thought and deed of yours into a benediction. Cleanse the heart, by listening to spiritual discourses, seeking the company and comradeship of the righteous, the simple, the sincere, the seekers, and by cultivating goodness of character and sweetness of disposition. Fill your hearts with the sweet fragrant waters of Prema (Love). Then, every act of yours, every word of yours will be sweet and fragrant.

—Baba

GURUDEVA VANI:

“Become Ideal Citizens”

In all countries of the world there are good and bad men, scholars and illiterates, the affluent and the destitute. The one thing that is common to all of them is their inner essence: Being, Awareness and Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda). All the scriptures have described the Divine as Sat-Chit-Ananda. Every object, every being and every individual in the phenomenal world have these triune attributes. But, in the inert objects only the first two—Sat and Chit (Being and Awareness)—can be recognised and not bliss. Only in animate beings can this quality be found manifest. This bliss, however, is of a transient nature.

There are two categories of bliss in the world: Acquired bliss (Sadhana-Janya Ananda) and Self-generating bliss (Swatas-siddha Ananda). Acquired bliss is associated with sensory objects. It arises and vanishes from time to time. It does not endure. For instance, when hunger is appeased, there is happiness for the moment. But it ceases after a time. This applies to all objects in the world. What is experienced when they are enjoyed is evanescent. This type of joy has been described as acquired or derived happiness. As it is got and lost by human effort, it is not true bliss.

Man, however, seeks lasting bliss (Ananda). He is, in fact, filled with bliss and is the embodiment of bliss. Bliss constitutes his very nature and being. It exists *sui generis* in him. Why, then, does he not experience it? This is because, even though he is the embodiment of bliss, unaware of his true nature he is obsessed with the external world and fails to experience the bliss within him. He imagines that the source of joy lies in Nature (the phenomenal world). This is wrong.

The bliss within

The bliss that is all-pervasive in the cosmos is also within man. But, as in the case of butter which is present in every drop of milk but which can be seen only after the milk is curdled and the buttermilk is churned, this inner bliss can be experienced only after the right effort is made.

one's true nature is ascertained that the divine Sat-Chit-Ananda inherent in one will be manifest.

Man today is conscious only of the reality of the physical (Annamaya) and vital (Pranamaya) principles relating to his existence. He has not developed even up to the stage of realising the significance of the mind. The body represents the physical (Annamaya). Activity and motion of the body are related to the vital (Pranamaya). The third element is the mental (Manomaya). The fourth is Vijnanamaya (Constant Integrated Awareness). Beyond this awareness is Ananda (the state of supreme bliss). In the great journey of life, man has passed only two stations. He has not tried to go beyond them to the mental and other stages. It is only after passing the Vijnanamaya stage that man can experience Ananda (pure bliss). But because man goes after the impermanent pleasures of the phenomenal world, he is unable to experience the enduring bliss that is inherent in him.

"Discrimination"

The Upanishads have declared that immortality can be experienced only through renunciation or sacrifice (Tyaga). This renunciation does not mean giving up hearth and home, kith and kin. It means giving up the transient and impermanent things of the world. This calls for discrimination between what is permanent and what is perishable. This kind of discrimination is absent among people today. Students, for instance, discriminate between what is convenient and what is unpleasant and choose the former. This element of self-interest should go. Discrimination should be exercised objectively to determine what is permanent and what is transient, what is good and what is bad. Only then can man discover the reality of the Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda), that is in him. The failure to realise this arises from defective vision. The fault does not lie in the manifest universe.

Faith and fortitude

Students should recognise the value of good health. Mere age does not make a person young. The great Mahabharata warrior, Bhishma, fought on the battlefield when he was 116 years old. How could he do it? It was because of his disciplined life that he could maintain his physique even when he was 116 years. Students should realise that good health alone confers lifelong happiness. Maintenance of physical fitness calls for mental discipline also. You have to control your desires. Even insects like ants observe limits to their acquisitions. Only man exhibits unlimited greed. And because of this he sacrifices real happiness. There is no harm in aspiring for a good job or a position of honour and fame. But many ordeals have to be overcome in achieving them. One should not succumb to difficulties. One must develop the fortitude to face all challenges by strengthening one's faith in God. Be fearless. God is with you. Proceed on life's journey with courage.

Before completing your education and entering the vast stage of life, you have to learn certain basic things. First among them is control of the mind. Only then will the senses be under control. Cultivate the feeling that the Divine is present in everyone and therefore you, should not harm anyone. Love ever: hurt never. This is the royal road for everyone.

embodiments of the Divine: Sat-Chit-Ananda. The air around you is neither visible nor can be grasped. And yet, can you deny its presence? Can you survive for a moment without it? Likewise, the one who denies the existence of God is denying his own existence: The Divine is omnipresent. Because you do not acquire the capacity to experience it, you are caught up in various troubles. You have to discover the unity that subsumes the diversity in the cosmos.

What is this unity? It is Sat-Chit-Ananda. Sat is Being (that which exists). Chit is Awareness, the quality that enables cognition. If a thing did not exist, it cannot be cognised. If it cannot be cognised it cannot be experienced or enjoyed. It is only when a thing is cognised and enjoyed that bliss is experienced.

Existence and experience

Here is the cosmos. How do you know about its existence? You can see the things in it, hear the sounds, have impressions in the mind about them and be moved in your hearts by them. How can you deny their existence?

You have to understand the relation between existence and experience. For instance, you feel hungry. You take food and the hunger is appeased. If food did not exist in the world, hunger would be out of place. If hunger did not exist, food would be unnecessary. In this context, it may be asked, which comes first hunger or food? We may consider that hunger comes first. This is not correct. Food came into existence first, and then hunger was caused. Man is able to protect his body because of the existence of food and hunger. It is said: food is for the protection of the body. Hence, you should regard food as necessary for living and not live for the sake of food. Education should be for leading a good life and not merely for earning a living. Birds and beasts are able to live without any education. Man has a higher destiny than mere living.

Rama's adherence to dharma

There is an episode in the great Indian epic Ramayana in which Sri Rama reveals the truth about Himself and His mission in answer to the sage Vasishta. When Rama was staying in Chitrakoota, Bharata and Shatrughna, with all the royal paraphernalia, went to see Him and appeal to Him to return to Ayodhya as He alone, as the eldest son and preeminent amongst them, was competent to rule the kingdom. Bharata declared that Rama alone was fit to rule and not himself. In reply to Bharata's entreaties, Rama said: "Dear brother! The plighted word is most sacred. It is our very life. In the Ikshvaku race, there has not been a single scion, who has gone back on his pledged word. Born in this great dynasty and being the eldest son I cannot brook the infamy of proving false to my pledge. I will joyfully give up My life rather than go back on My word."

The sage Jabali, who was present there, was eager to persuade Rama to return to the kingdom even by using specious arguments and appearing as an atheist. He told Rama: "Ramchandra! You appear to me to be stubborn and irrational. Is there any meaning in your trying to act upto the words of an old king who was a victim of the wiles of Kaikeyi? How can you say Dasaratha was a good man? He parted with the son for the sake of the wife. This is highly improper.

replied to the sage: "The body is perishable and may go at anytime. But the promised word remains. Truth has no form. It is eternal and omnipresent. It stands unchanged in the past, the present and the future. I cannot be a party to the destruction of that Truth," declared Rama.

Jabali returned to the argument again. He said: "Is it not foolish to let go the bird in the hand in the hope of getting two in the bush? You are concerned about the promises made by a dead man. Your concern must be to protect the truth of the living."

The preceptor and parents

Realising the difficulty of carrying on the argument with Rama in this way, sage Vasishtha intervened with the object of somehow inducing Rama to return to the kingdom. He said: "Ramachandra! There are three teachers for men—the mother, the father and the preceptor. You left for the forest on the words of your step-mother. I am your preceptor. The preceptor is eminent because he practises what he teaches. You must heed the words of the preceptor." To this Rama replied: "You have been the preceptor not-only for my father, but for my ancestors and hence worthy of all honour and reverence. But the mother who bore me and nourished me and the father who reared me and made a man of me, take precedence over the preceptor, who comes later. If the mother had not given me my body and the father had not protected me, how could the preceptor figure in my life? Only after the mother and father have shaped the son can the preceptor illumine his mind with knowledge. Though the preceptor should be revered; the parents come first."

Rama's reality

At this stage, Jabali came forward and uttered the mantras: "Matru devo Bhava! Pitru devo Bhava! Acharya devo Bhava!" (Regard the mother as God, the father as God, and the preceptor as God). At that moment three deities appeared on the scene. Rama observed that the God who is present in all the three is one and the same God and revealed His own identity as the Divine come in human form. It was then that Vasishtha declared: "Ramo Vighrahavaan, Dharmah" (Rama is the very embodiment of Dharma-Righteousness). "Oh Rama! You are Dharma itself that has taken human form. We have no words to argue with you." Jabali declared, "Pumsaam mohanaroopaaya" ("the, most alluring among men are You, Oh Rama") "You are the supreme upholder of Righteousness."

Earn Divine grace

During your studies, you have to, learn how to lead a life of righteousness. You pursue your studies with diligence and devote your nights and days to acquiring knowledge. But what efforts, are you making to earn Divine love and, grace? You feel sad about Swami not looking at you or talking to you but you do not try to find out why you are feeling this way. Are you enquiring into the purpose of education? Do you recognise the need for Self-realisation and control of the senses? Education should be for developing concentration of mind and not collection of facts. Along with studies develop good character. Your conduct will determine your destiny. Have a wide-ranging mind. Narada was a master of 64 sciences.

You have to make a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. When Valmiki was asked by Lava and Kusha why he described Ravana as a senseless man ("murkha"), although he was a master of all the Vedas and Shastras, while describing Rama as a high-souled person, he said: "Ravana was a well-versed scholar, but he did not practise what he knew. Rama was a Jnani, a wise one who lived upto what he had learnt. By controlling His senses, Rama led a life of truth and righteousness." Education that is used only for selfish ends is no education at all. Education should be used for promoting the welfare of others. Ravana sought only his own pleasure. Rama dedicated His life for the welfare of all.

"You are my wealth"

Dear students! You are doubtless on your best behaviour while you are here. Students are my life-breath. You are my wealth. For your sake I am devoting all my time and energies so that you may sublimate your lives. Apart from setting you on the right path I have no other interest of my own. I want you to become ideal citizens of Bharat. You are not realising the magnitude of my love for you. There may be no connection between the studies you pursue here and the kind of problems you may have to face in the outside world. The MBA students are taught "Communication". When you go out into the world, communication acquires profound meaning. You have to deal with different kinds of persons, workers, managers and the public. You have to know how to understand them and how to convey to them your ideas. Engage yourselves in your duties with faith in God. One of our MBA boys got a job in a Birla concern. Within two months he was able to earn a good name among the workers and the employers. This pleased me immensely. It is enough for me if you earn the approbation and regard of others. Students going out from the Sathya Sai Institute should earn a good name for themselves and the Institute. Already many employers have come forward to absorb our M BA students. If you live upto Swami's teachings you will be able to lead exemplary lives. Having spent, many years in Prasanthi Nilayam and, imbibed the atmosphere and spirit of this sacred place, you must carry this atmosphere wherever your life may take you. Remember always that Swami is in you and you are in Swami wherever you may be.

*—from Bhagavan's discourse to students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute,
in the Prasanthi Mandir on 12-2-1989*

All Names are His

God has a million Names —Baba

Certainly there is something in the remembrance of the names by which millions call upon Him every moment, in need, with love, with resentment. Dialects differ, languages vary, tones modulate, but the rainbow of voices ever stretches its arms to the eternal quest. It was at Baba's Feet that this writer learnt the beauty and the glory of the divine SIGN—the Names. (Sign in the

not only a Path but a treasure beyond all worldly riches.

The Inexhaustible, the Infinite is worshipped by the Muslim mind as Allah, Al-Ahad, the One and only. The remembrance (Zikr), a common mode of worship, is dear to many. Some love its rhythmic invocation, some the strength it gives, others seek solace. Many do it as a tradition. The Quran extols recitation of the Name:

*By whatever name ye call upon Him,(it is well)
For to Him belong the Most Beautiful of Names. (XVII: 110)*

Following the majority this author also started it, but more so because Baba has repeatedly stressed its importance. "Recite the Name, meditate on the form. Have the name and the form as your companion, guide and guardian throughout" (Baba).

The invocation turned out to be a richly rewarding activity. Two instances are cited here:

Once, while staying with my mother in her lonely, rock-bound house, I felt quite agitated. We had the habit of reciting different Names. I could not sit down to my daily practice of invocation. Standing near the window, not knowing what to do, I prayed to Baba. Outside, in the intense quiet hours before the dawn, nothing moved. Darkness marked the rocks in sharp outlines against a deep-blue, star-spangled sky. Suddenly from my mother's room there rose the voice calling for prayer. She had put on the cassette. The sound flooded the house, surged and flowed outside, filling the entire space. I became aware that each stone, each crag and the entire valley was reciting "Allah- ho-Akbar" No, it was not an echo, it was a chorus of different voices. Spontaneously, I joined in the remembrance: "Allah-ho-Akbar". "ALL NAMES ARE MINE" came the answer from Baba.

Had I forgotten a similar experience narrated in a Sufi journal? "I saw" said the dervish, "that the entire universe, in its structure consists of light. Everything had become one colour, and all atoms of all beings proclaimed: 'I AM THE TRUTH', each in the manner proper to its being..." (Shamsuddin Lahiji: Sufi).

The One in all

Throughout the last days of the Dasara festival of 1988 a small group of women sat in Poornachandra Auditorium and recited the Names of Baba from a booklet, *Garland of 108 Precious Gems*. The festival concluded with the Jhoola ceremony. It was a scene to cherish. He sat in the silver swing, wearing a robe of light. The hymnal sounds swirled around. What the tearful eyes of one of the group saw could be described in her own words

"The background with its lights, flowers and the magnificent decor, vanished, the Jhoola also disappeared. What I saw instead was the blue expanse of the night sky, pearled with a million gems. In the centre, stretched from one end to another, was the Milky Way, splendid, like a star-studded rope; on this swing of light Baba sat. The whole sky with its myriad lanterns swayed

—**Dr. Zeba Bashiruddin**

In the spiritual field, you must be sincere. Do not pretend, and deceive yourself and others. There was once a mendicant who sought a place where he could get a meal as he was very hungry. A pious old lady called him into her house and asked him to take his bath and partake of the noon meal. He said, "Oh, why should I take a bath? Govindethi sadaa snaanam; I have now repeated the name of Govinda, that is as good as a bath." Hearing this, the lady said, "In that case, Rama naamaamritham sadaa bhojanam; Ramanam is food for ever, I shall also feed you with a quotation. Get out of here pretty quick." Do not use the study of the Shastras and scriptures for increasing your egoism; let it make you humble, though at the same time, more resistant to temptation. Your nature is divine; what has happened is that delusion has covered it with dirt. The washerman does not make your clothes white; they are white already; what he does is to manifest its whiteness by removing the dirt that has hidden the genuine native colour, white.

—**Baba**

VALUES FOR CHILDREN:

A Mother's Story

After many years of doing my best to be both mother and father to my son, Ralph (not his real name), never feeling completely successful, I began the spiritual practice of sending love from my heart to his in the form of a beam of light. He is sixteen years old and seems to be infected with teenage wildness. The experience of replacing parental anxiety with love was beautiful. I felt my whole heart opening and expanding. I felt the warmth of Baba's presence in my heart, and I seemed to be connected to the whole universe. I am continuing that technique, sending him unconditional love each time I sit in the silence to perform my *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). I also include his hyperactive friends and all the beings in the world.

I had the blessed privilege of going to Prasanthi Nilayam in 1986, and one reason that I wanted to see Baba was to ask Him to help me with Ralph. We have a hard time with each other. I try to control him so that he won't make all the mistakes that I made and lose as much time as I lost trying to extricate myself from the results of those mistakes. We are very different. He is outgoing and social, while I am quieter and more introspective. He is a typical teenager, interested in rock music, movies, TV, and sports, but not much interested in books and homework. We have not been able to communicate very well since he was two years old. He won't take direction from anybody—especially not from me. His independence may be a blessing in some ways, but it has also been a tremendous trial for me. During the last two or three years I have prayed to Baba frequently to help me know that my son is truly His son and to open the heart of His son to receive His love. I have been able to get Ralph to participate in some

and suggestions.

After consciously placing him in a circle of love for the past four weeks, I was feeling confident that some of that resistance has lessened. I wrote on my calendar for Sunday night: "Ralph to go with me to the Sai Baba Centre." I gave up my desire to convince him of anything, and just wanted to exemplify Baba's love to the best of my ability. I also wanted him to know what I was doing on Sunday nights. It was definitely all in divine hands. He came along with very little fuss, and he enjoyed himself tremendously. He loved the video on Baba, the stories and individual experiences which were shared, the special atmosphere, and the love that those in attendance showed for Baba and for each other. He even sang along with us some of the devotional songs. On the way home in the car he asked many excellent questions. He noticed so much and grasped so much so quickly that it was a delight for me to talk with him. I'm sure you can imagine my joy, since Baba is my favourite topic of conversation. Ralph took in so many of the wonderful little tidbits that I told him. I wonder what will happen when he hears about the great miracles? He volunteered that he would like to go to the Centre again!

On the way home from the meeting, as we moved along with the flow of traffic on the freeway, I suddenly saw an unusually large, heavy ladder, taking up three-fourths of the left lane—the one in which I was travelling. I saw the car in front of me swerve, and I swerved also. There was no time to look into the rearview mirror; everything happened so quickly! I saw the car in the centre lane swerve to avoid our car and the car in the right lane go off on to the right shoulder into some bushes. In order to lessen the danger to the other cars, I hit the ladder with my left front tyre—probably at about fifty-five miles per hour. With Baba's grace, I did not lose control of the car. The ladder did not fly up and hit our windshield nor get wedged underneath the car. I stopped the car as quickly as possible and ran back to remove the ladder from the lane. There was not even a scratch on our car. No one was hurt in any of the cars. We were all fine!

Answer to prayers

I believe that this incident was orchestrated to show our son that Baba loves him, and that He wants to draw him near. I feel sure that He gave us back our healthy bodies and may be even our lives. I could so easily have lost control of my light, very unstable car, and crashed. When we got home, we went down on our knees together in front of our picture of Baba and expressed our heartfelt gratitude for His love, protection, and constant guidance. I feel that every prayer uttered over the past four years had been brought to fruition in this climactic, peak experience. There is no question but that Baba's grace is powerful, unpredictable, and always inexorably leading us on to merge our sense of separateness into His exemplification of divine unity. The instruments He used in this drama included Baba Centre, the *sadhana* of love, and the driver who lost the ladder. Truly, God works in mysterious ways to perform His wonders.

*—A California Devotee
From the Sathya Sai Newsletter, U.S.A.*

The Lord says that "A PURE HEART IS THE INNER PURPOSE OF ALL SADHANA." He also says that if we do not speak more sweetly and act more lovingly after meditation, then the exercise is a waste of time. For this reason, I would like to offer a structure of ideas that could be incorporated into the practice of meditation. This may help prevent the devotee from "spacing out" and missing the main purpose of this discipline.

Meditation is only one of the tools of the Spirit for transformation. The others are: service, constant remembrance of God, worship, prayer, enquiry and study, singing praises, and control of diet. Bhagavan Baba says He does not want our praises or worship, but our transformation. If we do not act more lovingly after engaging ourselves in any of these spiritual practices, then they become an empty ritual.

The treasures of the Spirit are within us. They are encased inside us like a trust fund granted as a birth-right from God. In fact, they are like an inexhaustible fund that even multiplies if "spent" with a pure heart. Can you imagine someone that has millions of dollars in a trust who never goes to the bank to make a withdrawal? Or, someone who frequently hangs around in the bank, but leaves without making withdrawals? Both these children of God will seem to be "poverty-stricken" for all intents and purposes. How about people who go to the bank often, make only small withdrawals and then spend them sparingly and irrationally? They too are poor. The first example represents those who never meditate. The second case depicts those who really have no idea what the purpose of meditation is. The third group, unfortunately, represents most of us seekers.

"Love all; serve all"

We should not be meditating to have "experiences" or to break records in the number of repetitions of a mantra we could do, or to be "successful" in maintaining an image of our favourite Form of God. Of course, these practices help us gain control of the body and the mind. The goal, however, is to realise the Lord's Spirit within us and to make withdrawals from the treasures of the Spirit, which are freely given. Then when we get back to activity in the physical world, we must spend these treasures on benefits to others. "Love All—Serve All," says Baba. That is what truly spiritual people try to do. We must try to bring "Heaven to Earth" by helping the Lord spiritualise the world in any way we can.

It is helpful to memorize a list of the Treasures of the Spirit and to remember that God is within us as Truth, Beauty and Goodness. A good list to work with is: Love; Strength and Resolve; Wisdom (applied Truth); Forgiveness; Patience; Tolerance, Compassion; Faith; Courage; Generosity; Humility; Discipline; Detachment; Joy and Good Humour. All these qualities are included in the Vedas and the list is an expanded version of the Fruits of Spirit listed in the Bible.

If these words are kept in mind during meditation one can improve one's handling of life's challenges by concentrating on obtaining from the Lord the combination of treasures appropriate for *responding spiritually* to the challenges. We must intend to use what we get to help prevent merely *reacting emotionally* to the situation. As an example, suppose someone has harmed us and we are upset. If we concentrate on getting more forgiveness, patience, detachment, Wisdom, Love and the strength to spend these treasures, then our spiritual response could be improved. Wisdom would remind us that we must have "sowed" some action in this or another life to be confronted with such an experience. The truth is that no one gets away with anything in God's scheme of Divine Justice. Forgiveness and Patience (Kshama) are the main fences protecting the great healing power of Love. And an attitude of Detachment will help the whole "package" work.

One can inject some powerful words and ideas into one's meditation by starting with something like, "Dear Lord, I open my heart to Your heart, to Divine Love, Peace and Joy. I direct my mind towards Your Divine Intelligence, Your eternal Wisdom and Truth. I pray that through Your Grace my will becomes that of doing Your Will. I offer my past, fears, guilts and problems, to Your all consuming Light."

You might end a meditation by telling the Lord: "I send forgiveness and love, back through all of time, to everything and everyone (including myself) that ever hurt or disappointed me. I am asking for and accepting forgiveness and love from everything and everyone that I ever hurt or disappointed."

Remember, unless we are willing to surrender our problems and negativities, and make some effort, we cannot effect a withdrawal from the Treasure Chest encased within. Let us not be poverty stricken. Let us try to be the objects of gold (Bangaru) that the Lord often calls us.

—**Jim Ciulla, M.D., Illinois, U.S.A.**

The glory of the great heroes of the spirit, those who have scaled the highest peaks of Realisation, and those who attained spiritual fulfillment, is exercising immense influence on the mind of mankind. It is as a result of along line of such seers that the spiritual Message of India has attracted the attention of all nations. If India has been able to earn the reverence of the world, the reason has to be sought in the precious treasure that they have earned and preserved. Here, love of God and fear of Sin have been the chief pillars of life and the everlasting guides for living.

—**Baba**

"Only when selfishness is totally eradicated will humanity be able to realise the divinity that is its destiny," declared Bhagavan Baba, addressing a vast gathering of devotees at "Abbotsbury", Madras, on March 21.

Bhagavan, who was visiting Madras City after the lapse of 3 years—His last visit was in January 1986—showered His love and blessings on lakhs of devotees who had been eagerly looking forward to His arrival on March 20th. Besides two inspiring discourses at "Abbotsbury", Bhagavan's crowded four-day programme included a Bal Vikas rally, visits to the Sai Mandirs at Perambur and Guindy, giving darshan to thousands of devotees at "Sundaram" after the early morning Nagarsankirtan and witnessing programmes of cultural performances and devotional singing on three evenings at "Abbotsbury". At all the functions unprecedented gatherings of devotees maintained perfect discipline and orderliness and were amply rewarded by the benedictory darshan they had of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan, who left Brindavan by car early in the morning on March 20th, reached "Sundaram" by 9 a.m., well before the expected time of arrival. A large number of devotees, who had been eagerly looking forward to Swami's visit to the city after an interval of three years, started gathering at "Sundaram" from the early hours of the morning. Thousands of them sat patiently for hours within the "Sundaram" compound and outside and greeted Swami's arrival with ecstatic cheers. Bhagavan got down outside the "Sundaram" gate and gave blissful darshan to the devotees who had lined up on either side of the approach road and in the open space outside the "Sundaram" compound.

Bhagavan was received at the entrance with Poorna-kumbham and the recitation of Vedic chants, followed by Nadaswaram music. After giving darshan to the entire gathering, Bhagavan went in with Gen. Mahadevan, Tamilnadu State Sai Samithi President, and others, to consider the programme for the day.

All the main public functions during Bhagavan's four-day visit were arranged to be held in the spacious campus of "Abbotsbury". The first function on 20th was a mass bhajan session, which was attended by over 50,000 devotees, who filled the large hall and all the open grounds of "Abbotsbury." Special facilities such as closed circuit TV screens and video screens located at vantage points, enabled the large crowds outside the hall to watch with adoration the presence of Bhagavan at the bhajan and the way Swami showered His love on the devotees.

The bhajan was followed by a cultural programme presented by Bal Vikas children of Madras. It was a specially got up audio-visual show in which while the children danced to the rhythm of the bhajan songs, the figures of the deities mentioned in the songs were flashed on a screen in the background in quick succession, animating the bhajans as it were. This was followed by another novel item, a sequence of ballet dances depicting the eight forms of Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth and Prosperity. Bhagavan greatly enjoyed the performance and

a delightful and edifying treat for the devotees.

The next day, the programme began with "Omkar", "Suprabhatam" and Nagarsankirtan at "Sundaram". An unprecedented gathering of devotees, men and women, estimated at nearly ten thousand, which included High Court judges, IAS and IPS officers and prominent persons from different walks of life, assembled at "Sundaram" before 5 a.m. for the "Omkar" and "Suprabhatam" and then went round the streets around "Sundaram" in an orderly procession singing bhajans. The Nagarsankirtan terminated at "Sundaram" where Bhagavan gave all the devotees His benedictory darshan from the lotus-shaped balcony. It was a thrilling sight to see such large numbers of devotees gathering so early in the morning for the darshan of the Lord after participating in the Nagarsankirtan.

Bal vikas rally

Precisely at 8 a.m. Bhagavan arrived at Abbotsbury to give darshan to the devotees, who had gathered there for the morning bhajan, and to witness an impressive rally of Bal Vikas children from all over Tamilnadu. More than a hundred children took part in the rally held on the grounds outside the main hall. The programme consisted of group dances to the music of songs in the four South Indian languages—Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam—and a performance on the theme of national integration. On arrival at the rally Bhagavan was greeted by a boy in the make up of a peacock. Bhagavan blessed all the children, moving freely amongst them, cracking jokes in Tamil and patting some of them. Swami distributed mementoes and watches to the children participating in the rally.

Swami later blessed the Bal Vikas children who had assembled in a second hall for receiving prizes from the Divine hands. They were the prize-winners in Bal Vikas competitions held during the years 1986, 1987 and 1988. They also received surprise gifts of watches and sweets from Bhagavan.

In the afternoon, a record gathering of over a hundred thousand persons assembled in Abbotsbury for Bhagavan's darshan and discourse. Every inch of space had been occupied well before the scheduled hour (5 p.m.) when bhajans were to start. Thousands had lined up on the pavements outside Abbotsbury to get a glimpse of Bhagavan as He arrived for the meeting. Thanks to the video screens provided at various points, all the devotees could watch the proceedings even if they could not have direct darshan of Bhagavan. Prior to the meeting, Bhagavan went round all the enclosures and gave darshan to the devotees.

Maj. Gen. S. P. Mahadevan welcomed Bhagavan and the immense gathering and requested Bhagavan to release two books in Tamil, one entitled, "Peraananda Peruraigal" (a collection of Bhagavan's discourses on various festivals) and "Arul Vaakku", a collection of 63 sayings of Bhagavan culled from His writings and speeches.

Sri S. V. Chittibabu, former Vice Chancellor of the Annamalai and Madurai Universities, spoke on the significance of Bhagavan's advent at the present time when the world is caught up

institutions set up by Bhagavan and the global programme of education in human values initiated by Bhagavan.

Bhagavan's discourse, which was translated into Tamil, was listened to with rapt attention. Bhagavan called upon everyone to realise his or her inherent divinity and cultivate universal love on the basis of the conviction that the Divine resides in everyone.

Bhagavan formally released the two books and later blessed the production of a bhajan cassette containing simple songs in Tamil to be sung in bhajans in the adopted villages.

On March 22nd, the day began, as on the previous day, with Omkar and Nagarsankirtan by thousands of devotees. The orderly manner in which the bhajans were conducted by the participants in the Nagarsankirtan was remarkable. The Divine darshan of Bhagavan they got at "Sundaram" was a well merited reward for their devotional exercise.

Later in the morning, Bhagavan came to Abbotsbury for the bhajan and blessed a gathering of Mahilas of the Sathya Sai Seva organisation who had been engaged in Sai Save activities. Swami visited a shed in which children from the "adopted" slums in Madras presented a programme of folk dances.

Bhagavan blessed nearly a hundred handicapped children from institutions for the disabled and distributed dhoties and saris to indigent old men and women from the slums. Bhagavan gave His blessings to the Narayana Save organised in another shed.

From Abbotsbury, Bhagavan went to Guindy where a very large gathering of devotees had assembled to have darshan of Bhagavan at the shrine dedicated to Shirdi Sai Baba.

In the evening, bhajans at Abbotsbury were followed by a programme of devotional music in which prominent playback singers rendered a variety of devotional songs. The artistes included Srimati P. Suseela, Sri Krishnachandran, Malaysia Vasudevan and Sri Ramakrishna. Bhagavan blessed the immense gathering by His gracious presence.

Participation in Nagarsankirtan rose to a peak on March 23, the last day of Bhagavan's stay in Madras. So many thousands were eager to get Bhagavan's blessings from the balcony of "Sundaram" that they joined the Nagarsankirtan early in the morning and filled the streets around the Mandir with their full-throated bhajans.

After the morning bhajans at Abbotsbury, Bhagavan blessed handicapped children and disabled old people from the adopted villages in Chingleput district. Swami witnessed a series of folk dances by the village children. They received mementoes from Swami, who distributed clothes to the old people.

when He went to visit the Sathya Sai Nivas shrine in Perambur. It was the first Sai Mandir to be built in Madras. Railway union leaders, headed by the octogenarian, Sri T. V. Anandan, offered their homage to Bhagavan. Showering His Blessings on them, Bhagavan informed them that He would present uniforms to the 136 students who are receiving technical training in the industrial training institute which was set up some years ago with a two-lakh donation from Bhagavan.

The four-day programme in Madras concluded with a discourse by Bhagavan at Abbotsbury in the evening. The main hall was reserved for the active workers in the Sai Organisation who had been engaged in various service activities. They included doctors, paramedical personnel, Bal Vikas gurus, and Seva Dal members. Sri Arjuna Raja, Convenor of the Tamilnadu Sathya Sai Trust, welcomed Bhagavan and requested Him to address the gathering.

Bhagavan devoted His discourse to an exposition of what constituted true seva and the spirit in which service should be rendered. Service should be sanctified and transformed into worship. (Details of the discourse are published separately).

After the discourse, there was a programme of devotional music by leading playback singers, Sri Jayachandran, Srimathis Vani Jayaram, Vasantha, P. Leela and Janaki. Bhagavan blessed the artistes and the accompanists.

Bhagavan's visit was altogether a memorable event for the devotees and an inspiring and blissfully rewarding experience for everyone in the Sai organisation. The most impressive aspect of Bhagavan's visit was the orderliness and discipline displayed by the thousands of devotees on all the days and the deep devotion that filled them in the presence of Bhagavan

Bhagavan left for Hyderabad by plane on the morning of 24th and returned to Brindavan, Whitefield, in the afternoon.

A CORRECTION: On page 112 of this issue, in the first column, the words in quotation marks from the third line should read: "Splitting of love is Science, the spirit of love is spirituality."

The Devotee and the Divine

During this February 1989 stay at Prasanthi Nilayam, my attention fixed always upon the grace and majesty of Sai, people were stopping me wherever I walked in order to express their uncertainty as to what they should do to understand Baba and to apply His teachings in their daily life. I venture here to briefly set forth some lessons learned by me during the past twenty

The first lesson learned at the Lotus Feet of Sai is that, of all the riches He can bestow, the foremost is love. At my first meeting with Him, myself having just come to this ancient land from a foreign place, sitting on the floor before Him and fascinated by His person, I fell into silence and then, in that silence, my dry Western heart awakened to a subtle movement of love occurring within itself—subtle but most real. I knew directly without thought that Sai as love had come into my heart and that only God Himself could so come into the heart of a stranger. The first lesson, then, is that love comes first—love awakened, love of Sai; then follows all else.

People say to me, “I want to love Sai, but how?” No “how” is needed. Man or woman, each dearly loves the mother, the spouse, and the endearing child born unto them. No “how to love” is asked in these cases. Love is there, not construed, and yet strong. Sai is your own, the indweller of your heart, your very beingness just under the surface of your consciousness. He is yours, so it is only natural to love Him; let all love flow to Him and your love will then also include your family and others close and dear to you—just as, water directed to the invisible roots of the tree quickly brings moisture and health to the branches, leaves, and flowers.

Dedication

Another lesson soon learned is that while Sai speaks softly and smiles sweetly, His is the boundless power of the Divine. With the slightest glance or thought He changes nature and changes man's destiny. Thus, if devotion to the Lord is true and without pretence, deep effects occur in one's nature and in one's career. Surrender your life to Him by dedicating each and every mental and physical action to Him, no matter how minor or simple the actions seem to be.

It could be said that most of us want life to be filled with joy for ourselves and for others also, and we want our lives to ripen and to flower in beauty and significance. When Baba asks, “What do you want?” Many of those individuals questioned spontaneously reply, “I want you, Baba.” The person who says that knows intuitively that Baba is the Lord and the Exemplar of supreme joy, supreme love, supreme wisdom, total freedom, auspiciousness, unlimited prosperity, and absolute truth. Baba tells us, in effect, that all these riches and much much more are our divine inheritance, ready and available to us whenever we really and truly wish to claim it. This, then, is another lesson learned—if we truly want God Himself, want Sai Himself, we must ask for it and take it.

Yearning for God

In order to ask, one may begin now by turning each petty desire away from its petty object, and desire God instead. That which we truly want, truly desire, we think about all the time. Thus—think about Sai every moment that the mind is not engaged in necessary work. One may turn every feeling to Sai, desire Him. Turn every thought to Sai. Talk to Him, picture His charming Form, ask His advice, complain to Him, tell Him you are sorry for each wrong thought, each wrong desire, each wrong action which manages to by-pass your acute attention. Feel and understand that God is the enduring Reality in every supposedly inanimate object. In the stone,

are informed by and supported by the one Reality, God. Let all thoughts be fixed on Him, all feelings be worship of Him, all speech directed to Him, all action service to Him. This is how one comes into one's inheritance of the plenitude of Divinity.

A further lesson learned at the Lotus Feet is at once to be God and express the richness of Divinity. God is love; now transform yourself into love, feel love, express love in daily life. Let the river of love flow between the two banks of detachment and common sense. Mercy, wisdom, justice, discipline, steadfastness are the Divine qualities we see daily in Sai; now express that Divinity in daily life. Yes, it can be done—that is the power in man, the nature of God in man. The lion and the scorpion retain their respective natures, but man has the power to transform himself—that is the divine power in man. This is the way to put Sai's teachings into action, the way not to be different from Him- even in daily life.

The next lesson learned at the Lotus Feet of Sai is that intense, consuming devotion to Sai, the Ocean of Bliss, is the basis on which rests the significant Intellectual understanding and that, bereft of love of God, of surrender to Him, the life of the intellect is dry in the beginning, dry in the middle and dry at the end.

Meaningful lessons

For the sincere, earnest Sai devotee meaningful lessons, filled with the sweetness of Sai's limitless wisdom, unfold one after the other. But that which unfolds needs space in which to manifest, and that pure taintless space is love for Him, the Lord of Love.

Thus, there is a simple answer to the question of how a devotee may understand Sai and put the divine richness of His teachings into daily life. It is so simple that everyone may immediately comprehend.

Love Him and long for His love without pausing. Think of Him always by seeing Him everywhere, and calling upon Him by His Name with love for Him, for He, the Perfect One, is there in each heart. Love Him fully without limit. Never worry again- everything else, everything needful, will naturally fall in the wake of one's intense love for Sai.

—Dr. John Hislop

The Truth About Death

The Yoga-Vasishta says that Sri Ramachandra asked the sage Vasishta the question, “Divine Master! Is there a way by which death can be avoided?” This same problem drove Gautama Buddha along the path of renunciation, and forced him to give up all traces of attachment; it showered on him eternal fame, as supreme among men. Prahlada, foremost among the devotees of the Lord, addressed his fellow pupils, even as a boy, “Friends! Have you not observed some

event of death and invited ad them to draw lessons from that inevitable fact. He taught them the higher wisdom.

Those who have the inner urge to achieve the higher wisdom which confers liberation have, therefore, to reflect upon and investigate the phenomenon of death. Death should arouse no fear. It should not be regarded as inauspicious. You should not run away from the problem, imagining that death happens only to others, and that it will not happen to you. Neither should you postpone reflections on death, judging that they are inappropriate now, and profitless. For, inquiry into death is really inquiry into one's own Reality. This truth has to be recognised.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

“Live up to Your Role”

Members of the Sai Seva Organisation should be true to the roles assigned to them in the organisation. They should emulate the example of Hanuman, who was proud to declare himself as the humble servant of Sri Rama. Service should be done in a totally dedicated spirit, with no taint of self-interest or conceit, observed Bhagavan Baba, in an inspiring discourse to a large gathering of active workers in the Sathya Sai Organisation, besides other devotees, at Abbotsbury, Madras, on March 23, 1989.

Swami began His discourse with a poem which pointed out how there is unity in diversity: Clay is one, but pots are of many kinds; gold is one, but ornaments are varied; milk is white, though the cows may be of many colours. Likewise God is one, but appears in innumerable forms. Man should recognise that the indwelling Spirit in every being is one and the same Divinity.

In the course of His ninety-minute discourse, Bhagavan said:

Divinity is present in everyone in an unmanifested form. All human beings are sparks of the Divine like the waves of the ocean. Every man is an embodiment of the Divine Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). This has been declared categorically in the Bhagavad Gita.

As God is the embodiment of Love, man is also an embodiment of love. But man today does not manifest it fully and properly because of his selfishness and self-centredness.

Though humanity has advanced considerably in the material and scientific spheres, it has gone down grievously morally and spiritually. Selfishness is predominant in every action. Behind every thought, every word, self-interest is prominent. It is only when this selfishness is eradicated can Divinity reveal itself in rendering Seva (service), there should be a recognition of the omnipresence of the Divine in all human beings. Men have not developed the spirit of

sacrifice. Sacrifice has been declared to be the only means to achieve immortality.

Men appear to be in quest of God. They do not realise that all that they see is permeated by God. All forms are divine. But because man's vision is externalised, he is unable to have the inner vision of the Divine.

Man craves for peace. Though the source of peace and bliss is within himself, he seeks them in the external like one pursuing a mirage. Owing to restless activity, endless worry and limitless desires, man has lost peace of mind and has become a prey to discontent and misery. At the outset, peace has to be cultivated within ourselves. And then that peace has to be extended to the family. From the home it should be spread to our village. Thus, peace should begin with the individual and spread to the whole society.

Preaching and practice

In the Sai organisation, efforts are made to propagate the values of Truth, Righteousness, Love, Peace and Nonviolence. This is only propagation, but not practice (or demonstration). Mere preaching is of no avail. Truth must be practised. Truth and Righteousness are the highest values upheld by Bharatiya Culture. If people do not live up to Truth and Righteousness, their humanness is worth nothing.

Of all virtues, love is the foremost. If love is fostered, all other qualities flow from it. In every form of Sadhana, love has the first place. Love is the supreme mark of humanness. Love is God. Live in Love. Start the day with Love. Fill the day with Love. End the day with Love. You have to engage yourselves in seva, eschewing every trace of conceit (Ahamkara). Our degradation is the result of forgetting God. When we remember God, our life will be filled with peace and happiness.

Man has three kinds of wishing abilities (Ichcha-shakti). One is: Swechcha (wishing freely). Two: Parechcha (carrying out the wishes of others) Three: Anichcha (Without wishing). Swechcha does not mean freedom to act as you please, using your strength and possessions as you like, regardless of the rights of others. True Swechcha (freedom to act as one wishes) consists in taking a decision with your whole mind, carrying it out in action and accepting the consequences, for good or ill, wholeheartedly. This is true freedom of will. The freedom that you desire in doing what pleases you should imply that equally freely you accept the consequences flowing from its fulfillment. "Parechcha" refers to what one does at the prompting or bidding of others and laments the consequences resulting from such actions, casting the blame on others for what one suffers. "Anichcha" refers to fortuitous happenings that occur without one's own willing or as a result of actions prompted, by others and are accepted as providential.

Having got the precious human form, men must seek to live according to the true requirements of that form. It should be realised that man is not born to wallow in ignorance, poverty or sin. He is born for a higher destiny. He should live up to the role conferred on him.

Once a Sanyasi (renunciant) came to a Maharaja and expounded to him the sacred truths of Vedanta. The king was pleased with his exposition and offered him a plate full of gold coins. The ascetic declined to accept it, saying it was not in keeping with the cowl he was wearing to accept any material gifts. "What need have I for these things when I have renounced every worldly thing?" he said. The king was pleased with the Sanyasi's attitude.

The next day the same person turned up in court in the guise of a danseuse. She danced superbly before the king. The king was pleased and offered to her a plate of gold coins. She declared that she was not willing to accept such a meager guerdon and wanted more. The king realised at that moment that the person in the dancer's dress was the same one who had appeared as a Sanyasi, the previous day. The king told her "Yesterday you declined to accept any gift at my hands and today you ask for more than what I have offered. What is the inner meaning of this difference in attitude?"

She pointed out that everyone has to act up to the role assumed by him. Wearing the Sanyasi's robe, it was the proper thing for the ascetic to reject any material gift. But in the dancer's role, she was entitled to ask for as much as she thought fit. That day she was playing the role of dancer.

When the king heard her reply, he felt he had learnt a good lesson from her. "Here I am, a king. I should conduct myself as a king and not behave in any way unbecoming of a person wearing regal robes." He appreciated the lesson which the woman had taught him.

Double lives

Today someone may wear the ochre robe, but his heart is filled with foulness. He has desires from which even a householder is free. The Bharatiya culture has been undermined by such double life. When you consider the pandits, many of them are well-versed in the scriptures and can recite them by rote. They may flaunt their Rudraksha-malas (necklace of sacred beads used in Japa). They may wear precious shawls. But their actions are not in accordance with their costumes and adornments. "Pandithaah samadarsinah" declares the Gita. The true scholar looks at everything with an equal eye. How can those who do not have this equal-minded vision be described as pandits? If one claiming to be a Sanyasi has renounced all mundane things, but continues to entertain desires, how can he be regarded as a Sanyasi? Today many who parade their knowledge of the scriptures are revelling in luxury (Bhogarajus) or glorying in disease (Rogarajus) but are not becoming Thyagarajus (those who are masters of renunciation).

Role of Sai sevaks

You are members of the Sathya Sai Save Dal. As such you must strive to render service in keeping with your role. You are sevaks. Have the feeling that whomever you may serve, you are serving God. Remember in what spirit Hanuman the monkey served Sri Rama. You should not imagine that because he was a monkey he lacked intelligence or other qualities. He has been described as "tranquil, virtuous, and strong." Such a person, when he was on a tree in the Asokavana in Lanka, was questioned by the Rakshasas as to who he was and wherefrom he had

Kosala"). He did not boast about his valour or knowledge. He was content to describe himself as the humble and devoted servant of Rama.

Bear in mind the maxim: "Without being a kinkara (one who is ready to carry out the Lord's command), you cannot become a Sankara (the Divine)."

You have to transform your life through service. You should give no room for arrogance or self-interest to the slightest extent in your service activities. Install in your heart the feeling that the service you render to anyone is service to God. Only then does service to man become service to Madhava (God).

Born in society, brought up in society, educated by society and deriving countless benefits from society, what are you doing for society? Social service should be regarded as an expression of gratitude to society for what it has done to us. Without society we cannot survive. The God-given body should be employed for practising Dharma. As Prahlada said: "Of what use is the human birth if the various organs like hands, legs, mouth and ears are not engaged in the worship of the Lord? Such a man is a burden to the womb that bore him." Sankaracharya, exponent of the Jnana Marga, in the last reckoning commended the path of Bhakti in his: "Bhaja Govindam".

Addressing the Mahilas in particular, Bhagavan said: Women are given to excessive talking. They should treat even their daily chores as a form of consecrated work. If they are unable to attend a Satsang on account of household duties, they should not feel miserable on that account. Discharge of duties at home is as sacred as attending a Satsang. Only if you do your duties at home properly will you be able to render proper service outside. In whatever work you do at home, whether sweeping the floor or preparing chapattis, convert it into a form of spiritual exercise. Infuse every action with love of the Divine and dedicate it to God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajans: "Bhajana binaa" and "Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam".

—From Bhagavan's discourse at "Abbotsbury" Madras, on 23.3.1989

Devoted to the Last

Sri Y V. Kutumba Rao, who was looking after the Prasanthi Nilayam ashram activities and attending to the affairs of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust with devotion and dedication for two decades, attained the Lotus Feet of the Lord on March 29th. He was engaged in service to Bhagavan till the very end. A large gathering of devotees and students and staff of the Institute paid their respects to the departed soul by singing bhajans and chanting Vedic hymns.

From Love: To Love

*How can anyone conceive of a form for that Formless Divine?
For One who has no hands or feet, What ornaments can one fashion?
It is fanciful to attribute this or that name and form to That One;
To ascribe the effulgence of a billion suns is a flight of imagination.
How can anyone attempt to reveal the form of the Formless Absolute?
The Atma is the Eternal Formless illumining the entire Cosmos.
Brahmam is Love incarnate.
Love can be realised only through Love;
If one holds fast to Love
Oneness with the Divine can be experienced.*

*Pavitraatmaswaroopulaara
(Embodiments of the sacred Atma)*

You have to note how you have secured this appellation. "Pavitra is a word derived from the Latin root, 'Vir', which means 'man.' Hence man is the embodiment of "Pavitra" (sacredness). The Atma is associated with Divinity.

After the rise of Christianity in Rome, the Romans gave a distinctive name to Jesus in recognition of His divinity. He was called "Persona", meaning one who is Divine. The English word "Person" is derived from "Persona".

The Indian term "Vyakthi" is related to the term "Person". "Vyakthi" means the one that makes manifest the Unmanifested. What is it that is unmanifest? That is the Atma (the Cosmic Spirit). Man is described as the sacred embodiment of the Divine (Pavitra-atma-swaroop) because he manifests the divinity inherent in him.

God is the very embodiment of Love (Prema). Man is a spark of the Divine. You may find a man without anger, without truth or without peace, but you cannot find anyone in the world devoid of love. Love is present equally in all human beings as the one effulgent divine quality. This love may be expressed in different ways, but its nature is the same.

Man is thus an aspect of the Cosmic Consciousness. Unfortunately, however, because man directs his love towards worldly objects, he is unable to recognise his divinity. His mind gets polluted because of association with the external world. As a result, even his love gets tainted and his mind becomes incapable of cherishing the beautiful form of the Lord. Only when he directs his love towards God will man be able to experience the Divine within him.

On the disturbed surface of a pond, the reflection of the moon is wavy. But on a clear surface, the moon's reflection is clear and steady. In a muddy pond, the moon's reflection is muddy. Likewise in the lake of a man's mind, if it is confused and fickle, his love also gets distorted. When the mind is pure, unselfish and unwavering, the Divine appears in all His purity and fullness. But because of the pollution of the mind through obsession with multifarious external objects, man today is unable to experience the Divine that is omnipresent and is equally in him.

Many persons declare that God is present within them. This is wrong. This statement belittles the Divine. When I hold a flower within my palm, the flower is obviously smaller than my palm. If you say God is within you, you suggest that you are bigger than God. The truth is: You are in the Divine and not the Divine in you. It is only when you have such a wide vision that you can experience the Divine.

Firm faith is essential for realising the Self. Faith is the basis of self-confidence, without which nothing can be achieved. The word "Manava" (man) itself means one who has faith. When he acts up to his faith, he experiences peace and contentment. Love is the means through which faith is strengthened.

People offer prayers to God. Prayers should not mean petitioning to God for favours. The object of prayer should be to establish God firmly in one's heart. Aim at linking yourself to God and not at seeking favours. Aspire for earning the love of God. That is real penance. That is why it is said: Looking ahead (towards) is Tapas (penance); looking backward is Tamas (ignorance). Tapas does not mean giving up hearth and home and retiring to a forest. It means giving up all bad qualities and striving ceaselessly for God's grace.

True devotion

Love is the primary factor in this process. There is nothing greater than love on earth. Anything can be accomplished through love. Therefore, make every effort to promote love.

True devotion consists in offering all your thoughts and actions to God and yearning for His grace. Bhakti has been described as a state of non-separation from God. Regardless of time, space or circumstance, one should feel closeness to God-that is true Bhakti. Nowadays devotion is confined to the brief spell spent in the puja room (shrine) or in a temple. During that period, devotion appears to swell within you and you feel you are at peace. But once outside, the peace is lost and anger takes its place. This cannot be called devotion. True devotion transcends the limitations imposed by the daily routine and obligations of life. It should not be subject to changes in time, place and circumstance. Love for the Divine should be present in any situation. "Sathatham Yoginah", it is said. "Always remain as Yogis." You must strive to cultivate such love and experience the joy of sharing that love with others.

Occasionally one's devotion cools off when one's desires are not fulfilled. This is not a sign of true devotion. Devotion should not be related to physical needs. It is concerned with the heart

the concerns of the body. Such devotion has been described as "Param Bhakti"—supreme devotion. It may also be described as one-pointed devotion (Ananya Bhakti). Only such one-pointed devotion can get rooted in the heart. Our love should not vary from time to time.

Embodiments of Love! People tend to sacrifice their true nature for the sake of others' approbation. They should live up to the truth of their being. That is true devotion. A real devotee is eager to experience divine love and does not seek pomp and show.

Four paths: one goal

People speak about Yoga, Jnana, Karma, and Bhakti in relation to spiritual practice. These are inextricably interrelated. Among these, Bhakti deserves special mention. The first among spiritual paths is the Karma Marga—the Path of Action. The votary of this path performs many actions for the welfare of the world. He participates in yajna and Yagas—ritualistic sacrifices. He is engaged in service and charitable activities. All these forms of Karma are fraught with certain difficulties. To perform sacrifices one must be acquainted with Vedic texts. This is not easy for laymen.

The Jnana Marga (the Path of Knowledge) calls for knowledge of the scriptures and several other kinds of knowledge, which together lead to Atma-jnana, or Knowledge of the Self. Jnana has been defined as "Advaita Darsanam", the awareness of the One Cosmic Consciousness. It means recognising unity in diversity. It is not easy to experience this unity.

The path of Yoga, which is concerned with control of the mind, is equally difficult. It calls for rigorous control of the senses. One has to overcome many difficulties, trials and tribulations. Very few have the mental and spiritual strength to face these difficulties and ordeals. The path of yoga is thus beset with many hurdles.

Bhakti—the easiest

Bhakti—the Path of Devotion—is the easiest path for all. It does not call for mastery of the scriptures. It does not enjoin performance of rituals and sacrifices. The elusive quest for unity in diversity is avoided. By cultivating love for God, the senses come under natural self-discipline. Those who are well versed in the Sastras are good scholars but they hardly practise what they preach. What matters is practice and not scholarship. Knowledge without action is useless lumber. One must strive to put into practice at least one or two of the things learnt in the spiritual field. The most important goal for man is to put into practice the doctrine of divine love.

The Principle of Love is the greatest unifying force which unites all spiritual practices, all creeds, all the goals of life and all the scriptures. The foremost path for the spiritual aspirant is the path of complete surrender to the Lord for earning His love and grace. The devotee offers everything he has and does to the Lord in the same manner in which a bride renounces all that she had before her marriage in going to the home of her husband. God's love cannot be got without such renunciation by the devotee.

On various occasions, the Lord subjects devotees to different kinds of tests and trials with a view to raising them spiritually to a higher level. The Lord, who is the source of all wisdom, will confer illumination only on those who approach Him. Those who feel that Bhagavan has not seen them or spoken to them should ask themselves how close they are mentally to Bhagavan and how near they are to the Lord in their practices. Each one should engage himself in a process of self-enquiry. The Lord has neither anger (Aagraha) nor benevolence (Anuraga). Even when He appears to be harsh, there is grace in that harshness. When He appears to chastise, there is compassion in it. When He seems to be angry, there is love behind it.

Only those who understand the nature of Divinity can appreciate the ways of the Divine. The Divine resorts to certain kinds of punishments to make the devotee pursue the right path and enable him to lead an ideal life. Such punishments are for the devotee's good and well-being.

The pot and the gardener

Here is a story to illustrate the maxim, "No gains without pains." There was a gardener who used to water the plants in the garden carrying a pot on his head from dawn to dusk. One day while carrying the pot he got a headache and wanted to lay down the pot and go home. At that moment, the pot taught him a valuable lesson. The pot said:

Oh man! There can be no fruit without labour, no pleasure without pain. Learn the lesson from my own story. In the beginning I was just mere dust and mud, trodden upon by people. The potter gathered that mud, turned it into clay by pressing it under his feet, and made a pot from it by whirling the clay on his wheel. And finally I was placed in a kiln for firing. Whoever came to buy me, tapped on my sides with strength to test my hardness. It was because I went through all these ordeals that I earned the privilege of dancing on the heads of people. If I had not gone through all these trials how could I have achieved this eminence? Likewise, only if you are prepared to go through trials and difficulties will you be able to raise yourself in life."

End the "I"

Hence, you should not succumb to difficulties and disappointments. You must strive to overcome them. For this purpose you have to acquire the grace of God by developing faith. Every man is a prey to one evil quality, a kind of disease for which there is no medicine. That disease is Egoism (Ahamkara). This egoism gets into a man's head and plays the devil with him. Egoism affects not human beings alone, but even birds and beasts. For instance, a dog kept in a rich man's gate barks at every passerby to exhibit its authority. It is an example of egoism in an animal. The dog wants to show that it is the guardian of the house and that no one dare enter it. The dog assumes that "this is my house, I have to protect it," but it does not know what that "I" is.

If today a man does not know what his "I" signifies, he is in the same position as the dog. Every moment, a person talks about "My body, my mind, etc.," but he does not ask: "Who am I?" He alone is a Jnani (a man of wisdom) who has discovered the truth about himself. One who goes on using the word "I", but does not know who he is, is an Ajnani (an ignorant person).

People bandy the word "Vedanta". When a scholar is asked, "What is Vedanta?" the answer is: "The Upanishads, which come at the end of the Vedas, constitute Vedanta." That is not the real Vedanta. The ending of the "I" (the ego) is Vedanta. If you wish to know Me, you have first to know what you really are. Look into yourselves. Without understanding who you really are, how can you seek to understand Me? When your vision is concentrated on the external, how can you understand the inner being?

Ishwara's three forms

Ishwara is said to have three forms. One is: Viraat-Swaroopa (the Cosmic form). Two: Hiranyagarbha. Third: Avyakruta (the Causal entity). Viraat-Swaroopa is Vishwa-roopa—the entire manifested Cosmos is His form. All the myriad forms and names in the universe are contained in His form. This is described as "Jagrata-Swaroopudu" (the Cosmic form as experienced in the waking state). The second one is the Divine as experienced in the dream state: Hiranyagarbha. In the waking state, we use our limbs, see with our eyes and hear with our ears. In the dream state, we perform many actions. What are the hands which we use, what are the legs with which we walk? What is the mouth that speaks in dreams? When all the organs and senses of the body are not functioning in the dream state, how do these experiences occur? That is the subtle form of Hiranyagarbha.

"Avyakrutudu", the third form, is the Causal entity. It has no specific form and therefore is called, "Avyakruta". But Bliss (Ananda) is present. There is consciousness of experience. The physical, the subtle and the causal are the three forms respectively of Vishwaroopa, Hiranyagarbha and Avyakruta. You are the same person experiencing the waking state, dreaming in the sleeping state, and enjoying bliss in the deep sleep state (Sushupti). The one entity existing in all the three states is the Atma—in the body in the waking state, in the mind in the dream state and in the Chitta (Higher Consciousness) in the deep sleep state. The Ishwara principle unifies all the three entities.

Return to the source

Today we celebrate Siva Rathri. It means Auspicious Night. Who is this Siva and where is He to be found? All kinds of answers are given. Kailasa or other places that are mentioned are only "care of" addresses. The true answer is: "Isaavaasyam idam sarvam"—"All this is pervaded by Ishwara." He is omnipresent. There is no place, object or being where God is not present. You have to correct your outlook and recognise the unity in the apparent diversity.

When God is omnipresent, what need is there to go in search of God? The search is meaningless. If one gets rid of the attachment and the hatred in him, he will experience the divinity inherent in him. This is the sadhana (spiritual exercise) one has to do today—to get rid of desire and hatred which conceal the divinity within.

Many people come to Swami and ask: "Swami! Show us the way." All that you have to do is to go back to the source from which you came. Where is the need for seeking the way? The

from which it came.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Consider for a moment, where from the rain comes. It comes from clouds. The clouds have come from water vapour rising from the sea. The rain becomes a channel on the earth, then a rivulet and then a big river which joins the sea. A pot made out of clay, when it is broken, is cast on the ground, where, in course of time, it becomes clay again. Water from the sea joins the sea, clay from the earth goes back to the earth again, man alone forgets the source from which he came.

Man must seek to know the purpose of life. With all his knowledge and intelligence, man should try to rise above the level of the animal to a realisation of his divinity. A great deal of time is being wasted on futile controversies. The educated boast about their scholarship. They should be more concerned about discovering their true nature and living according to it.

The word "Manava" (man) means one who lives free from ignorance. What is this ignorance? It is to regard himself as that which he is not. He is not the body. He is not the mind. When he acts as if he is the body and the mind, he is living in ignorance like Dhritarashtra.

The besetting evil in man is the sense of "mine", the acquisitive and possessive feeling (Mamakara). This is the cause of all other evils. Man has to develop the consciousness that he is divine. The breath which man inhales and exhales 21,600 times a day conveys the message of "So-ham" ("I am He")—the truth about man's divine reality.

Devotion and gratitude

We regard as devotion (Bhakti) a few minutes devoted for worship, or going to sacred shrines and the like. But true devotion is an expression of gratitude to God for all that He has given us the human body with its various capacities, the intelligence we are endowed with and the many natural amenities made available to us such as air, water and sunlight. A person without gratitude is worse than a wild animal.

Develop love for God. There is nothing more powerful than Divine love.

Bhagavan concluded His ninety-minute discourse with the singing of three bhajans: "Prema Muditha manase kaho", "Hari Bhajana Binaa Sukha Santhi Nahi" and "Subrahmanyam! Subrahmanyam!"

Three speakers addressed the gathering prior to Bhagavan's discourse: V. K. Narasimhan, Anil Kumar and Prasanna, an M. Sc. Student.

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 6-3-1989

The joy of going to Bal Vikas

*I was once dressed like you
Not knowing what to do.
Also not knowing how important God was
Until I went to Bal Vikas
I learnt so much more,
More than I knew before.
There was a black shadow in my mind.
And it was as if I were blind
Slow by slow there was light,
flashing in my mind very bright
I realised that Sri Sathya Sai Baba
was within me, and I know I was not
paying a heavy fee, because
I know I was only praying to God.
I'm happy to go to Bal Vikas because
I know, I'm a flower which blooms
in Baba's Garden.*

—**Vasanthee Govender (13 years), Natal.**

God Exists

*If you doubt there is a God,
Look deep into a rose,
See the velvet petals from the
folded bud uncloze,
Note the tint and texture and
the lovely colouring;
Could blind Nature of itself evolve
So fair a thing?
Feel the softness of the petal,
breathe the fragrant scent,
Need you waste another thought
on further argument?
Here is a proof of a Creator:
God made manifest;
In this little rose we see Divinity expressed.*

—**Patience Strong**
—**From Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas—(Children's Magazine)**

Sand's Sad Story

(In this beautiful poem, the student has 'caught' the lamentation of the sands in the Prasanthi Mandir compound which lost the daily touch of Bhagavan's Lotus Feet during His rounds of Darshan in 1988, as a result of putting a bed of concrete over the whole area.)

*O Wayfarer! listen to my tale;
Mark my words without fail.
From the hills of Nandi had I started;
With many a friend had I parted. .*

*At last I reached the valley of Parthi;
It was as if I had got mukthi.
A day dawned, when to I came a cart;
Followed by more, it shook my heart.*

*In the carts shovelful I was heaped;
I did not know the destination till I reached.
It was what I had prayed all my life;
It was the end of a never-ending strife.*

*At long last I had reached the Nilayam;
My entire being was full with Sai Ram.
Everyday I expected His Lotus Feet;
And watched the hearts of man and Master meet,*

*And then I thought I was great;
Not knowing what was to be my fate.
I became more and more arrogant:
Scoffing at every bird and ant.*

*And then at last it happened;
My entire being was darkened.
I was entombed under a bed of "concrete";
I was banished from the Lotus Feet*

*So here I am shrouded as if forever
Pining for the Lord so dear
I shall wait, wait and wait;
Till He rewrites my fate.*

And may be we shall meet again;

Roots for the Rootless

Our life, it appears, is an almost endless series of hellos and goodbyes. During our youth the hellos are more numerous and exciting. In our later years, it is the goodbyes that occupy our thoughts more:

Today's mobile and ever-changing society should make it easier to handle the hellos and goodbyes. The hellos and goodbyes involve not only human friends and relatives but pets, houses, automobiles, boutiques and shopping malls. Of all, our attachments, the human ones are, of course, the strongest. Throughout our lives we are constantly moving in and out of others spheres of influence and they in and out of ours. One never knows when a casual meeting will result in a long-term relationship for better or worse. Energies meet, merge, augment or clash, strengthen or weaken, muddy or clarify, inspire or defeat, then go their separate ways. We have no way of knowing which of today's hellos will be the important ones and which goodbyes will be the last.

Because of today's mobile society, evolving lifestyles and emotional pressures we are denied the physical roots once enjoyed by our grandparents. They often lived their lives in a single house surrounded by the same friends and relatives for decades. Facing a lifetime association with an aunt or uncle, perhaps sharing a residence, sometimes called up our best efforts at understanding and diplomacy. There was need, for teamwork in such activities as barn raising, seed planting, harvesting and canning. Nowadays strangers and aliens build our barns, raise our food and sew our clothes. If something breaks we either telephone a stranger to come, fix it, throw it out or trade it in for a new and improved model. Ours has become indeed, a largely anonymous, disposable, and rootless society.

Perhaps this is why we have come to attach such importance to form and less to content. There is not time to assimilate the deeper significance of a relationship; there is only time to recognize the form it takes and the contribution it makes before its place is taken by another. Our lives have become jig-saw puzzles in which many pieces are interchangeable.

How best to survive the shifting winds of such an existence? We must have roots somewhere. We may not have them in our family life or career or neighbourhood or civic or social club. Faced with this kind of life, I have found strong roots in Baba and in His simple teaching that truth is what does not change. The purpose of our life experiences is to sort the wheat from the chaff, to look upon everything as a learning experience, to be open to instruction from any source, to know that there is one divine entity that lovingly guides us whenever we

need.

Thus we can look upon each hello as an opportunity to learn and serve the Universal Self and each goodbye *only* as the departure of a form assumed by the Divine for the purpose of instruction and testing. If we accept Baba's teaching that in time we must all earn liberation from the cycle of birth and death and merge in Him who gave us form, then it is not goodbye... but *auf wiedersehen*.

—Jay Jarrett, Georgia, U.S.A.

Love for God

I was just 12 years old
When someone whispered
God into my ears.
And in a delight
I was prepared to
learn about God.
And I saw the
sense of humour
the Balvikas students had,
So I learnt about
Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Who brought joy into my life.
And in my mind
All I could hear was
Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Who made me walk, talk and sing
with the Sweetness of Love.
In the night when the stars shine
It's like Sri Sathya Sai Baba
shining on me, and then I whisper
Om Sai Ram!

—Kusturie Govender, (15 years), Natal.

STUDENTS' CORNER:

A Rebirth

*Sixteen long years ago
in a murky city a seed did sprout*

*with tender and innocent face
and all full of divine grace*

*With epics read in lamps aglow
the infant little did grow
into a being supple and strong
in whose mind rang a divine song*

*But alas! the boy could not resist long
the inviting city's passionate arms
and he into sin and temptation did fall
while trampled underfoot was God and all
Life became a meaningless pun
a living death! alas!
down the murky drain he went
into the darkness of the den;
but, through the darkness came a beam of
hope*

*A beckoning ray that dispelled dope
but clamped as he was in the false glade
even that hope began to fade*

But the divine beam clutched its beloved

*eternal
and from the murky darkness of the night
it guided him to broad day-light*

*A birthless rebirth! a new born hope!
threw to the winds as it were the dope—
the dope of passion, lust and greed
all blown away by divinity's creed.*

*Into His arms Sai folded him in
and showered ceaselessly love on him
and he when his Lord's cheek did kiss
was transported to perpetual bliss.*

*What more can I ask from dear Sai!
He that guards me day and night
how can I repay His love, His tenderness
I but remain in eternal gratefulness.*

**—Kumar Ramachandran
XI Standard. Vidyagiri.**

Swami's trip to Kodaikanal and Ooty in 1988 was a fascinating and revealing experience for all the students whom He took with Him on the trip.

The group joined Swami at Brindavan from where they proceeded to Ooty. At Ooty Swami was welcomed by the tiny tots of Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, Nandanvan.

Throughout the trip Swami subjected the boys to numerous quiz sessions to test their general knowledge. How many nerves are there in the body, Swami asked. Many answers were given, but Swami said seventy-two crores. Which is the largest bone—the thighbone. What is the maximum depth of the ocean—8 miles. What is the diameter of the earth—8000 miles.

Swami told the group stunning facts regarding the average ages of human beings in different Yugas: Treta Yuga—300 years, Dwapara Yuga—175200 years. In Kali Yuga it has diminished to less than hundred.

Swami asked the meaning of "O.K." Many answers were given; but Swami said O.K. signifies Om Krishna.

At Ooty, Swami showed His love to the children by distributing colourful sweaters He had brought for them all the way from Brindavan. Swami showed His loving concern for the children when He visited eleven Ooty children who were sick and couldn't have His darshan. He created Vibhuti for them. All through the trip, too, when anyone of the group felt sick, Swami never failed to give him personal attention, always quipping: "I don't know what these aches and pains you are suffering from are. I myself have never suffered from any pain or ache."

Throughout the trip Swami gave edifying discourses, giving spiritual, practical and man-making advice.

In one of His scintillating talks, Bhagavan illustrated the power of love by narrating an incident when He was on His way to a village on the Indo-Tibetan border occupied by the Chinese. Swami was warned not to go there on account of the presence of Chinese troops. But Swami went and His love eliminated the dangers arising from military crossfire. And to the surprise of all, He was greeted by a Chinese welcome dance.

Swami also spoke on many aspects of modern knowledge. For instance, Swami asked, "What is the difference between Science and Spirituality?" Many answers were offered, but Swami gave His in an epigram. "Spiriting of love is Science, the Spirit of love is spirituality." Swami went to say, "Spirituality is Antardrishti (inner vision), Science is Bahirdrishti (outer vision). Science deals with the power of matter, spirituality deals with the powers of mind. Below the senses is Science above the senses is Spirituality.

"Wherever you go and whatever you do, discipline is most important."

Swami not only gave the boys spiritual but also practical advice. For example, He told the boys how to keep a camera while taking photographs. Pictures should not be taken against the sun. Answering the question of an elderly devotee on how to convert action into righteousness, Swami replied, "When your action is dedicated to divinity, it automatically becomes righteous as divinity is the very embodiment of righteousness. Work is turned into worship when it is done to please the Lord."

We, Swami's students, must try to repay at least to a small extent the Unrepayable debt we owe to Swami by our gratitude. We must excel in all fields—spirituality, academics and sports. Let us begin by dedicating all our skills to Swami, that His name may shine through us.

**—Rakhal Gaitonde, XI Standard
Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School,
Prasanthi Nilayam**

The first lesson in Seva has to be learnt in the family circle itself. Father, mother, brother, sisters—in this limited group, which is well knit, one must engage in loving service and prepare for the wider Seva that awaits outside the home. The character of each individual member determines the peace and prosperity of the family; the character of each family is the basic factor that decides the happiness and joy of the village or the community. And, the nation's progress is based on the strength and happiness of the communities which are its components. So, for the welfare of the country and of the entire world, the spirit of service, vital enthusiasm, constructive imagination, pure motivation, and unselfish alertness are all urgently needed.

—Baba

Argument and Agreement

One of the basic problems of living with others is the reconciliation of opinions. No two persons agree on all occasions. There are also bound to be such differences; in the family, diverse viewpoints are stressed by father and son, brother and sister, husband and wife, grandfather and grand-children. Even friends disagree. However, each adjusts to the other and life moves on. But, when we do not like a person, the differences of opinion tend to sharpen, and may lead to doubt, distance and permanent enmity.

A very profound and practical advice for happy living given by Baba is the following:
"Difference of opinion must be like the two eyes, each giving a different picture of the same

this advice have to be grasped by every one of us.

Differences usually centre on a single object or objective. During a discussion, each tends to look at it from his own point of view. This depends to a great extent on his background, upbringing and temperament. No two persons, even in the same family, are the same (Thank God, they are not!) It will therefore be surprising if there were no differences!

Two eyes and one object

The analogy given by Baba is very significant. Our eyes are a stereo-pair. Although both eyes may look at the same object, they do not see it similarly since they are set apart! So, each eye has a slightly different picture of the same object. This is done on purpose, since only through the fusion of the two pictures in the mind can a three-dimensional view of the things we see be experienced. Through stereo-vision we see things in perspective, in depth!

Baba says that differences of opinion must be viewed as a stereo-pair! If we accept this obvious fact, it would be absurd to expect that others will see things the same way we do. We then realise that each has something different and useful to say about the same thing. A person's view is selective. So, if we pay attention to the viewpoints of many persons, we can secure a complete picture. During any discussion, we will notice that some participants give new dimensions to the subject and bring to light certain aspects which others had not perceived.

Normally differences of opinion lead to dissension, for we have no sense of tolerance. We exaggerate slight deviations. We do not value the opinion of others. The ego refuses to accept that we are not the sole custodians of the whole truth and that we can at best see only a partial truth. We are like the six blind men who described the elephant, after each contacting only a part of its body.

The crucial point in Baba's advice is implied in the comparison with the two eyes. The two eyes belong to the same body! Baba wants us to remember that although we are different bodies, we are essentially one. So we must look at our differences as if they are facets of the same entity. We have not only to tolerate them but even welcome them. In fact, without a pair of eyes the vision will be faulty for receiving and coordinating two pictures of every object. We will not have perspective and depth.

Respect others' views

Baba advises, "Always respect another's opinion and another's point of view. Don't start a quarrel at the slightest difference of opinion," and adds what is more difficult to recognise: "He may be right and you may be wrong!" Baba says, "Ponder over his argument, he might have had the advantage of knowing more about the subject, or you may be prejudiced either for or against; or he may not know as much as you do. Every instance of difference of opinion does not indicate personal hatred, remember." Baba is aware that we quickly attribute motives to the actions of others. We conclude quite soon that the reaction of the other person is due to personal animosity.

an open mind, we might, in most cases, benefit from the other viewpoint.

Baba has often advised that adversaries and those who are critical are more relevant for us than our admirers, since our 'antagonists' forewarn us. "Love your enemies. They are more useful than your friends!" is Baba's dictum.

—**Dr. M. V. N. Murthy**

From "The Greatest Adventure"

Sacrifice is the highest step. One who has the true spirit of sacrifice gives to others without any hesitation or reservation, smilingly and gladly, even his dearest and highest possession. Surrendering the fruit of action to the Lord is real sacrifice. A Tyagi does not shrink even to give up his body, regarding it as worthless straw. Sacrifice means something more than giving up of wealth, gold, and material objects. Evil qualities like hatred, jealousy, wrath and malice which have become ingrained in man over many lifetimes should be discarded. There is no happiness greater than that obtained from sacrifice. Only those who sacrifice are children of immortality because they live forever.

—**Baba**

Experiencing the Omnipresence

A divine Avatar is a manifestation, an embodiment of God in human form on earth. What great blessing and grace for us all, that God in His love has incarnated amongst us as Sathya Sai Baba!

God is everywhere, He is always with us. But if we have the opportunity to visit Sai Baba, it is a wonderful divine gift of grace. Many are those, who, like me, can testify that a personal meeting with and nearness to Sai Baba is an immensely elevating and inspiring experience. I remember with warmth and gratitude the bliss I experienced every time when coming into the sphere of His divine radiation of love and light. These divine meetings with Sai Baba have given me invaluable help and guidance in my spiritual development. His love has consolidated the consciousness that He is always with me, wherever I maybe and that His love reaches out beyond all boundaries of time and space.

For meeting and learning to know Sai Baba we travel from all around the world to Puttaparthi. Were we but aware of His real true nature, His omnipresence, we would understand that we can meet and experience Him everywhere, and that He is not limited to His physical form in Puttaparthi.

is our limited consciousness about this truth. What can be more important for us than becoming conscious about our divinity, our real 'I'?

If we were aware that our physical body is only a temporary abode for our divine inner 'I', an instrument for God to express Himself, then we would not identify ourselves with the body. It is important for us to liberate ourselves from this limitation and expand our consciousness. If we could do this, we would be free, whenever we so desire, to be near to Sol Baba and sit at His divine Lotus Feet. The day we possess this clear consciousness, we do not need to move our physical body to various places on earth for experiencing the presence of Sai.

Meditation is a way that can lead us to consciousness about God's presence within us and His omnipresence. When through meditation we have learnt to free ourselves from body-consciousness, we reach a state of trance that gives us a divine super-consciousness. When our consciousness, our soul, is not anymore bound to the body, we can, with our divine will and the power of thought, move our inner 'I' to where we wish to be present. One moment we are sitting, sunk in stillness in meditation, in our home, the next we are in our divine consciousness in Prasanthi Nilayam at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba and get His darshan.

We must widen and purify our consciousness for seeing and experiencing God in all His multi-coloured, innumerable manifestations in nature, in all forms of life.

We are all treading the same path. Nobody is standing still in his spiritual development, nobody is more divine than another. What makes the difference is the level of our spiritual development, our consciousness.

For our spiritual growth during earthly life, the most important task is to learn to know ourselves, our inner true divine 'I'. Purposefully and wholeheartedly, I have been searching for the truth hiding behind the phenomenal world. The glimpses of truth that I have been vouchsafed during my meditation seem to me today more and more clearly as not more than fragments and a step on the way towards the ultimate reality, the absolute truth, God.

The divine reality expresses itself in so many innumerable ways that very few can say, "I know the full truth."

—Curt Orefjaerd, Stockholm

Soham

*How can I find the path I seek
The path that leads me to my home?
Do I storm the bastion or reach it by stealth?
And how will I recognise myself?*

*In the far reaches of the night
When all is silent in the dark
And it becomes too hard to bear
The pain of separateness from Thee.
Then comes the answerdressed in Love*

*And Truth the shining gleaming jewel
Is That Which Isand ever Was.*

*No ecstasy, no frenzy either,
Only the hush of wings at rest
A softsweet stirring in my heart
A holytender....gentleness
Sai Ram becomes So Hamand He
Is now I AM
And I AM ...now is He.*

—P. H.

Words Reveal the Breeding of the Speaker

The tongue is the index of the breeding. "Hey! You clout! Did you hear soldiers march this way?" a man asked a blind farmer. Minutes later, another person accosted him, "Blind man! Open your mouth and tell me whether you heard the noise of soldiers marching this way." Later, a third voice approached him, "Sir, did you hear some soldiers marching along this path?" At last another person came near and placed his hand upon his shoulder, "My dear man, please tell me, did you hear men marching along this road? The blind man correctly described his interrogators as a soldier, a captain, a minister and the king himself. The words reveal the breeding of the speaker. The tongue is the armour of the heart; it guards one's life. Loud talk, long talk, wild talk, talk full of anger and hate, all these affect the health of man. They breed anger and hate in others; they wound, they excite, they enrage, they estrange. Why is silence said to be golden? The silent man has no enemies, though he may not have friends. He has the leisure and the chance to dive within himself and examine his own faults and failings. He has no more any inclination to seek them in others. If your foot slips, you earn a fracture; if your tongue slips, you fracture some one's faith or joy. That fracture can never be set right; that wound will fester forever. Therefore use the tongue with great care. The softer you talk, the less you talk, the sweeter you talk, the better for you and the world.

—Baba (From "Chinna Katha")

YUGADI SANDESH:

“Make Every Moment Holy”

We hail the New Year as Samvatsara because it signifies the omnipresence of the Divine. It is not the New Year Day alone that should be regarded as holy. Every moment is the beginning of a new year. Every moment should be made holy by sacred thoughts and actions,” observed Bhagavan Baba, in the course of His inspiring discourse on Yugadi day, April 7th, in the Kalyanamandap at Brindavan.

A very large gathering of devotees was present on the occasion.

Prof. V.K. Gokak said that it was only in this country that the concept of Avatar (the Divine coming down in human form) had been recognised from time immemorial. Four stanzas in the Gita contained assurances from the Lord as to the occasions and the purposes for which the Avatar appeared on the earth. The Gita also indicated what should be the attitude of man to the Avatar. “You have to thrill to Him,” said Prof. Gokak. There should be a full-hearted response to the call of the Divine. “The Gita held forth the message of complete surrender to the Lord. While Krishna gave Arjuna the freedom to act as He chose (“Yathechchasi thathhaa kuru”), Arjuna declared: “Karishye vachanam thava” (“I shall act according to your words.”)

Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Vice-President of India, who had arrived in Brindavan while the meeting was in progress, was invited by Bhagavan to address the gathering. Dr. Sharma said that Bhagavan Baba had inaugurated a new era in the history of mankind. It was their duty to learn the lessons from the avatar. Every hint or advice given by Bhagavan should be followed scrupulously. Dr. Sharma mentioned instances in which failure to observe Bhagavan's advice had led to serious consequences.

Prof. Anil Kumar spoke on Bhagavan's message to the world today.

The Lord as Time-Spirit in the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

All holy festivals in Bharat are invested with profound inner significance. Today is Yugadi day. It is commonly believed that this marks the beginning of a new year. No. It is really the beginning of an aeon (Yuga). The Lord is the beginning and the end of every aeon. Hence He is called Yugadikrit (the creator of the Yuga). God is not only the creator of each aeon, but He is also described as the sustainer of the Yuga.

In sustaining the Yuga, the Lord is all-powerful. He is omniscient. Hence He has the appellation "Yugadhara" (the supporter of the Yuga). He is also known as "Yugandhara". Divinity is the power behind the creation, sustenance and dissolution of every aeon.

Yugadi is also celebrated as the festival of the New Year (Samvatsaraadi). What is the meaning of "Samvatsara"? Samvatsara means God, the One who dwells in everything. For Samvatsara (the year), the underlying spirit is Atma. Another name for "Samvatsara" is "Kaala" (Time).

Because Time is subsumed by the Spirit, God is known as "Kaala Atma"—the Time—Spirit. Yugadi, therefore, represents the form of the Divine. The Cosmos itself is the form of the Divine (Vishnu). "Sarvam khalu idam Brahman," declares the Upanishad. The four Yugas (aeons)—Krita, Treta, Dwapara and Kali—are permeated with divinity. Hence, God has also the name, "Chaturaatmaka", "The Fourfold Spirit."

The fourfold spirit

This fourfold Spirit is manifested in four forms with distinctive attributes, though their powers are one and the same. They are: Vaasudeva, Sankarshana, Aniruddha and Pradyumna. All the four are combined in the Avatar (the incarnation of the Divine in human form).

God should not be regarded as some separate power or entity. Time is a manifestation of God. Hence God is adored as Time (Kaala), the Master of Time (Kaalakaala), the Controller of Time, One who transcends Time (Kaalaatheetha) etc. God is also known as Vatsara—as the Divine indweller in all beings.

Of the four forms of the Lord regarded as "Chaturaatmaka" (the fourfold Spirit), the first is Vaasudeva. This name signifies that the Lord is immanent in everything in creation and bears within Himself everything in the cosmos. He is omnipotent. He is resplendent. He remains unmoved in any condition, in any circumstance, while being present in every limb and every cell. He is known also as "Angirasa" the One who is present in every limb (Anga) in the form of the circulating blood and imparts vitality to it. As the vital essence (rasa), He is described as the élan vital ("Raso vai Sah"). Thus, everything is permeated by God and there is nothing outside Him.

The second name is Sankarshana. Sankarshana is the One who, at the time of the Great Dissolution (Pralaya), absorbs within Himself the entire Cosmos. He is the One who ends all sorrow and confers all happiness. The Sankarshana Principle is the one which removes misery and confers joy. Sankarshana should not be regarded merely as Balarama, the son of Revathi (the elder wife of Vasudeva). Sankarshana represents the Divine attribute of eliminating grief and giving happiness, removing mental agitation and conferring peace, destroying weakness of spirit and instilling fortitude. This is no ordinary attribute. It is a Divine quality which is present in every human being.

"Aniruddha" refers to one who has a unique quality. He confers this quality (or Sampada, wealth) on whoever prays to Him. He is the Lord who confers both material and spiritual benefits on those who adore Him in this aspect, He shines through His effulgence. This illumination is not derived from outside. He Himself is the source of His light and also the light that illumines everything. This Principle of Aniruddha is essential for every human being.

The fourth name is Pradyumna. He represents the invincible Divine power, which cannot be overcome by anyone. He has no equal. He is His own example. He is His own law. There is no one below Him or above Him because He is even in those below Him. The Pradyumna Principle is all-pervading and omnipresent.

God and man

It is the combination of all these four Principles which constitutes humanness. God is not different from man. Vaasudeva is Paramatma (the Omni-Self). Sankarshana is Jiva-Atma (the individual Soul). Pradyumna is the mind. Aniruddha is "Aham" (the ego). The union of these four is "Manavatva" (Humanness). If any one of these four constituents is absent, man cannot live in this world. If it is asked whether "Ahamkara" (Egoism) is also essential, the answer is: "Aham" (the Ego) should be present, but not Ahamkara (the feeling of egoism, the sense of separate identity associated with the body consciousness). "Aham" means the "I". The "I" should not be identified with the physical form. "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am the Brahman "). "Aham na Dehasmi" ("I am not the body"). "Na Aham Jivasmi" ("I am not the Jiva—the individual soul"). "Aham Aham", "I am I". This "Aham" is the essence of everything. In the Sanskrit alphabet, the first letter is "A" and the last letter is "Ha". When the two letters are combined, you have "Aha". All the sounds in the language are comprised within these two letters, "Aham" means the principle which is present in everything in the cosmos from the atom to Brahman.

This is the significance of the Vedic pronouncements: `Aham Brahmasmi". "Prajnanam Brahma", ("Prajnana—Constant Integrated Awareness—is Brahman"). " Tath-tvam-Asi" ("That Thou art"). Failing to recognise the truth of these great pronouncements and regarding the body as real and permanent, man is becoming a prey to sorrow.

The creator and creation

Bhagavan is the unified form of these four principles. Most people do not seek to understand the meaning of the word "Bhagavan". "Bhag" means "Sambhartha". A second meaning is "Bhartha" (Master). "Sambhartha" means the one who creates the Cosmos on the basis of Nature. Combining clay and water, the potter makes pots. Without either clay or water it is not possible to make pots. So, for the pot, the basic materials are clay and water. Only when two of the five basic elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether) are available can pots be made. Even these two elements are forms of the divine.

How wonderful is this creation! Air has the power to blow out a flame. A lamp is endowed with the power to spread illumination. But the same air is needed to keep the flame of the lamp burning. Thus air has the God-given power both to extinguish a flame or keep it burning. How does the same element have both these contradictory powers? This is the mystery of the powers of the Divine.

"Bhaga" (in the term "Bhagavan") refers to the creative powers of God. Hence He is called "Sambhartha". "Bhartha" is one who protects what exists. So Bhagavan is the creator and the protector of the Cosmos. The term also means one who illumines everything in the universe. Without this all-pervading Divine light, we will not be able to live for a moment. This means that if the Cosmos, which is constituted by the five basic elements, and the human body, which is made up of the same five elements, are to be sustained well, they need the sustaining power of the Divine.

Why holy days?

"Yugadi" should not be treated merely as a holy festive occasion. It must be regarded as a day dedicated to the Divine. All festivals observed by Bharatians have a marvellous inner meaning. But men in general view them only in terms of external observances and celebrate them with feasts and frolic. These festivals were really intended to be used for the exclusive worship of the Divine, enjoy the bliss of that devotion and overcome pain and sorrow. These holy days were instituted for the purpose of getting rid of ignorance and cultivating right knowledge, the higher wisdom and cosmic consciousness. Man has been endowed with intelligence together with the human form. Along with these, man has also been given temporary existence. Man has, therefore, to use the life-span allotted to him for leading a purposeful existence by the use of his intelligence. Man, unfortunately, misuses his intelligence and gambles away his precious life.

Man and society

Man should strive to use every talent and skill given to him not only for his own benefit but also for the good of the world. Man owes everything to society and should be grateful to society for all that he receives from it. Expressing this gratitude is man's foremost duty. This, gratitude has been described as Bhakti (or devotion). Chanting the names of the Lord is one of the ways of expressing this gratitude. All the nine forms of worship are different ways in which this gratitude is expressed.

The "Yugadi" celebration is an annual reminder of man's obligation to express his gratitude to the Divine for all the benefits received from God.

Sanctify every minute

We hail the New Year as "Samvatsara" because it signifies the omnipresence (in time and space) of the Divine. "Samvatsara" does not merely mean period (of a year) made up of minutes, hours, days, and months. Every moment is "Samvatsara", because without seconds, minutes, etc. there cannot be a year. If the year is to be sanctified, every moment has to be sanctified. Every second constitutes a year: It is not the New Year that matters. Every new second is significant.

Hence you should fill every moment with sacred thoughts, with pure feelings and pure action. Every moment you should try to get rid of bad thoughts and fill the mind with good thoughts.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! From ancient times, Bharat has been holding forth to the world great ideals and the highest wisdom. It has been concerned not only with the physical and material welfare of man but has laid stress on Divinity that permeates the universe. Men should recognise this Divinity and respect every being as an embodiment of the Divine. Forms may vary but the indwelling Spirit is one and the same in all. Hence you should bear no ill-will towards anyone. Control of speech is most important. Excessive talk should be avoided. Speech should be sweet and well intentioned.

"Help ever: hurt never"

Vyasa summed up the essence of his eighteen Puranas in two maxims: It is meritorious to help others, sinful to cause them harm. "Help ever: hurt never." The damage done by a bad word may cause more lasting injury than any harm done to the body. Bear in mind that India has been in the past an exemplar to the world. It has been the birthplace of great sages and scholars, valiant heroes, renowned artists and poets, and many who have excelled in all the arts. Having been born in such a country, it is the duty of all devotees to uphold the sacred Dharma of Bharat. People ceaselessly talk about "Bhakti", devotion. But what is this devotion? What are you doing for the land of your birth? Gratitude to your native land is the real index of devotion. Your body (Deha) and your nation (Desha) are one. Therefore, the welfare of the nation is your welfare. Remember this always.

After the fall of Ravana in Lanka, when all around him appealed to Rama to take over the lordship of Lanka and rule over it, Rama replied that the mother and the motherland are greater than Heaven itself and he would not give up his motherland, whatever might be the attractions of Lanka.

Love the motherland

Today, whatever may be the plight of Bharat, we should not give it up, because it is our motherland. Young people should develop an intense love for the Motherland. The sense of attachment to the nation, regarding it as "My Country, my people," is conspicuously absent today. Born in Bharat, breathing its sacred air, drinking the sacred water of the Ganga, inheriting the hoary culture of the country, people are still going after alien manners and customs. This is nothing less than treason to the nation. In no circumstance should you forget Bharat, whatever its defects. You must love the country and strive ceaselessly to promote its progress. The one who cannot proclaim, "This is the land of my birth, its language is my mother tongue, its culture is my religion," is as good as dead. No other country can boast of such a long line of great men in every sphere as Bharat. India has been the beacon-light to the world in the spiritual field. It has held out to the world such ideal rulers as Harishchandra, Nala, Mandhata and Sri Rama. Their fame abides, though their empires have gone. Today's rulers should realise that their rule will be temporary and they should conduct themselves in such a way that their names are remembered for their integrity and devotion to Righteousness.

Earn God's love

The only wealth one can carry with him after death is the love of the Lord. One should strive to earn that wealth during his life. This can be done only by selfless devotion and love. To earn God's love, one has to dedicate one's time, body and actions to the service of the Lord. This was the realisation that came to Arjuna after listening to the message of Sri Krishna. He declared: "Karishye vachanam thava" ("I shall carry out whatever you say.") Arjuna, who was an exceptionally intelligent person, came to this conclusion only after every kind of argument with Krishna.

Today, men argue in various ways, forgetting that the source of the reasoning power is itself God. Men should depend not on their physical or intellectual strength, but on the power of God.

Only the man who relies solely on the power of God can experience true peace and bliss. Such a person need not mind the criticisms of others. He can't defy the opinions of a multitude of persons and stand up for what he holds to be true. Unmindful of praise or censure, you have to cultivate firm faith in God. Do not worry about the world; concentrate on God. This was the attitude of the Gopikas, who were unmindful of what others said regarding their total absorption in the contemplation of Krishna. They exemplified pure and unwavering devotion. One must hold fast to one's belief, whatever may happen. A true devotee will not give up his faith whatever may befall him. The basis of that faith is not reason but instinctive conviction like the child's love for its mother. Students and young men who profess devotion to God, must be prepared to declare openly that they adore and love Bhagavan for no reason except that He is God. "My experience is the basis of my faith"; should be their answer. For devotion to God, only two things are needed: faith and experience. Both these are rooted in Love.

Embodiments of the Divine! Do not forget God, who is the embodiment of the Yuga. He is the Lord of Time. "Kaala" means one who is the giver of all happiness. If you take refuge in the Lord of Time, no one can cause you any harm. Make the best use of time, chanting the name of the Lord or engaging yourselves in sacred activities.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan "*Bhajana binaa sukha santhi nahi*".

—*From Bhagavan's discourse at the Kalyana Mandap, Brindavan,
on April 7, 1989, Yugadi day*

BHAGAVAN IN HYDERABAD:

Let Practice Prevail

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Today the world is replete with great intellectuals, learned scholars who excel in logomachy, professional politicians, and Sanyasis who flaunt the ochre robe. But the divinity that is inherent in humanity is not to be seen at all. People have forgotten their divine essence. Humanity has to discover its basic human qualities.

Whatever learning one may acquire, whatever positions one may occupy, however great a scientist one may be, if he lacks human values, he is no human being at all. What is humanness? Essentially it means unity in thought, word and deed. When what one thinks differs from what he says and what he does, he ceases to be human. He becomes a demon. Today what men have to cultivate is unity and purity in thought, word and deed.

True human qualities can grow only in a heart filled with spiritual aspirations, like a seed sown in a fertile soil and not on a piece of rock. Hence, to develop these qualities men will have to develop compassion and equanimity amidst the vicissitudes of life.

Man today *is* caught up in meaningless worries, endless desires, and unattainable ambitions and has no peace of mind. To one who is groping in the darkness of ignorance and peacelessness, it is spiritual illumination alone that can reveal the right path. Today cynicism and apathy are rampant. People are not interested in religious discourses. The reason is that these discourses are confined to the platform. There is no earnest enquiry into the value of these teachings, nor is there practice of the precepts. The foremost need today is to live the life of the Spirit.

What the world needs

For the progress of the world, it is not some factory or industry that is needed. The world needs good students and good men and women. Only then the nation will progress.

Men do not realise that as their desires increase, their happiness diminishes. There is no limit to desires. They multiply like ants in an anthill. There is no sense of satisfaction, however much one may possess or enjoy. Animals and birds have contentment. They have neither the selfish propensity to hoard nor the sinful quality of exploiting others. Man alone is prone to acquisitive hoarding and exploitation.

To realise one's divinity, there is no need to embark on a long quest. Divinity is all-pervading and is present in and outside every being. Every man is an embodiment of the divine.

God is the embodiment of love. Man, who has emerged from God, is also an embodiment of love. But, because he expresses his love towards external objects, he is forgetting the truth about his inner being. Instead of limiting his love within narrow confines, man should extend it to all and thereby make his life purposeful and worthy.

Today love is disappearing even between mother and children, father and son, husband and wife and between friends. Narrow-minded attachments are divisive in their nature. These should give place to a broad feeling of love and regard for all on the basis that the same Divine is present in everyone.

There is an example from the Mahabharata to illustrate this situation. Because of Sri Krishna's grace, all the Pandava brothers survived the Kurukshetra war. All the hundred Kaurava brothers died in the war. Seeing the plight of Gandhari, not one of whose sons had survived in the war, people blamed Krishna for such a calamity. Krishna went to Gandhari to console her. On seeing Krishna, she burst out in anger: "Krishna! Being divine, should you exhibit such favouritism? Could you not have saved at least one of my sons?" Smilingly, Krishna replied: "Mother! Did you set your eyes on even one of your sons? When you yourself did not choose to cast your eyes on your sons, how do you expect God to look at them?" (Gandhari had blindfolded herself from the time of marriage to her blind husband, Dhritarashtra, and never removed the bandage out of devotion to her husband). You have to earn the mother's love. There is nothing greater than one's mother and Motherland.

Man is beset today with many problems and difficulties. He alone is a true human being who faces these difficulties with fortitude and overcomes them. For this, what is required is strength of Spirit. Without spiritual strength, all other things are valueless. Karna had physical strength and material wealth. But he lacked Divine grace and hence he fell in battle.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Remember always that God permeates everything in the cosmos. Everything you experience is Divine. What all you see is Divine. What you eat is Divine. The air you breathe is Divine. You cannot see the air, nor can you grasp it. Likewise you cannot grasp God. The eyes cannot see Him. He can only be experienced in the heart. He is beyond the mind.

Unity through love

The human birth is precious. Sanctify it by leading righteous lives. Do not fritter it away. Whatever spiritual discipline you may practise or not, cultivate love for all. Offer that love as a divine offering to all. Only through love can world unity be promoted. It is because of the absence of love that all kinds of differences arise. Love is God. Live in Love. Make this the ruling principle of your life. Be considerate to everyone.

Today speeches are made on Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love) and exhibitions are organised to propagate these values. But there is no attempt to exemplify these values by practical living. Of what avail are speeches and exhibitions if these values are not practised? The world will not be reformed by propaganda. It is only when there are living examples of these ideals that they become meaningful and inspiring.

All the chaos in the world is due to the fact that people lead double lives. They say one thing and act differently. There should be unity in thought, word and deed. True spirituality consists in promoting human unity through harmonious living and sharing the joy with one and all. Bhajans and all forms of worship are only good actions, but are spiritually not important.

Devotion consists in expressing love towards all. You cannot effect a change of heart by speeches. They often lead to confusion and conflict. Better than speeches is the practice of love, with faith in the Divine. Follow the path of love and redeem your lives.

—From Bhagavan's discourse at "Sivam", Hyderabad, on 24-3-1989

Bhagavan's Benediction on Hyderabad Devotees

To many thousands of yearning devotees, who had been praying for Swami's darshan for nearly five years, Bhagavan's brief but memorable visit to Hyderabad on March 24th was an ecstatic experience.

Bhagavan arrived at the Begumpet aerodrome from Madras at 7-30 a.m. Large crowds greeted Him at the airport. Swami proceeded to "Sivam", in Hyderabad, where lakhs of devotees had assembled to welcome Him and have His darshan. Bhagavan was received with Poorna-Kumbham and the chanting of Vedic hymns by Bal Vikas children. In response to the earnest desires of all the devotees, Bhagavan delivered His benedictory discourse to the gathering and showered His blessings on one and all.

Later, Bhagavan visited the newly constructed buildings of the Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar. Swami was received with Poorna-Kumbham and floral offerings by the boys and girls of Vidya Vihar. Bhagavan blessed the large gathering of devotees present and went round the new buildings. Swami had an appreciative look at the 25-foot figure of Saraswati, the Goddess of Wisdom, installed in the centre of the building complex.

After going round the Principal's office and various classrooms, Bhagavan blessed the students and staff of the institution who had assembled in the spacious auditorium. Bhagavan witnessed two dance items presented on the stage by the students of Vidya Vihar. Bhagavan distributed Prasad to those who had participated in the bhajans and the students who had appeared for the tenth standard examinations.

Bhagavan returned by air to Bangalore in the afternoon.

THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF LIFE:

From Insurance to Human Values

I used to sell insurance. Last August in 1988, while travelling on an urban bus, the driver made an unexpected move and I flew out of the door. A taxi driver picked up my unconscious body and took me to the hospital. I was in coma for several days. When I started to regain consciousness, there was a man in an orange robe sitting on my bed. He had funny "afro" hair. Then, I lost consciousness again. When I came to consciousness again, he was still there. He didn't say anything but I wanted to pray to him and ask for his help. I wanted to live because my two-year old daughter needs a mother. But I didn't know who this strange man was. Then I slept. When I awoke, I asked the nurses and the doctors who the man in the orange robe was. No one knew.

After two months of convalescence, I returned to my office only to discover that I had been fired because I hadn't sold any insurance in two months. I was depressed beyond words. Then a friend suggested that I visit the local Sai Baba Centre. On a Thursday when we entered the Centre and I saw the picture on the altar, my hair stood on ends. I was struck dumb. Sai Baba was the stranger who sat on my bed.

At the Centre, I met a lady who owns a radio station. She explained how the radio was broadcasting a news programme describing positive actions by good citizens. They also had a

programme called "The Voice of the Avatar," which was recorded by devotees of Sai Baba. And then there were Bible stories, vegetarian cooking programmes and classical music. She offered me a job as reporter and announcer. I jumped at the chance.

I first had to study the Human Values as taught by Bhagavan Baba and try to put them into practice in my own life, so that I could recognise them and report on them. A whole new field has opened before me. Now I can see so much good everywhere. Public servants doing more than their duty requires, doctors and nurses serving day and night, bus drivers courteously transporting thousands safely everyday, students helping old ladies to cross busy thoroughfares or pushing a stalled car for the owner, honest bank clerks who return the erroneous overpayment, teachers giving their love to the students, policemen upholding the law, senior citizens taking care of a park and hundreds of such incidents make up the real news of the day. When looked at in this way, what a beautiful world it is! I am glad Swami has given me this second chance and made me see the world with new eyes.

—*Margarita Ingles, San Salvador*

BHAGAVAN AT OOTY:

With the Kids at Nandanvan

It was the 8th of April when Nandanvan was blessed with Bhagavan's presence. Our long wait was rewarded at 9.00 at night. By then the younger children up to the fourth class had gone to bed. The Lord was greeted with the chanting of Vedic hymns. It was nectar to our ears when He said: "Good boys! Good night."

The next day, in the serene silence of the prayer hall, the Divine Shepherd walked amongst His flock. Blessed indeed were we, as the Lord attended our assembly, spoke to us, smiled at us and gave us prizes for curricular and co-curricular activities.

He very graciously agreed to see our sports and cultural programme. At 4 O' clock, the programme on the field began. With heads held high, Sai's "soldiers of peace" marched in front of Sai. It was followed by the graceful dance of a deer and a peacock. Sai's children then greeted Him by a verbal formation, "PRANAAMS SAI." It was co-ordination of body, mind and soul when we demonstrated through yogasanas the ancient Indian way of maintaining all-round good health. Turning waste into wealth, we used coconut shells decorated with bright colours, lezzins and sticks for mass drill. Next, there was a dance of Gopikas before Sai Krishna. The "boatmen" of Nandanvan then prayed to the Lord to take their boat across the sea of Samsara. We ended with a display of pyramids and acrobatic feats interspersed with comic items.

At 6 p.m. the same evening, Swami helped in the make-up of boys participating in the cultural programme. Perhaps it is one in a million chances for Bhagavan Himself to place a crown on your head or fix a beard to your chin.

We were in a state of bliss when we sang and danced and performed skits in front of our beloved Lord. Tears of joy rolled down the cheeks of all parents present. Swami laughed and thoroughly enjoyed the programme, especially the items done by the tiny tots. At the end of the programme, He got photographs taken with us. The hall resounded with the arati song and then we went to rest.

Early next morning, Bhagavan walked amongst us when we touched His Divine Lotus Feet. There was a sad emptiness in our hearts as the Lord left Nandanvan. His promise to return soon filled our hearts with hope afresh and now we are awaiting the day our school will be turned again into Paradise.

—Kiran R. Karkera, Class VI, Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, Nandanvan, Ootacamund

Who is to Blame?

Whenever there is a disaster of one sort or another, one invariably hears the cry, 'How can God allow such things?'—though it is not very often that this lament comes from one of our readers, I am glad to say.

This cry was heard not long ago over the rail disaster outside a London station before Christmas. But can anyone imagine that God can be held responsible for faulty workmanship in the signals system?

It was heard again after the terrible air disaster, also just before Christmas, when the Pan Am plane exploded six miles up and descended on the little Scottish town of Lockerbie. Can anyone imagine that God can be held responsible for the actions of terrorists?

There are even those who cry, 'How can God allow wars?' Yet who starts wars? Human beings. Certainly not God. Then, too, the cry goes up, 'How can God allow such catastrophes as the earthquake in Armenia, or various other earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, floods, mud slides or typhoons? Yet the Avatar tells us, 'Man's inhumanity to man expresses itself in the form of natural catastrophes.' He has also said that man's shocking abuse of the animal kingdom brings 'very bad karma'. One could also add man's inhumanity to all the kingdoms of nature, including the planet itself. It is mankind's stupidity and greed and lack of responsible stewardship which creates, for example, deforestation on a huge scale, causing deserts, droughts and starvation in some places or flood's in another, not to mention the wounding of the planet by underground nuclear testing, the production of acid rain, and much else.

Only recently that splendid man, who for years had fought to preserve the Brazilian forests, which also produce nuts and rubber, has been murdered by those who lay waste the living forest in order to ranch cattle for slaughter.

As Sai Baba says, *'There is no thing which is not ensouled.'* It is a salutary thought which we should never forget. No wonder an evolved Red Indian chief said, *'Wherever man goes the earth hurts.'*

But one wonders who or what people glibly refer to when they speak of someone or something very loosely referred to as God? Do they think of some gigantic separate entity, somewhere 'up there', which created the vast, limitless cosmos and holds it in being? Or a super-personality of most uncertain temperament, as earlier humans evidently thought, who had to be constantly placated with human or animal sacrifices? Or some great being who can be cajoled by our prayers and supplications to give us what we think we want? In other words, God made in man's image, and separate from ourselves.

The fact is that we shall never understand God until we eventually *become God!* Until we have risen higher and higher through the spiritual spheres, beyond man's conceiving, over eons of time; to become co-creators with God and merge with God, and *are God.* Meanwhile, the fact that we are incarnate on this little planet means that we are at a stage rather similar to an ant running to and fro on a man's foot, without the slightest apprehension that the foot is part of an enormous complex being which invents computers and aeroplanes and nuclear bombs, but which is also capable of sacrifice, dedication, and love.

The Avatar has told us that it is not possible for human beings to conceive of the 'Unmanifest Absolute'. It is beyond our understanding, in the same way that it is impossible for us to conceive of space or eternity while we are conditioned by a three-dimensional existence where everything can be measured. The mind boggles when we try to envisage either endless space or infinity or eternity. We just aren't up to it.

We have been told by evolved souls in other dimensions that 'there is no thing but God.' The Avatar says, *'God is inside you, outside you, around you. You have to recognise this truth and live according to it.'* And *'Man extols God' as omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, but he ignores His presence in himself! God is in the heart of every human being ...All men are cells in the divine organism.'* One could therefore say that God is our higher Self, the Atma, which will eventually merge with the Paramatma. Jesus, after he was Christed, meant just: this when he said, 'I am in you, and you are in me, and I and the Father are One.'

We can only begin to know God through love, because God is love. God is latent in every being, however misguided, however deeply buried for the time being. In fact, as Swami says, *'The Paramatma is present in the minutest particle.'* And also, *'God is in every creature.'*

I have called this short and inadequate article 'Who is to blame?' I have always remembered the following lines from a famous play: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our *stars*, but in

ourselves, that we are underlings. 'Let us endeavour to take the Avatar's words to, heart, when he tells us: 'We must perform all actions in the firm belief that "we are God and God is in us." We must experience this sense of Oneness. And this can only be attempted or achieved through the practise of LOVE.'

—Peggy Mason

From Sathya Sai Baba Magazine, England, Spring '89

SRI RAMANAVAMI SANDESH:

The Name that Redeems

There is no Bharatiya who has not heard the story of Rama, nor is there a village in Bharat without a Rama temple. From time immemorial, every individual in Bharat has regarded Sri Rama's life as an ideal and has sought to sanctify every moment of his life by living up to it. Bharat has always considered the life of any one devoid of spirituality as utterly valueless.

Sri Ramachandra was born on a day when the planet Sukra (Venus) enters Meena (Pisces). The month of His advent marks the beginning of Spring (Vasantharitu). It is the time when the sun enters Mesha Rasi (Aries). Sri Rama's incarnation as a human being was for the purpose of promoting peace and happiness in the world. "Ramo vigrahavaan Dharmah" "Rama is the very embodiment of Righteousness." It was as if Righteousness itself had incarnated on earth. Dharma and Rama are inseparable.

Rama's life falls into two parts: the earlier and the later. In the earlier part, Rama figures as the heroic warrior who vanquished powerful persons like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. Rama excelled not only in physical strength but also in intelligence and character. It is impossible to describe all the virtues of Rama.

Every Avatar has six types of powers: all-encompassing Prosperity, Righteousness, Fame, Wealth, Wisdom, and Renunciation (or non-attachment). God is the possessor of these six attributes. Sri Rama had all these six attributes in equal measure. Every Avatar of God in every age and every place has these six attributes.

Truth and righteousness

In the Ramayana, Sathya (Truth and Dharma (Righteousness)) are the most important concepts. The Vedas, which are regarded as their very life-breath by Bharatiyas, have proclaimed: "Sathyam Vada; Dharmam Chara." ("Speak the Truth; Act righteously"). In order to honour the pledged word (of his father), Rama elected to go to the forest leaving Ayodhya. Truth is the foundation for all righteousness. There is no greater religion, than Truth. Rama stood out as the up-holder of Truth to fulfill the promise of his father, to maintain the traditions of his Ikshvaku dynasty, to protect his country and for the sake of the welfare of the world. Everyone who calls himself a human being should stand up for truth in the same manner. It is said of high-souled men (Mahatmas) that what they speak, what they think and what they do are in perfect

accord. In the case of the wicked, their thoughts, words and deeds are at variance with each other. By these definitions Rama was a Mahatma (a high-souled one) and Ravana was a Duratma (an evil-souled being).

Three women and three gunas

In the first twelve years of Rama's life, He encountered three types of women. When he went with the sage Vishwamitra to protect his sacrifice, he encountered the ogress Thataki. He put an end to her without any compunction or aversion. After Vishwamitra's sacrifice was completed, Rama went with the sage to Mithila. On the way, he came across Ahalya, who had been transformed into a stone. He gave her life, absolved her of sin through penitence and restored her to her husband. At Mithila, he encountered Sita. He accepted Sita without any hesitation. What is the inner meaning of these three incidents? They show that even from his boyhood Rama displayed extraordinary qualities and stood out as an example to the world. Thataki, the first woman he encountered, symbolises the Tamas quality. He destroyed the Tamasic quality. Ahalya represents the Rajo guna. He taught the right lesson to Ahalya, purified her and sent her safely to her place. He took to himself Sita who represented the Satwic quality. Bhagavan approves of and accepts only that which is Satwic. He values the Satwic quality. He protects and fosters it.

Today all the three Gunas—Tamas, Rajas and Satwa—are present in man in varying proportions. What does the presence of the Tamo guna signify? It is natural for the Tamasic person to regard untruth as truth, wrong as right, evil as good. Although the phenomenal world is impermanent and illusory, the Tamasic minded persons regard it as permanent and real.

The Rajasic person lacks the power of discrimination and yielding to likes and dislikes behaves without restraint. Impulsive action is characteristic of persons in whom the Rajo guna is predominant. Because of hasty and impulsive action, they are subject to all kinds of difficulties. In the process, they waste their lives. People should try to avoid acting in haste. "Haste makes waste, waste makes worry. So do not be in a hurry." In the quest for the Divine, there should be no hurry. Purity and serenity are required for God-realisation. There can be no happiness for the man who lacks peace.

Saint Thyagaraja said in one of his songs: "Without peace, there is no happiness." Thyagaraja was a great devotee of Rama. As a devotee, he had numerous experiences which he conveyed to the world through his songs.

Power of the name

What are the inner meanings of the name "Rama"? The three syllables 'R', 'A' and 'Ma' indicate the three causes for human birth, namely, the sins one has committed, the troubles one experiences and one's ignorance. ("Papamu, Thapamu, Ajnanamu "). "Ra" represents the root letter for Agni. "Aa" represents the letter for moon. "Ma" represents the root letter for sun. What does Agni signify? It destroys everything and reduces it to ashes. The letter "R" has the power to destroy all the sins committed by man. The letter "Aa" (symbolising the moon) has the power of cooling the fevers man suffers from and conferring peace on him. "Ma" represents the sun who

dispels the darkness of ignorance and confers the illumination of wisdom. Hence the word "Rama" has the triple power of destroying sins, conferring peace and dispelling ignorance.

When you utter the word "Ram", you first open the mouth with the sound "Raa". All your sins go out when the mouth is open. When you utter "M" by closing the mouth, the entry is barred against the sins that have gone out. Everyone should recognise the sweetness, the sacredness and the divinity enshrined in the name "Rama". It was for this reason that Thyagaraja sang: "Oh mind! Contemplate on the name of Rama, with full awareness of its power." It is good to utter the name of Rama, with full understanding of all that it signifies. But even without that understanding, the chanting of the name has the power to destroy all sins.

We must learn to chant the sweet name of Rama with a pure, unsullied heart, in a spirit of selfless devotion. In the mind of man dwell the deities representing the moon and the sun. Intelligence is endowed by the sun. However, two kinds of birds have got into the mind. One bird fosters the sense of "I" and "Mine" and fills the mind with ego. This is a destructive force. The second bird fosters the feeling of freedom from attachment and hatred. It signifies the power of the sun in the mind. Rama, who belongs to the solar race, adhered to the latter path.

The glory of spring

There is a significant connection between the Rama Principle and the season of Spring (Vasantha Ritu). In the Spring, the trees put forth new leaves and flowers and fill the world with gladness. When the sun's rays fall on the fresh leaves, they acquire a golden hue. The whole world puts on a glorious new look in Spring. The beginning of the New Year is celebrated in many regions by the preparation of special edibles from a mixture of flowers and fruits of the neem and mango trees. In consuming these edibles, people are reminded that life is a mixture of pleasure and pain, profit and loss and both are to be treated with equal-mindedness. In the Spring season the air is redolent with the fragrance of mango blossoms and the song of the cuckoo (kokila). There is joy in the air you breathe. The cuckoo's calls are never so sweet as in Spring (Vasantha). The kokila's song is sweet to the ears. If a crow sits on our roof, we wish to drive it away, but we welcome the kokila's song. Why this difference? The crow seeks nothing from us. The kokila has not given us a crown. The difference lies in their voice. The crow's cawing jars on the ears. The kokila's song is music to the ears. When the speech is sweet, the speaker becomes endearing. Hence men should learn to speak sweetly and pleasingly. Sweet speech confers peace. It is the means to self-realisation. It is in the heart of the man who is sweet-spoken that Sri Rama loves to dwell.

The lord's address

Once the sage Narada appeared before Lord Vishnu and said: "Oh Lord! I move about in the three worlds and I know the past, the present and the future. If I want to convey to you any special information, to what address should I send it? I do not want your temporary address. What is your permanent address?" Vishnu replied: "Narada! Take down my permanent address *Madbhaktaah yathra gaayanthi thathra thhishtaami, Narada*. (Wherever my devotees sing my glories, I reside there.") People ascribe various abodes for the Lord: Vaikuntha, Kailash, Badrinath, Kedarnath, and so on. All these are only "care of" addresses. The direct address is

only the heart of the devotee. As the Gita says: "The Lord dwells in the heart region of all beings." As the Lord is omnipresent, He is equally in the heart of everyone. Hence the heart is described as "Atma-Rama"—one who delights the Atma (the Heart) by His presence. Whatever you do, do it not for pleasing others, but for pleasing the Indweller in your heart, for your inner satisfaction. This means acting according to the dictates of your conscience. Every such act will please the Divine. To derive self-satisfaction from your actions, you have to cultivate faith. When there is satisfaction, there is readiness for sacrifice. Through sacrifice, the Divine is realised. Your faith should be unwavering like that of the Pandavas in Sri Krishna.

All spiritual aspirants and devotees like Thyagaraja have had to experience many trials and tribulations. Even Pothana, the author of the Telugu Bhagavatam, was subjected to many pressures and ordeals to compel him to dedicate his work to a local chieftain. Pothana stood firm because of his strong faith in Sri Rama. Rather than dedicate his work to a mere mortal, he was prepared to offer his heart and soul to Rama. Pothana totally surrendered himself to Sri Rama. He declared: "All that I have is yours. Whatever I receive or offer comes from you. I cannot claim anything that is mine own."

Offer your heart

Men go on pilgrimage to various holy places. When they are in Banaras they offer the Ganga water to the Ganga uttering the names of the Lord. What is the special value of such an offering? You must offer to the Lord the heart that He has given to you. This is true surrender. Lakshmana is the supreme exemplar of the doctrine of surrender (Sharanagati). "I offer my wealth, family and everything else to you, Oh Rama! Protect me, who has taken refuge in you." It was this total surrender which impelled Rama to observe, when Lakshmana lay stricken on the battlefield in Lanka: "Wives and kinsmen can be got in any country. But where can one get a brother born from the same loins?" Rama thus exemplified the depth of fraternal attachment. The mutual love between Rama and Lakshmana was of the highest order.

After the fall of Ravana, Sugriva, Vibhishana and others approached Rama and appealed to him to rule over Lanka, which was a richly endowed land. Rama turned down the request, saying that he could not give up his mother or his Motherland. Even in this devotion to the Motherland, Rama serves as an example to humanity.

Today everybody utters "Ram", "Ram". But very few follow the example set by Rama. They are not true devotees of Rama. At best they may be described as "part-time devotees". True devotion means perpetual remembrance of the name of the Lord and constant meditation on the name, cherishing the figure of Rama in the heart.

Face troubles with faith

You should be prepared to face the vicissitudes of life with firm faith in God. It is during times of difficulties that God is remembered. To confront difficulties with faith is itself a spiritual discipline. Although Rama was the son of Emperor, Dasaratha and son-in-law of King Janaka, he had to face many ordeals in life for the sake of upholding Dharma: The Pandavas went through many difficulties for the sake of adhering to Righteousness and hence their name

and fame remain for ever. You should pray to the Lord to give you the strength to bear all troubles and face all difficulties. If you have even an atom of Grace of the Lord, a mountain of troubles can be overcome. Chaitanya declared; "If a fraction of the time that is spent in worrying about wealth, provisions, wife and children, friends and business is devoted to contemplation on the sacred feet of the Divine, one can face the messengers of Death without fear and cross the Ocean of Samsara!"

It is not necessary to devote many hours to prayer. It is enough if one thinks of God with all his heart and offers himself even for a few moments. A single matchstick when it is struck can dispel the darkness in a room that has remained closed for years. Mountains of cotton can be burnt down by a single spark. Likewise, wholehearted chanting of the name of Rama even once can destroy mountains of sins. But the chanting should not be done mechanically like playing a gramophone record. It should emanate from the depths of the heart. Having been born in this sacred land of Bharat, having before you the ideal example of the Rama Avatar, you must seek to redeem your lives by living up to Rama's ideals and proclaiming them to the world. Remember the name of Rama with love. God can be realised only through love and by no other means.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "Prema Muditha manase kaho: Rama, Rama Ram!"

*—From Bhagavan's discourse at "Sai Shruti", Kodaikanal,
on Sri Ramanavami Day, April 14, 1989*

Bhagavan at Kodaikanal

Leaving Brindavan early in the morning on April 8th, Bhagavan and the party of thirty students and staff of the Institute accompanying Him halted at Mysore for a while before proceeding to Ooty. They left for Kodaikanal on the 10th.

Since His arrival at Kodaikanal Bhagavan has been giving darshan in the morning and evening every day to large numbers of devotees, including quite a few from overseas. In addition, Bhagavan has been giving informal talks to the students twice or thrice a day. In His discourses Bhagavan has been offering new insights into the leelas of the Krishna Avatar.

An interesting aspect of the informal meetings at Kodaikanal is the way in which Bhagavan stimulated the minds of the students by initiating exciting debates on economic and literary subjects, with the accent on their ethical and spiritual implications.

Almighty Love

*Love much. Earth has enough of bitter in it.
Cast sweets into its cup where're you can.
No heart so hard, but love at last may win it.
Love is the grand primeval cause of man.
All hate is foreign to the first Great Plan.*

*Love much. There is no waste in freely giving;
More blessed is it, even, than to receive.
He who loves much alone finds life worth living;
Love on, through doubt and darkness, and believe
There is no thing which Love may not achieve.*

—E. W. Wilcox

God has four qualities and it is only when you cultivate them that you can understand Him. They are: Prema (Love), Beauty (Saundarya), Sweetness (Madhurya) and Shobha (Splendour). The development of Prema is enough to add unto you the other three. When you are full of Prema for the Divine in all creation, that stage is Beauty; when you are immersed in the sea of Universal Love, you reach the acme of Sweetness; when your mind loses its identity and merges in the Universal Mind, then there is splendour indescribable.

—BABA

The Most Precious Gift

There was once a time when I would reply in answer to a question about my occupation, 'Oh, I'm only a housewife', as if it made me somehow inferior. There were many times when I dreamt of what I might have been. I felt a bit guilty for having had no other ambition than to be a mother. This feeling lingered until a friend recently remarked that I had chosen the role of mother in this incarnation, I had never thought of it that way before.

Sai Baba says that, 'Motherhood is the most precious gift of God'; how I would have laughed if someone had said that to me then, for when I first became a mother at the age of 28 it was a very rude awakening indeed I had absolutely no experience with babies and this delightful, demanding scrap of humanity, my baby daughter, turned my life right upside down. I cannot think of any other occupation so perfectly designed for the sublimation of the ego. A mother's wants, wishes, needs almost always come second to those of the family, so much so that a woman sometimes begins to feel that the constant giving, giving, giving involved in raising a family has obliterated her as an individual.

Not long ago women in the main were content with this role but the modern woman, set free from domestic drudgery by modern appliances is now adrift and falls easy prey to the seductive images presented by glossy magazines and the dreadful prototypes displayed in soap operas. These images are founded and built on the ego self and since the ego is itself born of the false idea that the self is the body / mind / personality then the images it builds up can only be a sham. But unfortunately many women are led to believe that happiness and satisfaction can be found in modelling themselves on these images and seek self expression in various ways, unaware that it is the ego self and not the real self that is manifesting.

Sai Baba says that we are three people, the one we think we are, the one others think we are and the one we really are. The first two are founded on false ideas, identification with the body, likes and dislikes, personality traits and so on, woven into a thick web that covers the real, divine self like a cocoon. To experience the everlasting bliss of the divine self the ego must be given up, easy to say but the most difficult thing to do. One has to be prepared to be nothing. The idea of ceasing to be as an individual is very frightening indeed but fear belongs to the ego self, it is the ego self that fears obliteration. The divine self knows it is eternal and cannot know fear: The moment of choice is like standing on the edge of a precipice, only those with the deepest faith and firmest resolve can, surrender their all to the Lord and step off the edge, to discover to their great joy that the individual that was given up was counterfeit all the time. Once the true bliss of the divine self has been tasted, the transient joys of the ego self no longer hold any attraction. Imagine you had never seen a real flower, that all your life you had been happily buying and arranging clumsy plastic imitations around your home and one day for the first time you see a beautiful, fragrant, living rose, the counterfeit ones would attract no longer.

I am now quite content to be 'just a mum', there is something very special about a mother. I remember how I hated to come home from school and find my mother out. One day during a visit to Prasanthi Nilayam as people were beginning to assemble for darshan, Sai Baba suddenly appeared on the verandah, waved to everyone, got in His car and drove away. When He had gone, the place seemed so desolate and empty, I wrote in my diary that day, 'like a home without a mother'. Staying at home does not mean becoming a robot who washes, cooks, cleans, dries the tears and plasters the knees.' My own life is full and satisfying and I have thanked the Lord so many times for those quiet times when the family was out and my mind has dwelt blissfully in His presence. Motherhood is indeed the most precious gift of God.

—Sylvia Bishop
From March '89 magazine of Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Hatfield

The Lord Who Cares

Because I know Swami, I walk through fire but am not burnt by its heat. His protection is like an umbrella sheltering me when I'm compelled by my own past karma to walk through hot deserts and storms instead of cool pastures.

He's my Divine Anaesthetist—I know I'm being 'operated on' but it doesn't hurt as much as it would otherwise. I was mixed up and lacked the guidance of living example to follow the beacon light when Swami took over my life.

It is not any easier now than it has been before I knew Swami but now I have some direction and His love which reassures me constantly of how much He cares. He is familiar with all our problems and worries. He is the panacea for all our worldly anxieties and when we give Him first place in our hearts, He'll ensure that we walk aright and it is He who sends us the courage and endurance to face the results of our past karma.

He has transformed my attitude to life, blessed me with self-confidence, lightheartedness when the unexpected happens. He is like a soft cushion which lightens the pain of pitfalls in life. Actually He wants our hearts to be a soft reclining couch for Him too and we feel His Presence within when we're filled with unquestioning faith and selfless devotion.

So many things are still not clear to me, but it doesn't matter. A day is, too short to love Swami and worry about all these temporary problems. We can either make ourselves sick by dwelling on our never-ending problems of material living, etc. or we can remember Swami's smiling Face of love, His twinkling eyes and His generous hands ever raised to bless and protect us and give us our heart's desires—most wonderful of all is the wisdom He showers on His Devotees that He is Shri Krishna and Shri Rama as well as Lord Shiva and Shakti incarnated on earth today to protect His devotees and to foster SATHYA, DHARMA, SANTHI AND PREMA.

I've made my choice. Sometimes life itself in this Kaliyuga becomes too much for me to handle. But this much I can tell you, I cannot be bad anymore, to think evil, to be rude and inconsiderate like I have been before. He prompts me from within giving me comfort and every kind of help. He understands me only as a true friend can, He is a God who knows me inside out, always reliable and highlights the best in me.

Practise his teachings

We have to follow Swami's teachings and in the process if we get cheated or hurt by others, Swami will bear the results and give us His protection. But our first duty, if we love Him, is to put His teachings into practice with courage and determination, even if we have to walk into a lion's den. We have to fill our moments, as often as possible with *Namasmarana* (repeating and remembering His Name in our hearts). Soon it will become automatic and His Name is a great purifier and will win for us His Presence in our hearts wherever we may be, whatever we're doing and everything will become easier to face. It will also be easier for us to concentrate at bhajans if we discipline our minds to love and remember Him outside bhajan hours also. "Revel in the sweetness of Bhajan in your heart, long after it is over!" We have to make our minds into sweet laddus and offer it at the feet of our Sai Gurudeva so that He may bend down and pick us

up, taste us and be delighted by our sweetness of heart and character! Then we become truly the cream of God's Creation.

Swami responds only to our Bhava (sincere feelings) for Him and the feelings of togetherness and unity we share with each other, especially other devotees. We must be prompted to do service (love in action) because we feel intensely the other person's pain, loneliness and need. Swami wants our feelings for him to flow into our daily lives and spill into the relationships we have with others. We will experience true happiness and live successful, worthy lives only when Truth, Right Conduct, Peace and Love find their way into our hearts. On these four foundations Swami inspires us to build the mansion of our own individual lives.

I've stopped asking Him for this, that and the other. I feel Him satisfy my spiritual needs which seem greater than, material ones now. He creates a yearning within for union with God, a permanent and lasting happiness that dims out earthly joys. It seems to me I've "graduated" when I learnt to love Swami for Himself because He's the Lord of the Universe. I owe Him so much for I recognise His countless Blessings in my own life.

I must just be silent as often as possible and say with loving joy in my heart while remembering His Divine Form in my mind: "Jai Sai Ram Swami, Jai Sai Ram" which means `I praise Thee—unceasingly!'

—A Devotee
From "Sai Vahini", Singapore

Sow Today, Reap Tomorrow

It is the inescapable destiny of every one to fulfill himself. Every living being has to attain fullness in the end. Each one is at present at a particular stage of this march, as a result of the activities engaged in during previous lives and the feelings he entertained in the past. The future is being built at present by the activities being engaged in now and the feelings that urge and shape them. That is to say, what we do, feel or think about, at present—these are the basic reasons for the good fortune or bad fortune which is in store.

—Baba

Man! Know Thyself

The Sai revolution in human consciousness involves a massive re-education of mankind along spiritual lines. It is associated with the Avataric mission of Baba and the Sathya Sai system of education with its emphasis on education in human values. What is this Sai philosophy that is destined to make a powerful impact on the future course of civilization? Sai Baba declares that

man is the greatest of all treasures in the universe and He advocates the study of man as the greatest of human pursuits because it will lead to the highest wisdom and the supremest joy that can ever be experienced. In effect, this philosophy returns man to his natural place at the center; but the focus here is not on man as a psycho-physical being but on man as the highest manifestation of Spirit.

The basic premise of this revolution in consciousness is that, no matter what one's circumstances and station in life are, there is no greater gift than being born a human being, for a human is the only being in this world or any other, who has the capacity to fully know the truth. of himself; and when he knows his own truth, he knows the truth of everything else. And what is that truth? It is that the spirit as pure beingness, as pure consciousness and eternal delight, the one reality that is known as Sat-Chit-Ananda, is the unchanging basis of this whole universe, and underlies all the changing forms and phenomena that we experience through our mind and senses.

Baba tells us that if, instead of demeaning man by separating him from his essential nature, we value him as the great jewel that he truly is, by emphasizing his noble qualities and encouraging these to blossom forth in his character, then we find that his world-view changes dramatically, and he sees all the phenomena of the world and all the ideas that make up the cultural heritage of mankind in a totally new light. When our intuitive faculties are awakened and our hearts are purified we begin to experience the spirit directly; we find it pervading all fields of knowledge and know it to be the underlying reality that is the very basis of all knowledge.

Once we are embarked on that road, we no longer separate our experiences into secular and spiritual compartments. From that point on, all experiences are spiritual because the spirit is apprehended in every experience. It is the only reality, and it reveals itself as a sweet, all pervading presence behind the scenes, shining forth everywhere as beauty, truth, order, power, love, delight. Every human encounter, every experience, every subject of knowledge, every process, every name and form, is seen as a perspective of that one reality; all are windows through which the light of the spirit shines. In our educational process, we develop not only the intellect but also a finer awareness, in which the beingness that is the unseen root of our phenomenal world becomes known to the purified and sensitized mind. Bhagavan said that this kind of education can take hold only in an integrated personality where the springs of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa are flowing freely.

We can associate this level of consciousness, where we become aware of the spirit present everywhere, with the cosmic Anandamaya Kosa, the universal bliss sheath, where the unity underlying all diversity is cognized directly. Bliss is an intensely subjective experience of unmitigated joyfulness. Yet such a subjective term dealing with an intense inner experience is the only one appropriate for describing the universe at this highest level of subtlety, because here it is no longer made up of objects or even ideas; at this level, the world as we know it has disappeared and the experience that remains can only be spoken of, as reported by realized sages who have known it, as unceasing joy and delight. Here, the individual self turns inward and completely loses itself in the true self, the immortal Atma, which now reveals itself as absolute

sweetness and lovingness; from here on, God, man and nature all dissolve together, just as ice cream of different hues and flavours mixes together and dissolves on the tongue, leaving a sweet taste of pure delight. Once the eternal self is known, then we are unalterably established in God-consciousness; from that moment on, all distinctions vanish and we realize that all there is, is the one supreme reality, describable only as unending bliss.

These then, Baba teaches, are the three steps that lead to man's spiritual awakening:

First, the springs of truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence which lie hidden in every man must be encouraged to flower in his character. By developing these, we cultivate all the noble qualities that make up a true human being.

Next, the spirit which we know to be present everywhere illuminating everything we call the phenomenal world, must now be experienced directly in the purified mind. In this regard, we practice detachment and discrimination, and develop our faith and devotion until the spirit becomes our constant companion, remembered in every phenomenon of our waking experience.

Then we are ready for the final spiritual ascent which is the culmination of our journey, where we experience the spirit directly as our own reality, the eternal self. To reach this level, we must eliminate, step-by-step, all the overlying sheaths that have veiled our truth until we finally discover that the beloved, the indwelling Lord, is our own inner self; and that inner self is the one true self of all. It is the same spirit which previously revealed itself to us as the joy we experienced in our explorations and discoveries and the love we felt when we realized our connectedness with everything and everyone in this vast world.

As we progress deeper into the spiritual path, we find that the world appears less and less objective and, instead, becomes a reflection of our own inner view. As we spiritualize our outlook and love becomes our unchanging inner experience, then love also comes back to us as our outer view. Nature is but an appearance projected by mind onto the spirit. When mind ceases in its busyness, then the spirit which is the only truth reveals itself as pure love and delight. Then the long dream is over and only the sweet self, the pure I remains.

The explosion of information in this century which has made the ancient wisdom of the East available to the common man around the world, the progressive development in the philosophy of Western science and the urgency for a new world outlook in the face of the threat of global catastrophe, are all factors pointing to a unique opportunity in the history of the human race for a great spiritual movement towards unity consciousness. Now, Baba has himself told us that the divine will has resolved to bring all of mankind into the transcendent awareness of the spirit. He said, "Everyone must develop the higher values and consider himself as Atma. To make known to all this Atma-Dharma is the mission for which I have come. I will bring all people near me, for they are all mine, and I am theirs. Then I will start teaching and training them until they become completely ego-free. For many years, it has been sweetness, kindness and soft persuasion; hereafter, it will be different. I will drag them, place them on the table and operate. It

is my love that prompts me to save them, to open their eyes, before they get deeper into the morass."

What a wonderful promise this is by the sweet Lord of Parthi, to rescue us all from the bog we find ourselves in and lead us back home to our own immortal self, the one reality which is He and which is also we. And there within ourselves, He will reveal the Ananda we have been seeking in all those countless forms that we occupied and discarded in the long night of our ignorance... never having known our own truth and the truth of this marvellous universe... that it always was and forever is, nothing else but the one blissful Self.

—*Al Drucker*

Bubbles of Bliss

*Who loves whom
'Tween the bee and the bloom'?
Who loves the other
'Tween the child and the mother?*

*Whose is the love
'Tween the he—and she—dove?
Whose's the ecstasy—
The merging river or the sea?*

*No wonder then
That time and again
Bhagavan within whispers to me this:
"Let us be one in Bliss."*

—*BEE*

Each in His own Tongue

A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell;
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And a cave where the cave-men dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty,
A face turned from the clod,
Some call it Evolution, And others call it
God.

Like tides on the crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in,
Come from the mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod;
Some of us call it Longing,

And others call it God.

A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite tender sky,
The ripe rich tint of the cornfields,
And the wild geese flying high,
All over upland and lowland
The charm of the golden rod;
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it God.

A picket frozen on duty,
A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood,
And millions who, humble and nameless
The straight, hard pathway trod;
Some call it Consecration,
And others call it God.

—*William Carruth*

The Mother and the Avatar

The years went by—and life in fact sped too fast for Easwaramma as Swami filled each day with extravagance of surprise. The impossible, the incredible, the unpredictable—these were her daily bread. She could however digest them and survive the pace because her memory preserved for her a private treasure house, a Smriti, of myths and legends of the past, of the lives of saints and sages and tales of war and peace. Smriti was a constant and convincing companion for her. The tales concerning Brahmamgaru and his astoundingly accurate prophecies, Panduranga Vitthal and His amazing acts of Grace, the stories of cures that happen at Kadiri where the God Narasimha is installed- these served her as touchstones to recognise the authenticity of the Avatar that was now before her. She discovered parallels and coincidences, approximations and similarities and her faith grew as she constantly thought over the disturbing but happy happenings all around her. The faith she gained through this process helped many others to strengthen theirs too, and became for her an instrument for firm minded and decisive action.

Mother had a rich spring of native wisdom (Medha) with which she quenched the thirst of the desolate and the deprived. She not only knew the simple folk remedies for physical illnesses but also many 'psychotherapeutic strategies' (to use an aristocratic word), that could demolish depression and fear from the minds of women who came to her. They confided much to her that they would not tell their own mothers. Her sympathy in listening unlocked the recesses of their hearts wherein their agony was interned. She tolerated the long narrations, never evincing hurry or boredom, resentment or disgust, and the teardrop that shone in her eyes was enough to drown their distress.

Mother was firmly anchored in the wisdom she had garnered through the years even as she grew toughened by many a storm that blew. Death snatched away four of her children while they were still lisping and toddling infants. Her daughters were widowed in the prime of life. A grandson was born deaf and grew up dumb. A granddaughter was the victim of smallpox. These were the challenges she confronted in the domestic sphere. But Swami's actions stirred her to the very depths while His words filled her understanding with courage and clarity. She learnt to

grow serene during storm and calm and impressed everyone with her Dhrti; her steadfastness in her overpowering attachment to Swami and to all those who adored Him. She had no appetite for novelty, diversity or distraction. She was, in her later years, firm in the fullness of her heart.

She bore no ill will towards anyone, relishing and nourishing it, but always used the very first opportunity to meet the person in question and discover the nature of the urges behind his words and actions. She was seldom too indolent or despondent to neglect this inquiry and if she found that the reasons conformed to Swami's directions and dictates she would return happy with all her resentment gone.

Mother encouraged devotees to come to the Presence again and again for she was aware that the sublimation of conduct, character and attitude needs long and close contact with the Avatar. She confided to them her own story: of fear giving place to wonder, wonder turning to awe, awe moulding itself as acceptance, acceptance expressing itself in adoration and adoration yielding delight! "You have to practise patience. It is a long long time from the tiny bud to the juicy fruit," she would say, quoting Swami's homilies to pacify the desperate and the depressed. Her counsel showered comfort for she herself was the embodiment of the Kshama (fortitude) she prescribed.

Fortitude brought equanimity and equanimity shed love even on those who did not know how and when to return it. It was a spiritual sadhana to love one's enemies, to confront hatred with affection, Swami said, for all are cells in the Cosmic Body of God. "When your tongue is bitten by your teeth, do you knock the culprit out with a hammer?" He would ask. I have heard Mother repeat this query to appease the anger of many a woman who felt insulted or ignored. Kshama means also the quality of mercy which manifests itself as the urge to forgive and forget. Mother had only a thin film of memory for incidents that pricked her self-respect. It disappeared when even a scarcely noticeable whiff of wisdom blew over her infinitesimal ire.

The Avatar has taken upon Himself the task of redeeming mankind from the ruin towards which it is rushing. His call for Samskara (Sublimation) involves not only the cleansing process, the uprooting of hatred, hostility, fanaticism, frenzy and prejudice, but also the process of nourishing the positive qualities of tolerance, brotherhood, sympathy, charity and clarity. Easwaramma, like millions of her sisters, was pestered by folly, fear and fumbings whenever worldly desires accumulated and clamoured and clashed in conflict. Swami led her into the realm of happiness, goodness and wisdom. He raised her, whom He had chosen as the Mother, to the status of His foremost pupil as she progressed from perplexity to pre-eminent faith in the Divinity that deludes us as Diversity and also helps us to cast off that delusion for this is but a game It enjoys playing.

The lives of men and women in the villages were delivered from disease and despair by the props of rite, sacrament and ceremony, mantram, yantram and tantram, priest, performer and soothsayer. Swami explained the kernel, the core, enclosed in these forms and formulae and enlightened the Mother and others on their doctrinal significance, their basic purpose, their

diagnostic and clinical validity. He lightened the burden of anxiety and ignorance, brightened dark corners and 'drove out dread from their minds.

These and many other lessons were showered upon the Mother for years by the Supreme Teacher—through the glance that warns, the smile that encourages, the exclamation that alerts, the interrogation that interrupts, the metaphor that reveals meaning, the story that implants a message—and she was shaped into a genuine saint who could see every event, emotion, thought and thing as a gemset doorway through which she could cognise the ONE. No wonder the Lord responded positively and with pleasure... "I am coming!"... when Mother yearned with her last breath for the mergence, and, from all of her called out, "Swami! Swami!" The wave which had reared up and rolled in answer to the Oceanic Will was invited by the same Will back into Itself.

*—From "Easwaramma—the Chosen Mother" by Prof. N. Kasturi.
Easwaramma merged in the Lord on 6th May 1972*

A group of Sai devotees once requested Bhagavan to inaugurate a new temple in their town. But Bhagavan refused to comply with their request on the ground that black-market cement was used for constructing the temple. When the devotees pleaded not guilty, Bhagavan revealed to them that the so-called Sai devotee who had donated some cement bags for the construction of the temple had illegally saved them from out of the cement allotted to him as a contractor for constructing a dam. Hence Bhagavan's refusal.

A Vedic scholar was asked by Bhagavan to get out of His presence when he was seated in the midst of some students and other devotees at Whitefield. When the pundit showed signs of bewilderment as to why Bhagavan was so harsh to him, he admonished the latter, saying that it was a crime for a Vedic pundit to profess to be a Sai devotee and at the same time to indulge in illegal malpractices by way of lending money to poor and illiterate villagers without proper licence from the Government, and that too, at exorbitant rates of interest.

The third incident relates to a Commercial Tax Officer in Orissa, who once made use of his official jeep to take his family and a few neighbours to visit a cave temple of Shiva in the interior of a dense forest on a 3000 feet high mountain. On their way back the jeep got stuck in a hill stream and refused to budge an inch. The dark night was gathering fast. An hour's struggle to extricate the jeep was in vain. The officer was terribly scared, because the jungle was known to be infested with wild animals as well as dacoits, and his party consisted mostly of women and children. As he happened to be a Sai devotee, he fervently prayed to Bhagavan in utter desperation. Lo and behold! There appeared on the spot four Sathya Sai Seva Dal volunteers who rescued the party by pulling out the jeep, and then vanished in a second. Thus by Bhagavan's grace, the officer and the party reached home safely. However, Bhagavan taught him a lesson not to misuse the Government vehicle for private purposes, by immobilising his jeep and thereby creating panic in him and his party.

About a decade ago, a recluse of forty-five summers by name Kalpagiri came to Prasanthi Nilayam. No one could guess that this so-called "monk" was a wolf in the garb of a sheep. Four years earlier, he committed a ghastly murder and to escape from punishment by the due process of law, he made good his escape by donning the saffron robe and wandering in the Himalayas and other places of pilgrimage. As soon as the Omniscient Baba saw Kalpagiri in the Darshan line, He called him inside and told him during the interview: "My dear Kalpagiri! How can the saffron robe or visits to Rhishikesh and other holy places rid you of the sin of murder? Enough of your roaming in the guise of a Sanyasi for the last four years. Go now to the Police station and surrender yourself there. Experience your Karma by receiving the punishment due to you according to the laws of the land. When the death sentence is declared, file your clemency petition to the President. I will save you. You will not be hanged. You have my protection to atone for your heinous sin, through devotion, in this very birth. Come on, this sacred saffron robe does not befit you. Take this white cloth." Saying so in a tone that combined love and sternness, Bhagavan gave Kalpagiri a white dhoti.

confessed his guilt, the judge awarded him the capital punishment, as the crime was of a heinous nature. In line with Bhagavan's direction, a clemency petition was submitted to the President of the Indian Union. Eventually, Kalpagiri received the President's pardon. Death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and Kalpagiri became an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, spreading his beneficial influence on the other convicts too.

In conclusion, it may be seen from what is stated above that where there is a will, there is a way either to scrupulously abide by the Governmental rules and regulations or to violate them for selfish reasons, in disregard of the common good for which such laws are made by Government.

—**Dr. A. Adivi Reddy (From "Ten-Fold Path of Divinity")**

The Grace of God cannot be won through the gymnastics of reason, the contortions of Yoga or the denials of asceticism. Love alone can win it, Love that needs no requital, Love that knows no bargaining, Love that is paid gladly, as tribute to the All Loving, Love that is unwavering. Love alone can overcome obstacles however many and mighty. There is no strength more effective than Purity, no bliss more satisfying than Love, no joy more restoring than Bhakthi, no triumph more praiseworthy than surrender. The Gita says, you must be "adweshtaa sarva bhoothaanaam", without hatred to all beings; but, that is not enough. A wall has no hatred towards any being! But is that the ideal? No, you must positively Love all beings, actively Love, actively engage yourself in acts of Love. That alone wins the Grace you crave for.

—**Baba**

WITH BHAGAVAN AT KODAIKANAL:

Digging: Inside and Outside

One of the well-known Sai bhajan songs contains a prayer addressed to the Lord: "Give us, Oh Lord! Opportunities to serve you" ("Thava sevaaki avasara deejo, Sathya Sai Mahadev.") The Lord, who is the indweller in the hearts of devotees, has His own way of responding to their prayers.

Here is what happened recently in Kodaikanal, where Swami stayed in His sacred abode, appropriately named "Sai Shruti", from April 10th to May 8th. In 1987, Swami had to give darshan to the devotees in the open ground below "Sai Shruti". The frequent rains often drenched the devotees, who doubtless were ready to brave anything for a glimpse of Bhagavan. Swami felt the need for a hall where the devotees could assemble for bhajans and Swami's discourses. The bhajan hall was ready in April 1988, but it was soon found that it was too small for the growing number of devotees and there was no separate means of access for women devotees to enter the

women devotees.

To secure additional ground for widening the hall, a clearing had to be made on the hill-slope to the north of the hall. When the Lord willed, everything happened according to His master-plan. Showers over the preceding days had softened the earth. And one sunny morning, pickaxes, baskets, shovels, etc., were assembled at "Sai Shruti" and the opportunity to serve, for which the devotees had been praying was graciously provided by Bhagavan. Tons of earth had to be removed and it had to be carried to a low ground below for raising it.

The Sai Institute students, who had accompanied Swami, were the first string players, who by example showed the others how to play the game. Ladies and elderly devotees joined in passing the earth-filled baskets to the low ground below. Such was the enthusiasm of some elders that Swami chided them for trying to be Bhima or Bhishma and recommended that they become water boys instead. Sore muscles and blisters turned into strong muscles and calves as the morning and afternoon work sessions continued.

Each day Swami distributed Prasad of milk flavoured with cardamom, and sweets when the day's work stopped. We all experienced a unique joy while singing bhajans as we worked. The earth-filled baskets sped along the rows of men and women like flying saucers and didn't seem to weigh at all.

This work was guided constantly by the Lord's darshan, as He walked among the devotees. We forgot our personal problems and got into the spirit of unity. Swami would make comments, like, "dig deeper" or "how many feet?" One wondered whether He was referring to the excavation outside or the exploration inside. Swami often says that sadhana is one-fourth of the task but three-fourths of it is self-enquiry on the road to Self-realization. While the ground was being prepared for the extension to the bhajan hall, we too were being prepared for our spiritual advance. "Dig deeper," meant "look within". "How many feet?" could mean, "How far have you given up your attachments?" Working and singing together mean unity, oneness and love in action. The hundreds of devotees that participated in this service are forever grateful to Bhagavan for this act of supreme grace. To all the participants, it will remain a precious and unforgettable experience.

—**J. B.**

GURUDEVA VANI:

Depart Without Debt

Bhagavan is hailed in the Arati song as "Sadgurudeva". He is the Divine teacher of the Supreme Truth par excellence. He makes use of every conceivable occasion to drive home the profoundest truths in the most compelling and interesting manner. The students and small group of devotees who were present at the evening gatherings in "Trayee Brindavan" after Bhagavan's

prasadam at the end of the meeting, they had the unforgettable privilege of listening to Swami's informal discourses which were mainly concerned with what may be compendiously described as "practical spirituality". Swami spoke one evening on what is true friendship. On another evening, He illustrated from a crucial episode in the Mahabharata how it is sinful to be silent witnesses to the perpetration of a grievous crime.

On another evening, Swami related instances from the lives of Socrates, the Greek philosopher, and Prophet Mohammed to pinpoint the lesson that one should not leave any undischarged debts before one passes away.

In relating the story of Socrates in His own gripping manner, Swami described how the young men in Athens were attracted to Socrates because of the way in which he aroused in them a deep interest in the basic problems of life. Because too many young men chose to remain with Socrates, the authorities in Athens condemned him to death. Rather than allowing himself to be put to death by others, Socrates chose to end his life by drinking a cup of hemlock.

Swami described the last scene in which Socrates was surrounded by his numerous young disciples. With no fear of death, Socrates spoke to them cheerfully. Before receiving the cup of hemlock from the hands of his disciples, Socrates told one of them that he owed a hen to a neighbour. He asked the disciple to give a hen to his neighbour so that he may be free from any debt to anyone before his passing. He then received the cup of hemlock from the disciples' hands and drank it calmly.

Incidentally Swami described how Alexander, a student of Aristotle—who was himself a pupil of Plato, the guru of Socrates—met an Indian ascetic during his invasion of India and learnt from the sage the supreme value of detachment (Vairagya) and the impermanence of worldly acquisitions.

Referring to Prophet Mohammed's life, Swami described how on one occasion when the Prophet was fleeing from Mecca, he had to use the services of a camel-driver for carrying him across the desert. The Prophet had no money to pay to him at the time. Later, when the Prophet was about to leave the world, he called one of his disciples and asked him to discharge the debt the Prophet owed to the camel-driver.

Swami related these incidents to the students to impress on them how important it is in life to discharge one's obligations to others. The ancient Indian sages, Swami said, believed that if a person dies without discharging his debts he cannot escape the obligation to be born again to discharge the unpaid debts. Our ancients attached the highest value to honouring one's pledged word. Harishchandra was the supreme example of one who was prepared to undergo every kind of trial and humiliation to fulfill the promise he had given.

Swami recited a Telugu poem which says:

*The army is vital to a fortress;
Character is vital to a community;
Truth is vital to speech.*

True friendship

One evening, Swami asked the students to define the characteristics of true friendship. Various answers were given and the examples of Krishna and Arjuna were cited. Bhagavan said that He wanted examples from human beings alone. The relation between Krishna and Arjuna was that of the Divine to man.

Swami then gave the answer Himself and illustrated it with an example from ancient Italy. Swami said true friendship is present when the friends regard themselves as two bodies with one heart and soul. Swami then related the story of Damon and Pythias. Pythias had been sentenced to death by a ruler (of Syracuse) for an offence against the State. Pythias's friend, Damon, came to the ruler and said that as the sentence was to be executed a month later Pythias might be released from prison to see his wife and children. The ruler agreed to release Pythias on condition that Damon agreed to be in prison for a month and was willing to suffer the death sentence in case Pythias did not turn up on the due date. Damon readily offered to take Pythias's place. Pythias was freed and permitted to go home to meet his family. On the day prior to the date of execution a large crowd had gathered at the prison to see whether Pythias kept his word. Tension mounted as Pythias had not arrived by the evening. Damon was cheerfully ready to mount the scaffold in case Pythias did not turn up. Late in the night Pythias came running to the prison to save Damon from execution for his sake. The next morning the ruler was astonished at seeing both Damon and Pythias and was struck by the extreme devotion between the two friends. He pardoned Pythias and took both the friends into his service.

Swami went on to say that such friendship was not to be found today. Most "friends" were fair-weather friends who flocked around a person when he was prosperous or held a high position, but ignored him when he was down and out. Such "friends" were like frogs which gathered in a pond full of water but abandoned it when it was dry. Swami said God alone was the unfailing friend who could be relied upon to stand by the man of faith in weal and woe and protect him through all vicissitudes. Young people should not think that they could postpone thinking about God till their old age. No one can say when death will come. Only if one remembers God constantly all the time will he be able to remember God in his last moments.

Who are sinners?

Swami related at great length an important episode in the Mahabharata to convey a lesson regarding the role of persons who are silent witnesses to the commission of what they know to be a grievous wrong.

Describing the incident in which Draupadi was dragged into the court of Duryodhana by Dussasana, Swami said that Draupadi made a passionate appeal to the elders present to declare whether the humiliation she was being subjected to by the Kauravas was in accordance with

Kripacharya and Ashwathama, remained silent. Vikarna, the youngest of the Kaurava brothers, was the only person who condemned the outrage that was being committed against a noble and virtuous Kshatriya princess. His words were dismissed as those of a callow youth.

Swami pointed out that when a grave crime is committed, the sin is shared by four categories of persons. Apart from those who are the actual perpetrators of the crime, the others who share in the sin are those who are abettors or accomplices, those who instigate or encourage the commission of the crime and those who are silent witnesses to the crime though they know that a grievous crime is being committed.

The lesson which Bhagavan drew from this episode for the students was that when any of them found a student misbehaving or disobeying the rules of the Institute, they should correct him on the spot and should not hesitate to chide him. To be silent or indifferent in such situations amounts to encouraging and abetting such misbehaviour.

—*Bharadwaja*

Implications of Love in Action

There are all types of interpretation of the four-letter word "Love". Each one knows it in his own characteristic way according to one's background, education and stage of life. As one's 'Dharma' changes with the four stages in the life span, so does the connotation of this word. But there must be a common factor which must be found in all these interpretations without which it could not be understood or practised by the youngest and the oldest. If you try to analyse its various theoretical and practical aspects, you will find that there is one such common factor found in all the varied meanings. Only the quality and the measure of this common factor may be different in each one.

This common factor, in very simple language, is "consideration for others." In "others" we include all that is visible and surrounds us such as living beings (humanity, animal world, vegetation, the smallest insects as well as the insentient objects such as stone, useless articles which have no obvious value or utility in practical life).

Sympathy—love in action

This attitude of consideration grows on the foundation of sympathy which each mind is born with; it is inborn, inherent and is given to each one by Bhagavan when He sends the souls out on this planet. It is a different matter whether it is allowed to develop properly from childhood or is turned in an opposite direction to become an attitude of obstruction by influences which prevail on the mind of the child in its growing years. If the parents possess a healthy mental growth, the child also becomes stronger and stronger in it, but when the parents and teachers do not have the correct mental make-up, naturally the child is influenced and strays away in the wrong direction.

friend called Keshav from a family not so well off. The two used to play together. One day Arun came and said to his mother at lunchtime, "I do not wish to eat." The mother was puzzled as she knew that Arun was hungry and had not taken any extra food! She enquired again and again from Arun why he did not wish to eat. At last Arun spoke pointing to his friend Keshav, "See he has not eaten as they do not have anything to eat and so I too would not eat!" The mother smiled and said, "Arun, this will not help either you or Keshav; let us do something which will help both of you. Bring Keshav along. You have lunch and Keshav will also eat with you." Arun was delighted and both friends enjoyed the meal.

This incident shows that the factor of sympathy and consideration for others, which is a practical form of 'LOVE' is present in all humans with birth, only it needs to be directed properly by those who are looking after the child. Besides it can be put into practice not only in the case of food, but in every action of everyday living. There are millions of such situations which one is faced with, from morning till one goes to sleep.

Theory and practice

Here comes the role of self-introspection. One has to become first conscious of the importance of "sympathy and consideration" in life, one has to become aware of it every moment of one's life, till it becomes a natural habit in life; only then one would know whether one's actions are leading to the correct path and introspection would be of proper use. It has to grow in such a way that one can put oneself in the position of ten other persons, eliminating one's own ego, and try to understand the problem from the others' point of view, in an impartial, completely objective way. This does not happen in a day, but actions trained and done from that particular point of view lead to the maturity and serenity of the mental attitude which ultimately leads, in the words of the Gita, to the state of a Sthitaprajna or a person with a steady mind and unwavering wisdom. So many examples can be quoted from practical life where this is applicable. But the trouble is that we do not understand it in a practical way. We only learn the theory of it by rote and think that no further thought need be given to it! We forget that every subject in the educational process has two parts: (1) The theory, (2) The application of the theory in practical life. We do not pay much attention to the second part and are content to learn the first part only. We are satisfied with being 'armchair' educated people. This specially applies to the Indian intelligentsia who consider physical work of any sort as not honourable or uplifting; rather it is looked down upon. I am compelled to say this specially about Indian men. They have been brought up on the idea that daily work of many kinds is the concern of women only. This becomes very obvious once the Indian young man travels abroad and sees the different situation there where everyone has to work, men, women and also children.

Gandhiji used to say, "In order to restore the dignity of work, the work which is considered of the lowest category, the dirtiest and filthiest, must be done by oneself and should not be given to anyone else." To put it into practice, it was a rule in his Ashram that cleaning of latrines (and mind you there were no sanitary closets in those days!) must be done by the Ashramites themselves by turns. Cleaning of cooking utensils, big and small, washing of clothes, each one had to do oneself.

Swami has gone even several steps further. He has declared that "Work is Worship." He has put it on a much higher pedestal and it includes all types of work.

Now this also has to be understood in the proper perspective. As the same food cannot be served to one and all, to the healthy and the diseased, to a baby and an old person, similarly work has to be allotted to each one according to one's mental and physical capacity, according to his background and age. But the rule holds that no one is exempt from the obligation to work. One can speak or write on this subject endlessly, considering the various situations that arise in daily life and making them examples and deriving golden rules out of each one according to each individual. But first of all, one must become AWARE of the obligation to work and introspect in one's own mind whether one's conduct is in accordance with this obligation.

—A. K. V.

Gopis Then—Sai Sevikas Now

A lady devotee, who participated in the seva at Kodaikanal, writing about her experiences, draws a parallel between the Gopis carrying milk, butter and curds in the basketful of pots on their heads, chanting all the time the name of Krishna, and the devotees at Kodaikanal who conveyed basketfuls of mud from hand to hand, singing all the time bhajans and chanting the words: "Krishna Jai! Krishna Jai." She writes:

"Walking back and forth on the large balcony in His Kodaikanal home, Swami presented a most picturesque figure, in His orange coloured robe, silhouetted against the clear blue sky. As He stood there with a few tall eucalyptuses in the background, He was in His usual captivating manner clapping His hands, keeping time to the singing of the "gopis" below. As their voices soared upwards in chorus, "Krishna Jai! Krishna Jai" He filled them all with joy and energy.

"In this extraordinarily beautiful scene—on a steep hill-side in Kodaikanal with the sun shimmering in the waters of the lake below, and surrounded by lush tropical vegetation—they all worked away happily. The gopis moved piles of earth in their baskets from one point to another. Some sent their baskets flying to bridge a deep cleft in the clay and mud wall, some skillfully passed on their baskets to the next in line.

"Even on Easwaramma day (May 6th) this seva continued under the flags and festoons that had been put up for the occasion. In the morning, there was a short bhajan session and in the afternoon the seva continued for a couple of hours. Two overseas devotees from Italy and Greece, now living in South Africa with their families, on the day of their departure got a special farewell gift from Sai Gopala. He gave a stack of Vibhuti packets to each of them. They were immensely grateful to Bhagavan for the opportunity He had given them to participate in the seva in His divine presence."

What is 'Inner' Reality?

"Science gives but a partial view: for the intellect is itself an outsider, and has lost hold of the inner unity of life." "This sense of inward reality has been deadened by the calls of ordinary life, the practice of civilisation, and we have come habitually to look upon ourselves in the same materialistic way in which we regard other things. In the silent darkness of inner feeling a direct communication seems to pass at every pore from ourselves to all other things, keeping up a continuity of sympathetic influences. But in the broad light of intellect and science, things assume an isolated and independent existence."

—"Life and Writings of Schopenhauer" (W. Wallace)

In the views summarised above, Schopenhauer was much inspired by the non-dualism of the Upanishads. Perhaps the core teaching in this respect was the permanence of Universal *Atma* which permeates and thus unifies all impermanent beings and that the human subject's capacity to witness reality comes from the *Atma*. Western thinkers today, however, usually lack the conceptual background for grasping the highest non-dualistic (*advaitic*) philosophies

Our education relies upon reason, which is based entirely on the principle of *'either—or but not both.'* If matter is real, by this eliminative principle, then spirit cannot be so (unless it is also somehow physical). However, both spirit and matter are real, yet in different ways... or in opposite senses. Sai Baba explains both that the world in which we must live out our lives is real, not an illusion, and yet also that it is illusion, due to its impermanence veiling the eternal. Mere logic cannot allow that both assertions can be true.

The problem is due to reason being applied too widely, extending it beyond its capacity to matters that require of us our inclusive comprehension. Only holistic understanding can harmonise outward contradictions, differing systems of thought and religion. Philosophy abounds in examples of how reason itself causes apparent contradictions, especially when applied to first and last things (e.g. Kant's antinomies).

Creation is what we call 'objective reality', while the Creator is The Subject who, Sai Baba teaches, is also present everywhere and even throughout physical creation. Though our senses show us His objective works, Baba insists that divinity can *only* be experienced through self-discovery. Insofar as we become inwardly conscious we become aware that we are a party (if an exceedingly small one) to that infinite Consciousness, which is what creates and multiplies, sustains and eventually withdraws to itself even the objective universe.

The objective outer world and inner reality

"Whatever is not in man cannot be anywhere outside him. Whatever is visible outside him is but a rough reflection of what really is in him." (Sathya Sai Vahini.)

spheres of primary particles or the complexities of genes and always gazing further backwards into time by mapping the macroscopic universe of galaxies, quasars and our cosmic origin. Staring always outwards, scientific theory extends 'the known world' and so 'creates' the great complexity of coordinates or ideas by which it is fascinated.

Materialistic thought and material ambitions have focused modern concern on the play of the appearances that is Nature, to the exclusion of the player which is Spirit. It is not enough to see only our dim reflection in our worldly works or increased information about the universe. For this easily becomes the error of Narcissus, man's self-fascination, if we are too little aware of how little we know of the mysterious causes of life, history and creation in its endlessly-varied vastness. Pride in the mind and its works is a large part of the 'civilised' ego.

The actual seer of all this outward display, the human subject, may catch an oblique glimpse of his inner reality in all that, as in a mirror dimly. The subject, once a factor scientists tried to eliminate entirely, is now allowed a place in micro-physics along with the rest, if only much like another object or a factor for which one must somehow account.

However much one tries, though, the subject cannot become an object, even though it may *appear* partly objective when reflected upon in memory. Its very nature is to be always ahead of the objective world, never able to sink down and become part of its fixed existence. This 'transcendence' is what makes each one of us who we are and allows us as observing subjects mentally and spiritually to range beyond even time and space through the human mind at will (even though the flesh may fail to follow!). This is what the term 'inner reality' points to.

From our incarnate human viewpoint, limited though it be, we have the possibility *both* of focusing our energies outwards onto the world of action and objective discoveries *and* inwards in the contemplation of the spirit and its source. Experience indicates that, if we neglect the one, it will be at the cost of the whole. A balance must be maintained between worldly activities and spiritual practices so that the one can inform the other.

The 'I' sees the cosmos

"It is indeed strange that this huge Cosmos depends ultimately on whether 'I' cognise it as such or not! 'If you feel it is there, it is there: if you feel it is not there, it is not there!' This means that we have to go deep into this process of the mind of man. Is there any occasion when our assertion leads to the existence of a thing and our negation results in its disappearance? Or, is this conclusion a figment of the imagination? Inquiry on these lines would undoubtedly reveal the Truth..."

(Sathya Sai Vahini, p. 164)

Apart from studying great religions and spiritual works, the need to explore inwardly arises within us. Theories that 'map' the inner landscape may be helpful in some ways, yet Baba often reminds us that inner reality is not to be 'found' solely by introspective navel-gazing or mere mental investigation. How shall we understand what he means when he says: 'Meditation must

doings, but trying to maintain an inward awareness in actions.

For those of us who always somehow have to try to ally faith and reason, one stumbling block is often grasping the relationship between `inner' and `outer'. Concentrating exclusively on the world of external things, our modern pragmatic training hinders us in grasping the connection between its scientific ideas and the heart of the matter, the reality of the subjective person.

The human subject is like the lens of both film camera and film projector, everything must pass through it, inwards and outwards, in order that anything be brought to light (for the subject).

Add to this the fact that we can and must exercise our will, which itself gears inner to outer. By our will we select and modify what we `take in' and decide what to `put out' in words or action. The result is surely that the human subject has considerably greater long-term influence than any external cause which affects the body or the environment. It is the only point of contact between the ideal and the real, where ideas and reality meet. This fact, the latent power of the individual spirit in the face of any sort of challenge, is still much neglected and overlooked in modern world culture and education which concentrates overwhelmingly on the `outward' factors that affect us at the expense of our latent `inward' resources. Science would have that we are at the mercy of factors, economic, environmental, genetic etc. while it tends to reject `faith' as a subjective factor, implying that it is some sort of illusion.

Knowledge, belief and faith

In a world `blinded by science' people are fearful of `blind faith'. Yet gradually again it seems, after decades dominated by pragmatism and utilitarianism, the age-old issue of knowledge versus faith is being raised again. St. Thomas taught that the sciences have their own sphere and need not usually conflict with faith. When that really happens, as it allegedly did, St. Thomas was in no doubt that faith must prevail.

Believers in science rightly talk of the dangers that can come from religious superstition and most Western countries still overwhelmingly prefer to base their policies on scientific predictions rather than on religious beliefs. Yet this can go too far. In referring to the Manu Dharma Shastra, Swami wrote:

"The scientists of today call this attitude `blind faith': they want it to be discarded. They want every subjective and objective fact to be examined and put to rigorous tests. They confuse themselves when they consider this as an independent path to discovery of reality."

(S.S. Vahini p. 112)

What is called 'belief' can refer to judgements about facts—on whether something is true or not—and this concerns the outer world of observables, opinions and creeds. Then faith, on the other hand, can signify a state of the subjective person and reflect `inner' qualities. Such qualities include, among many others, trust in the rightness of caring, friendship, the love of others and of

varying beliefs, faith is essentially one.

Matters of belief have to do with analysable states of affairs and can be argued scientifically or rationally (often with little or no appreciable impact on the actual person within). However, faith simply reflects an individual's holistic self-understanding... a comprehension which goes beyond any debatable issues. Standing back from the world to get an overview of oneself as within yet beyond it, of one's relations with all and everyone, faith intuitively discerns our true identity as an inward being. Because it is not of the body but of the spirit, faith can be reviewed and assessed on its own inward evidence, knowing it directly (without the interposing medium of sense organs).

Inner vision

Swami instructs that the prerequisite of any action becoming spiritual is genuine dedication (for the universal Good), being the exact opposite of selfish motivation. Though *outward* or 'objective' results from one's work—money, status, popularity and so forth—can give passing gratification it is *inward* or 'subjective' qualities like peace of mind, detachment, equanimity, compassion, mindfulness of the divine and their like that give lasting quality to life.

Inner vision is advanced by unattachment. It accrues as faith, deriving from actual life experience combined with the practice of what the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard called 'inwardliness' (*Innerlight*). It is not the same as intelligence, for the intelligence merely copies, reworks and transforms the observations our senses provide, so it is an artificer. Baba has said, "*art is outside, heart is inside.*"

Qualities like peace of mind, compassionate understanding, goodwill, mental courage, tenacity of purpose and others are 'inward'. Seen as spiritual rewards coming as the expression of instilling a good will towards all, they can be enjoyed in self-confidence for they differ from the 'outward' fruits of actions that are done for tangible rewards.

—**Robert Priddy, Oslo**

In the published version of Bhagavan's Christmas (1988) message, which appeared in the January 1989 issue of 'Sanathana Sarathi', the statement on page 2 that "Jesus grew up at Nazareth till he reached thirty" should read as follows: "Jesus grew up at Nazareth till his thirteenth year. His spiritual ministry began when he was thirty." (Ed.)

Tree of Life

To Swami, all life is one; for all life has only one seed: "I am the seed of all life." This tree of life draws its sap from above. Its branches, twigs and leaves only manifest the vitality of the seed

vision of Reality in which branches, twigs and leaves are accepted but not the seed; nor one in which the seed is recognised but not the tree. The wholesome vision does recognise the seed and the tree; and knows that the tree is only an expression of the seed. Swami gives this vision of unity to a divided world as the truest heritage of mankind.

"Life is not a journey from untruth to Truth, but from partial truth to the whole Truth," He says. In one stroke, Swami has reduced all warring opposites to integral components. Apparent diversities and differences in life are to be looked upon as the manifold expressions of the whole. Swami declares again: "Life is a journey from 'I' to 'We'." The different 'I's that make the 'We' are not conflicting wholes, they are insufficient parts of a sufficient and efficient whole. Swami not only gives us a perspective, He wants us to re-organise our living according to it. Thus, a philosophy becomes a religion; and religion stands on the solid ground of understanding. The individual must expand to embrace the universal, for it is only in the universal that the individual can attain one's fullness. Therefore, Swami says that all these individual heads and hands and feet are the myriad limbs of the 'Sahasra Seershaa Purushah...'

Face the challenge

Swami wants us to face life boldly, heroically. "Life is a challenge, meet it," He exhorts. How? "Follow the Master," shows the way. The Master is the purified Buddhi or intellect through which God speaks. Then "Face the Devil," the devil of temptation to a life of diversion. "Fight to the end" comes the next step. A person who has heard the voice of God within shall never give in until life's transcendence is attained, for that is the end of all struggle. There the 'game of life' is finished and the dream is realised. This fight is our unceasing sadhana of asserting our innate divinity over the downward pulls of the senses and the mind. The first step is awareness of our own strength, self-confidence, which stands redeemed in the last step when "we shall find that these environments were almost zero in comparison with the power of the soul."

Swami does not under-rate the role of the intellect. In fact, He insists that one must develop and purify one's intellect, as this gift of God is given only to man. When one's Buddhi or intellect is a meek follower of the vagaries of the mind and the senses, it brings all the misery. But if Buddhi draws its sustenance from the light of Self and reflects that on the mind and the senses, this gift of God has been rightly used. Vichara (enquiry) is three-fourths of sadhana, Swami says. But all intellectual understanding has to become a living experience. Once, when someone remarked in the presence of Swami that he knew that all life is one, Swami at once asked him, "Do you get a stomachache when your wife gets it?" Therefore, the awareness of unity is not an affair of the intellect; it is the expansion of consciousness until one realises that the 'other' body is also his body. Swami not only says that He is everywhere, He actually gives proof of it. One such incident can be related here. Once, after Swami returned to Prasanthi Nilayam from a tour, it was noticed by some that Swami's back bore clear marks of car wheels. When asked for the reason, Swami revealed that while going through a jungle road His car had run over a python, and that He was also in the python to take the pressure of the car wheels. This is true oneness.

and Upanishadic seers filled every hill and dale singing of this holy joy of life. "Born in Ananda, all beings ultimately merge in Ananda," they sang. This happiness is born out of purity of heart and mind, not out of a sense of physical well-being; a balanced economic and emotional life. On the question of purity, Swami allows no compromise. He very often states that the only purpose of all philosophy and religion is to help man achieve purity of consciousness, Chitta-Suddhi. It is the result of dedication, harmony of thoughts, words and deeds; and of recognizing that the body is merely a means to the end, not an end in itself. Swami's recent slogan to mankind is, 'Purity is Enlightenment'. The sunshine of holy joy is inside. To be pure is to turn within and bask in that sunshine.

Purity and unity

Swami's philosophy embraces all the myriad variety of life, for it arises from His own oneness with the creation. Once He said: "When I address you as Premaswaroopulara, I am only addressing myself in you. Just as I see myself in you, you must see yourself in me." He wrote in a letter, "There was no one to understand me until I created the world for my own delight..." Another letter reads, "You are the God of the universe. You are creating the whole universe, and drawing it in... You appear as the smiling flower, as the twinkling star..." He points out his oneness with the creation and wants the creation to realise its oneness with the Creator. There can be no higher stage of the experience of UNITY that so effortlessly expresses itself in Swami. In another poetic letter He concludes, "So we begin and so we end; you in me and I in you." There is a great purity, a great simplicity and humility in these utterances which can only be divine.

Swami drives home the truth that the attainment of Reality brings fulfillment to man even in the worldly life. A palm tree that stands with a bunch of fruits throws its shadow on the earth. One who climbs the tree and plucks the fruit has also his shadow pluck the shadow fruit. But one who climbs the shadow tree and plucks shadow fruits has no access to the real fruits. The palm tree is life divine and the fruits the realisation of God, while the shadow, tree is worldly life and the shadow fruits, peace and happiness in the world.

—B K. Misra
(From "Sai Chandana")

Traigunyam

Recently, speaking to a group of devotees at Brindavan, Swami said, "Dvaita represents Tamas, Visishtadvaita Rajas and Advaita Satva." This interesting statement merits careful analysis. This does not mean that the first two are inferior to the third. Swami repeatedly asserts that all philosophies have ultimately to lead to Advaita. The belief in these three schools of

guna predominant in each individual.

The word `guna' which is generally interpreted as quality or attribute has no precise English equivalent because gunas are not attributes of matter but represent the very materiality of matter itself. Prakriti and gunas are inseparable and identical. The triple nature of matter, traigunyam, Tamas, Rajas and Satwa, according to the Samkhya philosophy, is a part of the evolution of the universe itself.

That the gunas play a basic role at every level of creation can be appreciated if we take a closer look at the information provided by science. At the fundamental sub-atomic level, every particle has a mass or weight which contributes to its inertia and Tamas is represented by this resistance of the mass of matter. Every particle is in continuous motion and this intense activity is the equivalent of Rajas. In spite of this unceasing activity, there is orderliness inherent in the system so that the rhythm of vibration of each particle makes it enter into relations with the surrounding particles. This Satwic attribute not only ensures perfect relationship between particles within the atom but also between the larger units of matter. The same applies to the celestial bodies, the stars and the plants which with their great mass moving at tremendous speeds have established a perfect relationship with one another. Thus the gunas contribute to activity and orderliness in the universe at every level.

The scriptures declare that the entire creation is an inseparable association of the Purusha and the Prakriti, the Awareness and matter. The Purusha or Self is conceived to be of a triple nature: Sat Chit Ananda, forming a triangle pointing upwards The Moola Prakriti or the not-Self with its three gunas is pictured as an inverted triangle with the apex pointing downwards. The close association of the two in creation is represented by placing the two triangles together to form a six-pointed star, a symbol often seen in temples and forms part of the Sri Chakra. Endless permutations and combinations of the three gunas with varying proportions of the five elements, the Panchabhootas, gives rise to all the diversity seen in creation. In the inverted triangle representing Prakriti, the guna which is at the apex determines the predominant nature of the individual.

The gunas in their various combinations are associated with every aspect of life, the four varnas, food, health, buddhi, knowledge, equanimity of mind, happiness, action, faith, worship, tapasya, charity, renunciation, bondage, everything is based on and influenced by the gunas. Lord Krishna deals with this exhaustively in the fourteenth and seventeenth chapters of the Gita.

Every human organism while being inevitably a mixture of all the three gunas, exhibits a predominance of one or the other and this determines the level of its evolution. The indolent, inactive and dull man of tamasic nature revels in ignorance, doubts and uncertainties. At this stage, Rajasic development in him is a necessity to sharpen his intellect and to enable him to undertake worldly pursuits. But the same when it becomes excessively predominant holds him back from further evolution. It then expresses in him as egotism with its attendant qualities of anger, lust, greed, arrogance, pride and jealousy. The next step in evolution can be achieved only

leading on to humility, self-control, faith, devotion and mumukshutwa or yearning for liberation. Being integral part of matter, it is wrong to think that Tamas and Rajas are bad gunas. The defect lies in allowing either of the first two to dominate over the third, Satwa.

From the spiritual standpoint, Satwa can be taken to represent consciousness, Rajas the dynamic activity and Tamas the feeling of doership. The spiritual evolution of man is punctuated by the three stages which are closely linked with the predominant guna in him. The first is 'I am me', wherein the body consciousness associated with tamoguna predominates. The next is 'I am all', association with Rajas when unity of creation is comprehended and man indulges in useful activities. The third stage is 'I am I' related to Satwa wherein the individual becomes established in the changeless Absolute, the pure Awareness. The same can also be equated to the three attitudes 'I am in the light', 'the light is in me' and 'I am the light', or *salokyam*, *sameeepyam* and *saroopyam* leading on to *sayujyam*. The progress one makes towards the goal depends on one's Sraddha which in turn is influenced by one's natural disposition. "*Sattvaanuroopa sarvasya shraddha bhavati*," says Lord Krishna (Gita Ch. 17 V. 3). Thus Shraddha is also of three types: "*trividhaa bhavati shraddha*," the tamasic, Rajasic and Satwic.

The three gunas are characteristics of Maya or avidya or nescience. She is 'trigunatmika', says Viveka Choodamani (V. 110). Tamas is born of ignorance and is deluding all embodied beings, says Lord Krishna "Tamas tvajnaanajam viddhi mohanam sarva dehinaam" (Gita Ch. 14 V. 8). It is responsible for the veiling power of Maya, "eshaa aavrtvinaama tamogunasya" declares Viveka Choodamani (V. 113). Tamas makes things appear other than what they are. Dvaita insists on the Jivatman and Paramatman being always separate. It is a philosophy of distinctions. The body mind complex keeps God as an entirely separate entity outside oneself and worship is done with that attitude. From the advaitic point of view, this is Tamas. Rajas is the nature of passion: "Raja raagaatmakam" (Gita Ch. 14 V. 7) and is responsible for the vikshepa shakti or the projecting power of Maya. This power is of the nature of activity and is accompanied by attachment and thirst for sense pleasures. There is intense longing or 'sprhaa'. Visishtadvaita believes that the Jivatman has separated from the paramatman and this philosophy is for those who are conscious of the separation and are longing for union with the Supreme. In this context it is Rajas. Satva reflects the reality of the Atma. "*Yatra atma bimbah pratibimbatah*" says Viveka Choodamani (V. 117). But Satvic happiness also binds and creates attachment to wisdom. "*Jnana sangena badhnaati*" (Gita Ch. 14, V. 6). Realisation of one's own Self ensues from pure Satva "*swaatmaanubhootih*" (Viveka Choodamani, V. 119). To advaita, Jivatman and Paramatman are same.

All scriptures declare that the ultimate goal of human birth is realisation of the Self. This implies that the progress has to be towards the predominance of Satwa guna. However, this is not the end of the road because, as declared by Lord Krishna (Gita Ch. 14, V. 5), all the three gunas bind the Jivatma fast in the body "*nibadhnanti dehe dehinam avyayam*."

respectively. But a chain is a chain that holds one in bondage, irrespective of the metal it is made. Only when all the three are broken, the illumined state of trigunateeta is attained.

What are the qualities of the one who has risen above the three gunas? The answer comes in the later verses of the fourteenth chapter. Lord Krishna says, "he is seated like Me unconcerned, unperturbed, regards pain and pleasure alike, blame and praise as one and is the same in honour and dishonour and same to friends and foes." What is the result of transcending the gunas? "Madbhaavam sodhigacchati"—he attains My Being, says the Lord; one becomes pure Awareness itself. (Ch. 14, V. 19).

Transcending the gunas does sound difficult indeed. One wonders whether there is not a simpler way of attaining the goal. The Lord anticipates this doubt and gives His recipe in verse 26 of Chapter 14.

*“Maam cha yoavyabhicharena bhakti yogena sevate
Sa gunaan samateetyaifaan brahma bhuyaaya kalpate.”*

If we serve Him with unfailing devotion of love, we are assured of rising above the three gunas and become fit to reach the state of Brahman. What is this devotion of love which Swami also repeatedly stresses in His discourses? It is the cognition of divinity within oneself and constant abidance in the Self. It is same as abiding in the consciousness, in the sense of 'I amness' which is the divinity residing in us. It is not possible for any one to directly reach the state of Pure Awareness. The pursuit of the Satvic path of Advaita, that is the one-pointed attention to the indwelling consciousness in one self and the unfailing love towards God residing in all that automatically leads us on to the transcendental Reality, the Pure Awareness.

—**M. B.**

Thanksgiving

*Thank you my Lord;
For keeping us in your vicinity,
And showering us with the flowers of divinity,
As our teacher, parent and loving God.*

*We ought to be grateful, O Lord,
For we live in the light of your heart,
Without which we would live in dungeons,
Of ego, hatred and vengeance.*

O, Lord Sai, thank you

*We shall try to clear our debts,
Through every way you show us.*

*O Lord! Your wish is to us a command,
We know it's for our own good,
As you are undoubtedly
The Embodiment of Selflessness.*

**—Sundervardhan,
XI C.A.E., Vidyagiri**

*My Ananda is my food and to secure that food I promote happiness in others and derive
delight from their joy. That is the significance of my statement, "My LIFE IS MY MESSAGE." To
feel blissful in the enjoyment of the happiness which others experience is a quality of the Divine.*

—Baba

Tale of a Pilgrim

As I picked up my pen, to pen-in what little I could about the infinite, incomprehensible entity—our Beloved Bhagavan, a sudden thought occurred to me. It was: "Swami cannot be understood by the mind, but He can be won by the heart." This thought kept recurring and resonating in my head. Thinking thus I kept the pen down and casually surveyed the stack of books on the rack overhead. For some peculiar reason, the third volume of "Sathyam Sivam Sundaram" caught my eye and my hand reached out to pick it, as if impelled by some hidden force. I just opened a page at random, hoping to land on a topic for my article. I was browsing through its contents in a non-chalant fashion, when my eyes suddenly popped out of their sockets. The very same thought which was whizzing in my head a moment ago was actually recorded in 1970 by Prof. Kasturi, the very words of the Avatar in black and white before me. The words read—"Small minds and limited intellects cannot comprehend My Divine Power." This in itself may be termed an experience of Swami's omnipresence. Sceptics and rationalists may dismiss this as a mere coincidence, but to me, as far as Swami is concerned, there can be no question of coincidence. As the saying goes: "Little minds prefer lower means." It seemed as though Swami had blessed me with a theme for my article. Thus overwhelmed by this love of Sai, my mind drifted down the memory lane, recollecting, recapturing and recapitulating those rapturous moments that I cherished with the Lord, as a child, in days gone by—days than will never come again.

Feet. I am indeed honoured and consider myself uniquely privileged to say that it was He who selected my parents and performed their marriage as well. It was He who heralded the arrival of my sister and myself, by creating Vibhuti and blessing my parents. Both my sister and I are indeed fortunate to have been christened by Swami. It is of course up to us to live up to His expectations. This tale regarding the manner in which Swami has been the guiding and protecting force in our lives leads to a never-ending story. In retrospect, for the infinite mercies and favours He has bestowed upon us, what we have repaid probably amounts to almost nothing. As the saying goes:

"God gives and forgives, Man gets and forgets."

It is often said in cricket terminology, when a batsman is given a chance due to some lapse on the part of the fielding side, that he is given 'a life'. I, for one, am lucky enough to write this article only because I was given 'a life' by the ever merciful, compassionate Sai.

Before I proceed to relate the incident wherein Swami protected me, I must say that Swami had given me a locket, the like of which many others possess, which is no longer with me. On this locket was inscribed a palm, with the words; "Why fear when I am here?" in Tamil around it on one side. On the other side was the figure of Sainath of Shirdi, in His characteristic pose, with one leg crossed, seated on a stone.

It was Krishna Janmashtami day and Krishna being my grandma's favourite deity, this festival was celebrated with great pomp and festivity. There was a recitation from the Bhagavad Gita that evening. I was just a toddler aged three. I was rolling about and playing on the elevated porch-room, which could be reached by a flight of ten steps, where the Gita chanting was in progress. In the process of rolling I reached the edge of this staircase. The ladies meanwhile were engrossed in the Gita-chanting. All of a sudden they heard my scream and rushed to see what had happened. To their utter horror they saw me tumbling down the steps. My scream was countered by mother's cries, "SAI RAM! SAI RAM! SAI RAM!" As they all rushed down to see what had become of me, they were utterly amazed to find not a scratch on my bonny body. They were doubly surprised to find that the shining silver pendent seemed to have borne the brunt of the fall, for it was dented. Only then did they realise the gravity of the situation and my mother silently thanked Swami for having protected me. Among those who had gathered for this Gita-chanting were a few non-devotees as well, and this incident probably found them thoroughly baffled and must have left them wondering at the infinite love, grace and power of our beloved Swami.

This is how we experienced His Love, Power and Divinity. There are numerous other incidents experienced by thousands of people, proving the Omnipresence of Swami. As someone once said, "Every pilgrim who has come to Puttapparthi has his own tale to tell."

Thus I conclude offering my most humble salutations at the Divine Lotus Feet of our Lord Sai.

The deepest yearning of man is to experience the One, the Basis, the Being that has become. From east and west, from south and north, you have come in thousands and are now One in this Poornachandra Auditorium, feeling a blissful spiritual Unity. Be aware of the One which manifests as the many. That is Divine Life. Aspire for such a life, not simply for long life. Aspire for the Bliss that the awareness of the Atma can confer, not for the pleasure the objects of the world can give.

God is omnipresent. So do not act differently when you are away from my presence. Be always and everywhere conscious of the Presence. Be vigilant, even while engaged in little tasks. Maintain silence, in the recesses of the heart, as well as outside. The Gita says, God's hands and feet are everywhere. You can hear His footfall only when no other sound hinders. Develop the awareness of God, see Him and serve Him in every living being.

—Baba

STUDENTS' CORNER:

Sai Ganesha

*Lord Ganesha is the God who loves
The lisping child and the toddling tot.
So too our Lord Sai Ganesha
Loves us, His children, quite a lot.*

*Lord Ganesha gives us to eat
Laddus, modaks, dainty sweet
So too Sai Ganesha, whenever we pine
Feeds us with Love, Sweet, Divine.*

*Siddhi Ganesha—serene and calm
Blesses us all with His right hand palm
So too Sai Ganesha, showers blessings sweet
When we bow, with our head on His Lotus Feet.*

*Buddhi Ganesha, of intellect fine
Mends our brains and steadies our mind
Our Sai Ganesha, who everything knows
Adds to our joys and sweetens our woes.*

Reduce the luggage you carry about, when on the journey of life. Remember, all that is not 'you' is luggage! You are not the body. So, the body is an item of luggage. The mind, the senses, the intelligence, the imagination, the desires, the plans, the prejudices, the discontent, the distress- all, all are items of luggage. Jettison them, soon, to make your travel lighter, safer and more comfortable. Learn this lesson watching the great, who are humble and simple. They are the elders whom you should admire and follow. They are the people who bring forth your tears when they pass away; there are others who bring forth your tears, when they pass your way! They are to be avoided.

—Baba

Memorable Moments with Bhagavan

For students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, among the many great moments that they cherish, the most precious are those that are spent in the Divine Presence. A loving word, a tender look or a gentle pat—every little gesture of love or grace is safely treasured in the innermost recesses of every student's heart.

One can therefore imagine our happiness and joy when we heard that Bhagavan had graciously chosen a few of us (27 to be precise) for a trip with Him to Kodaikanal during the summer vacation this year. From among the millions of young men at school or college it is a supreme good fortune to be chosen as students in Swami's colleges. And from among the hundreds studying in the Sai Institute, what blessed opportunity is it to be chosen for spending a vacation with Bhagavan! We could only feel a deep sense of gratitude to Bhagavan for conferring this unforgettable blessing on us.

The day before we began our trip, Bhagavan called us in at "Trayee Brindavan" and gave us an outline of His programme. The places where we would stop for lunch, etc., the places to be visited, the route we were taking and even the order of convoy of vehicles were laid out by Him in minute detail. Then came the most important part, when He asked: "How many of you are going in the bus?" Enthusiastic voices replied spontaneously: "27 boys, Swami." Bhagavan smiled and shook His head. "No," He said, as. He looked lovingly into everybody's eyes. "With each student there will be one Sai, and so 54 of us will be going in this trip." (The more I stay with Him, the more I realise how ignorant I am and how much I have yet to learn from Him.)

The journey to the hills began on the 8th April from Brindavan. Our, first halt was at Mysore, where the Vice-chancellor of the Mysore University played the role of hostess to Bhagavan and His party for a few hours. We reached Ooty late in the evening. On the way, we passed through the Bandipur forest area, and Swami very graciously came with us in the bus. For the next hour and a half we realised what it is to be with the Lord and comprehend the majesty and manifold

elephants, boars, deer all of which Swami pointed out to us), a murmuring brook flowing by, and here we were with Swami—what more could one ask for?

Later Bhagavan got into His car for the climb up the winding road to Ooty. When we reached an hour later, tired and hungry (but very happy, of course,) Swami was there to welcome us with open arms. Seeing that beautiful face, that charming smile and the ever radiant figure, we knew we were back home. Later, as we slept soundly that night, the only barrier between us and Bhagavan being a screened window, the last thoughts that crossed my mind were

*Love does not make the world go round,
Love is what makes the ride worthwhile!*

At Kodaikanal

After spending a couple of days in Ooty, we left with Bhagavan for Kodaikanal. Here, again, though Bhagavan led our convoy most of the way, He reached His beautiful bungalow, "Sai Sruti," facing the magnificent Kodaikanal lake, an hour before we got there by bus. As we arrived, Bhagavan told us in His own sweet and loving voice "Even before you came, I wanted to make sure all the arrangements were made. Your beds, your rugs and all other comforts had to be looked into" Time and space seemed to melt away as we basked in that aura of selfless love surcharged with divinity. "When you boys go home, doesn't your mother look after your needs? This is your home and I am your mother."

Immediately thereafter, He pushed us into the dining hall where dinner was served. It is difficult to find words to describe the love of the Divine Mother. That maternal love was evident again after the dinner was over, when Swami said: "You are all tired. Go and rest now. Tomorrow onwards WE WILL FIGHT!"

From April 11th to May 7th, we spent the most memorable and blissful 27 days in our lives. If one were to write down the various experiences that we had everyday with Swami for four weeks it would need more than a book! I shall content myself with presenting only the more notable events that happened during those memorable days.

Every morning, even as the sun broke through the mist over the lake and cleared the fog, Swami used to come out of His room and shower His love on us. Throughout the day we hovered around Him like a flock of doves and seized every opportunity to be close to Him and listen to His words of Divine Wisdom. More than two millennia ago, perhaps the Buddha had imparted his loving message to his ardent followers in such surroundings, far from the madding crowd.

The most significant fact one learns about Bhagavan, living in His proximity, is that He is never tired of teaching. An ordinary teacher seeks only a few hours to teach; even a mother, for that matter, takes a few hours off for rest. But with Swami, it is quite the contrary. Day in and day out, whenever there were moments to spare from His myriad commitments to the devotees

sitting by the fire-place or even before retiring into His bedroom He would pause to teach... And His teachings ranged from highly intimate and personal matters, wherein He would give individual advice and guidance, and topics of general interest which included management, science and technology, astronomy, astrology, etc., to the dizzy heights of spiritualism where He would interpret the sacred texts in a very lucid manner so that even the veriest tyro amongst us could understand them.

He spoke to us of the importance of general knowledge and common sense, elucidating this with innumerable parables and examples. One day He would spend an entire morning speaking to us about matters relating to personal hygiene, food, the kind of clothing we should wear and the manners we should observe in public. The same evening we were in for a spiritual discourse on Advaita, on surrender, on the true meaning of religion. No one was left out. Bhagavan would begin with a young student interested in studying medicine and speak about the various parts of the human body, the chemical and biological reactions that occur under different circumstances. He would then turn to the students of Business Administration and speak about communication, advertising, marketing, and the relevance of Indian ethos and values in the conduct of business enterprises today. Coming to a few of us senior doctorate students He would dilate on our research topics which ranged from profitability in commercial banks to the study of natural products in Organic Chemistry.

For over a period of ten days, Bhagavan gave a series of beautiful and revealing discourses on the life and teachings of Lord Krishna. He not only narrated events which are not found in the published scriptural texts but provided new insights into the understanding of many of Krishna's teachings. Bhagavan also thrilled us by narrating the previous lives of many of the important characters, explaining incidentally how the inexorable law of Karma operates. The Divinity of the narrator was manifested during the discourses by the occasional materialisation of jewels worn by the notable figures in the Dwapara yuga.

Interspersed between these discourses, a few lively debates on literary themes were initiated by Swami with a view to widening the outlook of the students and stimulating their interest in the great classics of East and West. Shakespeare and Valmiki, Kalidas and Shelley and many others figured in these debates. Swami used to wind up the evening's exercise by lighting up new aspects of the problem, which had not been dealt with by the speakers and pointing out the difference between enjoyment of mere literature and the quest for spiritual insights in the classics.

Once in a way, Swami would turn the attention of the students to more mundane matters like economic planning and problems of development, but always reminding them that the proper solution of these problems called for a spiritual and moral approach.

The blissful and sublime four weeks we spent at Kodaikanal will ever remain a precious memory in our minds and an unfailing source of inspiration in our lives. We went with empty hearts and soiled minds and came back pure and filled with love. We learnt many things from

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Karma—the Mystery and the Meaning

The Bhagavad Gita refers to man as *karmajaa*, that is to say, born through Karmas or deeds propelled by desires in previous lives. Bhagavan Baba too points out to us time and again that the dualities such as happiness and misery, success and failure, health and disease, which we encounter in this life, are patterned by our thoughts and feelings and desires and actions in our past lives. In short, desires lead to deeds and deeds determine our destiny.

Today, the concept of rebirth or reincarnation of the soul is gaining worldwide acceptance—thanks to the remarkable advances made by psychical research, in this field. But its counterpart, namely the Law of Karma (Action and Reaction) has not attracted as yet the attention of the psychologists and earnest thinkers, presumably because it is beyond the capabilities of human intelligence to examine any one's present happiness or misery and trace back its root-cause in the thoughts, words and deeds of that jivatma in its previous incarnations. However, we do know that Godmen like Shirdi Baba and Sathya Sai Baba, with their transcendental vision, not only see the working of this Karmic Law in the agony of persons who come to them for succour but even release them, where they deem fit, from its dispensation of mental or physical distress. Rightly, therefore, the word 'fate' is termed in the Sanskrit language as "Adrishta", which means the unseen working of destiny.

There is, in my experience, a small but striking incident—call it 'freak of Nature' or what you will—which gave me a glimpse into this 'Adrishta' or the subtle working of the Karmic Law. It was way back in 1956, on a cloudy noon in June, when I was going on office work from Bombay to Saugor (in Madhya Pradesh), via Bhopal, by a Delhi bound train. The monsoon month being a slack season for traffic on this line, I was the sole occupant of the compartment that day. In this joyous feeling of being alone with the Alone in the compartment, I took out of my hand-bag my Guru's framed picture, placed it on the big steel trunk in front of me and kept a lighted incense stick by its side. Thereafter, I started filling the passing time in the running train with crooning my favourite bhajans, reading some books on spirituality and looking out of the window at the God-made cool, green trees and fields, towering hills and bubbling streams all being bathed by the gentle rain from above.

At Deolali (Cantonment) station, which the train reached in the evening, something unexpected happened. Just when the train started moving slowly, before gathering speed, a young Army officer in full uniform jumped on to the footboard outside the door, shouting repeatedly, "Please open the door, quick." As I promptly allowed him in, he thanked me in a

his face. He, for his part, began to turn his inquisitive eyes on my Guru's photo in front of him, the burning incense stick, the books by its side, and, finally, on myself, from top to toe. Then he started, without any reserve, telling me about his serious problem: his having lost, just the day before, his only child, 5 months old, all of a sudden due to gastro-enteritis; the consequent rude shock to his wife which had so much dazed her that she would not speak, take food, or sleep but just sit brooding over something she could not understand. She was in the adjoining compartment, so much lost in herself that, when the train started, she would not respond even to his loud shouting, asking her to open the door! That is how he had to thrust himself on me! He was now taking her to Simla, hoping that, there, the loving attention and care of her father, brothers and sisters, would pull her out of this shock. As he narrated all this to me, I clearly saw that men in the army too have a feeling heart. I too was moved...

Then followed, after mutual self-introduction, a long discussion—for nearly an hour and a half on God and religion, the meaning and purpose of life, the relation between man and God dwelling in his own heart, Bhakti Marga and Jnana Marga, the value of Satsang and the indispensability of a worthy Guru. Illuminating incidents from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramathirtha figured in the discussion. As the next station arrived, he—Major K—stood up, gave me a warm hand-shake conveying his heartfelt thanks to me and rushed back to the adjoining compartment to join his sorrowing wife.

Early next morning, I packed up my luggage and kept myself ready to alight at Bhopal, so that I could relax for about two hours of the journey ahead to reach that junction. A few minutes later, the train halted at a wayside station, waiting for the green signal from the Station Master. Just then, Major K—alighted and called out to me, "Doctor, please come to our compartment, something urgent, please come." I took some time to ensure the security of my luggage, and then I rushed to see what had happened.

As I entered the compartment and sat by the side of Major K—I saw Mrs. K sitting on the berth opposite to ours—an impressive figure but now under the deep spell of the shock, a white pale face, heavily grief-laden eyes giving a forlorn look, hair ruffled, and almost unconcerned about her husband's calling me in. Major K—had told her the previous evening all that we had discussed on God, Religion, Life, etc. and she had heard it all with interest, as she had done her M.A. in Philosophy. Her only visible response then was that she expressed a desire to ask me a question, if possible.

The question she asked me was, indeed, a baffling one: "Why did God snatch away my beautiful child so cruelly from me?" I started my reply with citing a similar case of a devoted couple who came to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, wailing before Him that they had suddenly lost their only son—a young boy—and that they could not bear the sorrow. The Maharshi, however, advised them that they, as the boy's parents, should not be so self-centred and so selfish as to have the son back but be more concerned about his soul and its further evolution—its God-ward journey. God is the Giver of life and body to the Soul, said the Bhagavan, and He

called and asked to get back into the body, it might not agree, said the Maharshi.

At this point, Mrs. K interrupted me and said: "That's all right as philosophy. But why should a kind and merciful God make me a loving mother for five months and then push me into this hell of life-long misery?" I thought for a while and the Guru's Grace enabled me to give her the consoling answer: "You know, sister, that life is a stage where Man experiments with his various concepts of happiness—health, wealth, wife, husband, children and so on. But then, as the Bhagavad Gita says, these worldly enjoyments are sweet as amrita at the start but, later, in effect, they are as bitter as poison. Experiencing this truth, man gives up in each life one concept of happiness after another, saying, 'Neti, neti' (not this, not this), until he realizes that the only true and lasting happiness is the Sat-Chit-Ananda Swaroopa of God in his own heart. So, it is possible that the soul of this child keenly desired in some previous birth to stay with you for some time, enjoy your love and make you also happy with its love. Having fulfilled this desire, it must have left the body on its further God-ward march..."

Hardly had I completed this sentence when Mrs. K came out saying with some force, mixed with pain, "Oh! Then could it be my mother...? Yes... yes, it must be my mother! She had come to fulfill her promise to me given a year and a half ago, when I could not control my crying while bidding her farewell at Simla because I knew that she would soon succumb to her serious illness. But, she, with full self-confidence, was consoling me, "Ro mat, Beti!" ("Don't cry, my child") she said. 'As soon as I become all right, I will come to Deolali and stay with you for quite a few months...' Oh! Maa...!"

This sudden outflow of suppressed emotion of pain, grief, anxiety and fear blew off the lid of her mental shock and she began to come out slowly once again into the world of mysterious life and death. As I got up to return to my compartment, I interrupted her as she was thanking me, and said, "Sister, if you really wish to thank me, then do what I tell you. Start right now taking your food as usual, talk to your husband as usual, keep your mind healthily engaged. That alone will make the soul of your mother happy." Her tears of love for the mother and a silent nod indicated that *she* had accepted the advice.

About ten days thereafter, I received at Saugor a letter from Major K—I was thrilled as I read its contents which said, among other things, that both he and his wife were visiting an Ashram at Simla and having Satsang every day. They were getting interested in reading some books on religion and they had decided to lead thereafter a life of faith and piety. The Law of Karma had achieved its purpose for this grief-stricken couple in its own mysterious way.

—**Dr. B. Mavinkurve**

“True education consists in the refinement of one's character. Everything in the world derives value from refinement (Samskara). How much more is it essential in the case of man? It is only when academic education is combined with Samskaras that the full blossoming of the human personality takes place. The sole aim of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute is to combine Vidya (education) with Samskara (refinement or character)” observed Bhagavan Baba, in His illuminating discourse to the students and teachers of the Institute, inaugurating the new academic year on June 15th, at the Institute Auditorium in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Students from all the three campuses of the Institute, including those who had been admitted this year in the various courses, were present.

Bhagavan was received with Vedic chants on arrival at the Auditorium from the Mandir. Welcoming Bhagavan, the Chancellor of the Institute, and the gathering, the Vice-chancellor, Dr. Saraf, said that it was a day of rejoicing for all of them because Bhagavan was visiting the Institute after many months. In His educational institutions Bhagavan was preparing the messengers for His global mission.

Bhagavan, at the outset, symbolically inaugurated the new academic year by lighting a lamp.

In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

*Anglicised education has gained prominence
Spiritual studies have taken a backseat
How, then, can purity of the mind—
The essence of education—be developed?*

Teachers! Students, Lovers of education!

The entire visible universe is a cosmic university. In it every human being has to learn how to eat, to walk, to speak, and do many other things. So, Nature is the first teacher. At birth man is like an animal. The parents teach the child how to develop its human faculties. If the parents did not undertake this task, the child would remain an animal. Thus, the second category of teachers for a man are his parents. The ancient sages felt that it was not enough to develop the human qualities in the child and therefore envisaged a system of "Samskaras" (cultural training) for the spiritual development of the child. The Samskaras are intended not only to develop further the human qualities but also to eliminate all remnants of animal nature in man.

What is meant by "Samskara"? It is a system of practices by which the bad tendencies in man are got rid of and good tendencies are inculcated. They are designed to turn the outward looking (Pravritti) tendencies of man towards the cultivation of the internal (Nivritti).

"Samskara"

The process of "Samskara" (or refinement) is not confined to specific things; it is applicable to every object in the universe. No object can be enjoyed by man without its going through a process of transformation. For example, take the case of paddy. The paddy that is grown and harvested cannot be consumed as such. It has to be converted into rice. In the process of transformation, the original paddy has considerably increased in value as rice. The transformation process thus makes an object more useful and valuable. Take another example, that of cotton. Cotton in its primary form has very little utility. But when it is spun into thread and made into cloth, it becomes usable by man. There is a wide gap between the value of cotton and that of the cloth into which it is converted. The same rule applies to gold. There is a big difference between the value of the ore that is extracted from a mine and the gold that is got from the ore after processing.

Lack of self-control

It is clear from these examples that all objects in the world, unless they go through various processes of transformation, cannot acquire much value. If that is the case with regard to ordinary objects, how much more is it necessary for man, who is more important than all of them, to go through this transformation? Man is the most precious object in creation. Men are more valuable than all the things in the world. It is man who imparts value to all objects. Today we are failing to give proper value to man.

What is the reason? It is because man is attracted towards the visible objects of the world experienced by the senses and is unaware of the Spirit (Atma) within him. The powers man is endowed with are limited. By appropriate practices he can make good use of them. But by involving himself in sensuous pleasures, man is losing his powers. The main reason for the loss of the powers given to man is his lack of sense-control. This accounts for the premature onset of old age among many people.

For accomplishing anything in the world three things are essential: one, mastery over the senses; two, control over the mind; three, maintaining perfect bodily health. It is only when all these three requisites are present that man can achieve his aims. If today man fails to achieve even petty objects, it is because he is deficient in all these.

To acquire these three, man has to practise Dharma, as laid down by the ancient sages. The Veda declares: *Yatho abhyudaya nissreyas siddhih saa Dharmah*. (That which is conducive to one's well-being here and the hereafter is Dharma—Righteousness). This means that in this world that which gives happiness and relieves sorrow here and the hereafter is Dharma—Righteousness. This calls for unity in thought, word and deed. This is true righteousness. Where there is no accord between what one thinks, says and does, his life is meaningless. It is by the harmony of thought, speech and action that the true worth of man is manifested.

The mere human form is of no use to the world. It is by his thoughts and actions that one's humanness is revealed. Hence all the studies that are pursued should be related to the body, the mind and the Spirit. Today's education stops with concern for the body and does not proceed upto the heart. People speak about Education in Human Values (EHV). In my view, what is needed is not EHV but 3HV—education which embraces Head, Heart and Hand

Students should reflect on the human values. One who pursues knowledge in the world may be a student or a scholar. But he cannot become thereby a Jnani—a man of wisdom. There is a big difference between the scholar and the Jnani (the wise one). Ravana had mastered 64 categories of knowledge while Sri Rama had studied only 34 categories. Although Ravana had studied more subjects than Sri Rama, Valmiki described him as a "murkha" (an irrational person). Why was Ravana dubbed a "murkha"? Because, despite his mastery of all skills and arts, he was a slave of his senses. The one who is a slave of his sense organs is a fool who has lost his reason. Rama was not dominated by his senses. He was their sovereign.

Uphold truth

The difference between Rama and Ravana can be seen in three aspects: *Sarva loka hithe Ratah* (one who rejoices in the welfare of the whole world); *Jnana sampannah* (Endowed with all wisdom); *Sarve Samudita Gunaihi* (One who is filled with all the virtues). Rama promoted the welfare of the world by adhering to Truth and setting an example in righteous conduct. Hence, the supreme importance of upholding truth should be recognised. Everyone should try to keep his promise and live up to what he says. The simple motto: "Truth is vital to speech," contains a profound message. All of you tend to speak a great deal. How much truth is there in your speech? This is the first lesson students have to learn. Without truth, what you speak has no value. Moreover, truth has to be spoken for the welfare of the world.

The educated persons of today are concerned solely about the well-being of themselves and their families and have no interest in the welfare of the world. Education should aim at making a person take pleasure in promoting the well-being of all people. After birth, as a person grows he develops associations with relations, friends, teachers and many others. It is through these numerous relationships that one's human qualities develop. Without these associations the lone individual would remain at the animal level. One's human nature is developed by society and contacts with kinsmen, friends and others. You have to show your gratitude to all of them by striving for their well-being.

Education for life

From this, you have to proceed to the acquisition of a wide range of knowledge. This is what is meant by the statement "Awareness is life". Confining your interest to a few subjects will result in narrow-mindedness. To acquire a wide outlook and have comprehensive knowledge of men and things, you have to cultivate many good qualities. Teachers today confine their teaching to imparting knowledge and skills useful for earning a livelihood. But they do not teach anything about life itself, how it should be lived and the basic goals of life. Learning to earn an income is not a great thing. Learning how to live worthily as a human being is what is essential. Teachers

basic truths about life.

Students today are seeking education not for the sake of knowledge but as a means to earning money or wielding power. This is not true education. It is the discovery of one's real spiritual essence that constitutes real education. All the evils we witness in the world today stem from a perverted system of education. The so-called educated persons have no control over their senses.

Self-control

The primary need is for the development of self-control among students. They must be able to remain firm in their minds and unwavering in their outlook in any circumstance. This can be achieved only through spiritual discipline, which is also the means to real bliss. The world is in sore need of spiritual discipline. Spirituality is essential even in the pursuit of science. If you look at the orderly movement of the stars and planets in their respective spheres, you can see that only a divine power can ensure such order in the Cosmos. The gravitational pull of the earth is evident when an object falls, but the force of gravity is not visible. Likewise there are innumerable invisible divine forces operating in the universe. Because they cannot be seen, their existence cannot be denied.

Another fact to be noted is the way in which balance is maintained in Nature. If this balance is upset, there will be many untoward consequences. During the last World War, millions of men died in battle. After the war, the babies that were born were nearly all males. The reason is that the balance in the sex ratio has to be maintained in the Divine scheme of things. The Divine operates in this manner to preserve the cosmic order. When this order is disturbed, the world is in peril. Forgetting the role of the Divine and losing himself in worldly pursuits, man is forfeiting his basic human estate.

Power of the Divine

It should be realised that it is the power of the Divine that enables one to see, to speak, to move and to think. All the powers of the sense organs are derived from the Divine. Man in his conceit may imagine that he is the doer. This is the result of ignorance and folly. You have to ascertain what it is that underlies all creation, which is at the base of all things and which is responsible for their existence. The answer is: Divinity. Without faith in the Divine nothing can be achieved. There is no need to seek a reason for this faith. It has no reason or season. It is beyond reason, like the love of a child for its mother. The child loves the mother for the only reason that she is the mother. When one is asked why he has faith in God, his reply should be: "Because he is my God." You should develop such confidence. Only with such firm faith can you realise God. And that firm faith can considerably enhance your strength.

There are elements today who undermine whatever little confidence the students have. The students are innocent; their hearts and minds are unpolluted; they are selfless. But some interested persons infuse doubts in their minds. Some parents and some teachers are to be blamed. When teachers address the students, they must try to strengthen the faith of the students by their example. When the teacher's conduct is at variance with what he teaches, how can he

should adhere to discipline. If the teachers conduct themselves well, all will be well with the students.

An ironic aspect of education today is that as a boy advances in education, his character goes on declining. Children in the primary school observe perfect discipline and are well behaved. As they progress towards the secondary school their purity and discipline suffer. By the time they reach the university, everything becomes topsy-turvy. As they grow in years, they lose self-control. What is the reason? As they grow in years their mental balance is upset and they lose steadiness of mind and self-control. The older boys have a harmful influence on the younger ones. Hence, it is most important that the senior students should correct themselves and set a good example to others.

Everyone should bear in mind that all the regulations and discipline that have been prescribed for the students are conceived solely in their own interest. Only those who are prepared to abide by these rules and regulations deserve to be here.

Teachers and parents

Then, there are the teachers. They become parents of children in due course. But that is not important in itself. They should become ideal parents. If teachers fail to bring up their own children in an exemplary manner, how are they going to mould other children who come under their care? The children of teachers have been found to behave improperly.

Many parents spoil the children when they come home for the holidays. Whatever discipline the students had cultivated at school or college is undermined at home. Many parents tend to pamper their children and spoil them as Dhritarashtra did. Parents may commend what is good in their children, but they should not hesitate to chastise them when they go astray. It is because of the excessive indulgence shown by parents that many students are spoilt. Nor is that all. When a boy comes home and keeps up his spiritual practices, the parents rebuke him for his devotion and tell him that there is time enough for him to observe such practices in his old age. Parents of this type who undermine the seeds of devotion in their children are modern versions of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada's father). Parents should see that the children are kept on the right path at all times. The students, for their part, should make it clear to their parents that they will not give up on any account the good things they have imbibed in their educational institution. When the children recite at home a prayer before taking food, as they do in their hostel, they are sometimes ridiculed for observing such a practice. The boys should have the courage to tell their parents that the prayer is being said as an expression of gratitude to the Divine who is the provider of all things. You should not give up the practice, if you cannot persuade your parents to do so. Students should develop into such exemplary persons. Be respectful towards your parents, but do not hesitate to tell them what you feel to be right in all humility and reverence.

Sense-control

Mere book knowledge does not constitute education. Nor does it mean the ability to juggle with words. Education means broadening the heart. It implies development of control over the

good qualities in the student. An education that is devoid of such qualities is worthless.

Excessive talk is responsible for students losing self-control and failing to acquire good qualities. Even the power to discriminate between what is transient and what is permanent is lost thereby. One does not know how to behave towards elders and strangers.

Value of silence

The effect of excessive speech on the behaviour and mental faculties of people was the subject of research in a Columbia school. The experiment was conducted in a primary school for twenty five years. The students were grouped separately in batches of ten. Those students who spoke the least were offered prizes. Tests were conducted on students indulging in excessive talk and those observing silence or reticence. It was found over the years that the intellectual abilities of students observing restraint in speech were of a high order. There was purity in their speech. They had a broad outlook. They developed enquiring minds. They had a high degree of discrimination.

In the case of students indulging in excessive speech, it was found that their memory power was weak. They were narrow-minded. They lacked discriminating power.

The results of the experiment testified to the wisdom of the ancient Rishis who betook themselves to the forest for silent contemplation. Every one of the practices of the ancient sages was designed to lead men towards the highest stage. Remember that through restraint in speech you can develop mental agility.

Discipline and behaviour

Wherever you may be, whether in the college, or the hostel, or outside in your homes, you have to observe the same discipline and maintain the same correct behaviour. That alone is genuine discipline. To behave in one way in the presence of Swami and in a different way when away from Swami is utterly unbecoming. Maintain uniformity in behaviour wherever you are.

Study well, but see to it that you make good use of the knowledge you have gained. Realise the distinction between the scholar and the man of wisdom (Jnani). When you practise what you have learnt, the joy you derive from it is much greater than what you got from the study. The man who practices what he has learnt is a Jnani (a wise man). The man who merely shows off his book knowledge is a pedant. You must become wise men as well as scholars. Then you become fit for realising the bliss of the Spirit ("Jnanaath evatu kaivalyam").

Education and refinement

Consider well why you have chosen to come to this Institute when there are so many other Universities. Here we have in addition to academic education the accent on spiritual discipline ("Samskara"). Elsewhere there is education but not refinement of the Spirit. Only the combination of education and spiritual refinement can bring out all the qualities in a human being. "Samskara" means getting rid of all the bad qualities, bad habits and bad thoughts and

greatness. You may show respect towards the great. But you must revere and love with all your heart the good. The good are adored and loved wherever they may go. The great may be shown deference. Don't be concerned about greatness Cultivate love. Become the very embodiment of love. Then you can share that love with one and all.

Students! The Vice-chancellor spoke about the importance of discipline. Whether you like it or not, you have to observe discipline. In due course, it becomes a righteous habit. A child in the beginning does not like cooked food. But as feeding goes on, the child gets used to the food and even relishes it. Likewise, by regular practice, you get used to a life of discipline and even enjoy it. It is through regular practice that you achieve tranquility.

In the pursuit of your studies, do not confine yourself to the prescribed subjects. In addition to these special subjects, you have to acquire general knowledge and commonsense.

Develop firm faith in God. All the ills afflicting the world today are due to the loss of faith in God. Why has man lost peace of mind? The reason is two-fold: One, indifference to what he has; two, craving for what he does not have. Man does not make proper use of what he has. Why should he hanker after what he lacks? One should be content with what he has got and should not worry about things he does not have. Then alone he can be happy. This is true education.

Bhagavan concluded His address with an exhortation to the students to observe the rules and regulations of the institute on all occasions, in the hostel, in the classes and everywhere else. The old students should serve as models to the new entrants. At the end of the discourse, Bhagavan sang the bhajan: "*Bhajana binaa sukha santhi nahi.*"

GURUDEVA VANI:

Messengers for the Message

The sole purpose of setting up Sai educational institutions, imparting education from the primary level to the highest post-graduate level, is to prepare a select band of young people who will be qualified educationally and spiritually to serve society, the nation and the world with devotion and dedication, declared Bhagavan Baba, Chancellor of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in the course of a series of discourses which He delivered in the Prasanthi Mandir from June 18th.

While the discourses were primarily addressed to the students of the Institute, their relevance, from the spiritual point of view, to the large body of devotees and others, was clear and compelling. To bring out the impact of Sai education on those who had gone through or were pursuing their studies in the Sai institutions, Bhagavan called upon two students every day to speak on one or other aspect of their education and their experiences with Bhagavan. These

profound influence Sai education has had on their attitudes and lives and how much Bhagavan had transformed their character and behaviour. To many of the old devotees attending the discourses, the strength of conviction with which many of the boys spoke about the transformation in their lives and their firm faith in Bhagavan was a heart-warming experience.

Bhagavan's discourses were aimed at instilling in the students deep faith in God, promoting discipline, infusing in them the spirit of reverence for parents and elders, impressing on them the need to cultivate human values and to develop the yearning to realise the bliss of the Spirit that is dwelling in them. The discourses were appropriately illustrated by episodes from the great epics as well as incidents from Indian history and everyday life. The discourses were a spiritual treat to which everyone looked forward every evening.

We give below passages from the discourses to convey as succinctly and comprehensively as possible, having regard to the limitations of space, the essential message of Bhagavan

God's Response

Dear Students!

The sandalwood tree, without any feeling of hatred or bitterness, imparts its fragrance even to the axe that fells it. Divinity responds in the same manner. Some persons, blinded by their ignorance, arrogance and folly, may say all sorts of things about God. They may even imagine that thereby they have assailed God. But God remains totally unaffected. Even to such bad and evil-minded persons, He offers His blessings and benediction.

Good and bad are obverse and reverse of every object. The citizens of Ayodhya had great love and devotion for Sri Rama. However, despite all their entreaties, appealing to him to stay in Ayodhya, Rama decided to leave for the forest. When Rama did not respond to their appeals, all their love and devotion turned into bitterness and resentment. "We used to think that Rama's heart was sweet as nectar. We felt that his heart was soft as butter. We could never bring ourselves to think that he would be so hard-hearted." Such were the bitter feelings of the citizens of Ayodhya. This was the reverse of what they had felt about Rama earlier.

Good and bad

Every object carries with it good and bad, gain and loss, the praiseworthy and unworthy and similar pairs of opposites. Separation and association are both causes of sorrow for the devout. Separation from good persons causes sorrow. Association with bad people is distressing to them. The most important sadhana for man is to seek the company of the good and eschew association with the evil-minded.

Men today seek the fruits of good deeds without engaging themselves in good actions. They wish to avoid the consequences of sinful actions while indulging in such actions. If you want to avoid the results of bad deeds, you should avoid such actions. If you desire the fruits of meritorious deeds, you must do meritorious acts.

Man should develop the qualities of love and forbearance. Love grows by giving and forgiving. Selfishness grows by getting and forgetting. Students! You should realise even at this tender age the infinite preciousness of life. There are innumerable things which you have to learn in life. You must make good use of every minute of your time. See that your hearts remain pure and unsullied.

The ocean's message

Lord Dakshinamurthy conveyed His message through silence. He seldom resorted to speech. By mere sight He could impart the profoundest truths about the universe and the Divine. On one occasion, in the course of his travels, He reached the shore of the ocean. He was delighted to listen to the Omkar vibrations coming from the ocean. The ocean represents the primal divine sound (Shabda Brahman). It symbolises the grandeur and majesty of the Divine.

Dakshinamurthy drew a lesson from the endless waves reaching the shore from the ocean. He noticed that as soon as some rubbish fell on the ocean, it threw it out on the shore by a series of waves without retaining it even for a brief moment. Dakshinamurthy questioned the ocean: "How selfish you are! You are boundless and fathomless. Can't you make some room for this poor stuff? It is highly selfish on your part not to tolerate this poor thing despite your vastness." The ocean gave a fitting answer: "Lord! There is nothing unknown to you. If today I allow this piece of dirt to remain with me, ere long I will be filled with flotsam and jetsam and my entire form will be changed. Hence from the very beginning I have to cast off anything that is dirty and polluting. Only then I can remain pure."

Likewise, every person should keep out even the smallest bad thought the moment it seeks to enter the mind. To treat it as small and inconsiderable would mean allowing such things to enter the mind and in due course fill it entirely. In the process, the entire nature of the person is changed. His human essence is undermined. Hence every effort must be made to keep out all bad thoughts and feelings and promote human qualities as much as possible.

Stand up for truth

Through very small effort great things can be accomplished. A huge serpent can be destroyed by a large number of small ants. Do not consider yourself small. Seek to acquire the strength and determination to carry out your duties. In the world, difficulties crop up from time to time. Jealousy towards one's betters is quite common. Crows have animus against the cuckoo. Cranes jeer at swans. But neither the cuckoo nor the swan is worried. The world has many such envious beings. Do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by such experiences. You have to confront them boldly and stand up for truth.

The Four Qualities

In the course of His discourse on June 20th, Bhagavan Baba said:

be: Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (earning of wealth), Kama (fulfillment of desires) and Moksha (Liberation). It may not be possible for all human beings to achieve these four goals.

There are four qualities which man has to develop if he is to pursue properly the four Purusharthas. These are very necessary for students today. It is the failure to understand these four requisites, properly that has been the cause of many grave consequences. These four are Maitri, Karuna, Muditha, and Upeksha. These are four important qualities required by everyone.

Friendliness

The characteristics of each of these qualities have not been rightly understood or explained. For instance, Maitri is regarded as mere friendliness. What is friendship? Whom should you befriend? How is one to be friendly? These aspects have to be understood. One should not cultivate friendship with all and sundry. Friendship should be cultivated only towards those who are one's equals in age, status, culture, etc. Friendship with those above or below one should be avoided. This is the true meaning of friendship. When you try to befriend those above you in status etc., they may try to patronise you. When you do not like to be lorded over, the friendship will break. When you develop friendship with those below you, you may attempt to boss over them. When they do not acquiesce in this, the friendship will break up. Therefore friendship will be enduring only when it is as between equals in age, wealth, status etc.

Karuna and mudita

Karuna (Kindness or compassion): Kindness should be shown towards those who are in a lower position than ourselves in respect of age, wealth, health, status, education, and the like. Only then compassion becomes meaningful and valuable. Kindness justifies itself in such cases.

Mudita (Appreciation): This quality relates to the attitude to be shown towards those who are better off than you. You should feel happy when you see such persons. They may look wealthier than you or better placed than you in position and possessions. You should feel happy on seeing them. You should rejoice at the sight of persons holding higher positions or scoring higher marks. "Mudita" means freedom from envy and feeling happy over the better fortunes of others.

Upeksha: There are two terms Apeksha (liking) and Upeksha (dislike or disinterestedness). We should have no liking for those who indulge in bad deeds or entertain bad thoughts. They should be kept at arm's length. Keep away from all those who are filled with bad thoughts, indulge in bad talk and bad actions. This is Upeksha.

If you cultivate these four qualities, you do not need any other goals in life. Friendship with equals, compassion towards the lowly, rejoicing in the good fortune of those who are better off and keeping away from the wicked—these are the true objectives to be pursued in life. It is because of the failure to observe these directives that the quality of life has deteriorated.

Everyone has to observe purity in body, dress and manners. This is external purity. This is not enough. The mind also has to be kept pure. The thoughts should be clean. It is necessary to maintain both external and internal cleanliness. How is internal purity to be achieved? It is easy to maintain external cleanliness by washing and removing the dirt. How is one to recognise internal impurity and try to remove it? There is only one way. That is to recognise that in all beings, from the smallest insect to the highest, there is God. This awareness will make the mind pure. You must have the conviction that the Divine permeates everything and is present everywhere. The infinite, universal Spirit is omnipresent. No one can determine what is good and what is bad in this all-pervading Cosmic spirit, because It is one without a second. Only a person with body consciousness can make such distinctions out of ignorance. For Divinity there are no such distinctions and no one can attribute such qualities to the Divine.

The containers and the contained

Here is an example: There are a number of pots made of clay, wood, copper, brass, silver and gold. They are filled with water. The reflections of the sun can be seen in the water in all the pots. Is it possible to say that the reflection of the sun in one pot is good and that in another is bad? The value of the pots may vary. But can any value be given to the sun's reflection in each of them? The pots are products of nature. The sun is transcendental. The pots can vary in quality. But the sun is incomparably pure. He symbolises the Infinite Spirit. Every living being is an image of the Supreme. Without a vessel, water cannot be contained. Without water the sun's image cannot be seen. In a human being, the mind represents water. The body is the container (vessel) The Spirit (Atma) that dwells in the body corresponds to the reflection of the sun. The Atma that is present in all beings is one and the same. The differences between them relate only to the bodies (the containers). Enquiring in this way, it will be found that defects in quality relate to the bodies and the mind and not to the Spirit. The water in one vessel maybe muddy, in another it may be turbulent and in yet another it may be pure and still. The reflection in the water in the first may be regarded as Tamasic, that in the second as Rajasic and the one in the third as Satwic.

What, then, is it that has to be kept pure? It is the mind, which has to be purified by the removal of Tamasic and Rajasic qualities. How is this to be done? By getting rid of two bad tendencies: one, trying to cover up one's faults; two, searching for the faults in others. The mind can become pure only if these two traits are got rid of. Only those who are conscious of their own defects and who seek to recognise the good in others can make their mind pure and steady.

Devotion

Students should realise that the relations between Swami and the students will depend on the intensity and sincerity of the students' devotion. Here is an example. As you go along a road, you find on one side a tree rich in foliage and in full bloom. Across the road, on the other side, you notice a paddy field in which the crop is withering. What is the reason for this difference? In the case of the tree, the root, have gone deep in the ground and they can supply water to sustain the tree. In the case of the paddy crop, the field has not been watered for two days and the crop has withered because the roots have not gone deep and have not received any water. The one who is

surface-deep will have no contentment. Each of you should examine how deep and sincere is your devotion to Swami.

The One and the Many

In the course of His discourse in the Mandir on June 21st, Bhagavan said:

Music, which is invisible, is one, but the ragas (melodies) are many. Each raga has a unique form of its own. Likewise, taste (rasa) is one, but has a variety of forms. In Indian musicology, 64 different ragas are listed. They are called "Chatusshashti" (64). However great a musician may be, even if it be Narada or Tumburu, the celestial singers, if he were to sing a single tune for long, his music will pall on the audience. Hence a variety of ragas are required.

God, who is the embodiment of sweetness, manifests Himself in many forms. The Upanishads have declared: "Raso vai Sah" (He is sweetness itself). He invests that sweetness with infinite variety.

Prakriti (Nature), which is made up of the three gunas (qualities—Satva, Rajas, Tamas), is one only. All the myriad colours, sounds, smells, tastes that we witness have emanated from Nature alone.

How can God, whose manifestations are infinite, be described? The Vedas have declared: "From which speech and mind turn back unable to grasp It (the Supreme.)" To realise the Divine, the only (easy) method is chanting the Name. There are, of course, many great ones who chant the name of the Lord incessantly. There are many others who recite the Name for days, months and years, but this effects no change in them. What is the reason for this? All their sense organs function with the feeling: "I am the body." Those who utter the name of the Lord while being immersed in the body-consciousness cannot realise the Divine, however long their penance may last.

Names and forms

People belonging to different faiths and cultures pursue various spiritual practices according to their different backgrounds. When they find that these practices have not produced the results they expected, out of frustration or disappointment they go after a different form of worship or a different faith. Spiritual change cannot come merely by chanting a different name or even adopting a different creed. Divine grace is not secured by a change of faith. It is the mind (mathi) that has to undergo a change, not one's religion (matham). By merely changing the garments you wear, you cannot acquire divine qualities. Virtues have to be cultivated. Only the person who transforms his character can sublimate himself.

One actor: many roles

Here is a simple example: In a play, one actor appears in the first scene as a beggar in tattered clothes. In another scene he appears in the robes of a king. Later he appears as a minister. The

of the king and that of the minister. What is the reason? They go by the costumes worn by the actors. A person is judged by his dress and his actions. But see how a dog behaves in relation to its master. The dog recognises its master irrespective of the dress he wears. It acts on the basis of the voice of the master. It would seem that a dog has a better sense of recognition than human beings who judge men by external appearances.

Men today act on the basis of names and forms. These names and forms are artificial. Sound has the quality of permanence. If the name of the Lord is chanted with due regard to the sound, the name acquires spiritual power. The higher consciousness (Chinmaya) can be experienced in the utterance of the Divine name.

Man is the embodiment of divine consciousness. Only when he is pure, he can experience that consciousness. Through attachment to worldly pleasures man gets bound to the physical and becomes oblivious to his essential divinity.

Love for love's sake

Man knows that God is the very embodiment of love. Only through the cord of love can God be bound. But it is only when love is for love's sake that this cord can bind God to man. If love is motivated by desire for worldly objects, God will be beyond our reach. You must become embodiments of love. If you are merely loving, your love will be confined to a few. Only when you become the embodiment of love can your love comprehend all. Only then will you realise that it is the same God who is the Indweller in all beings.

Role of a leader

Swami then related a story from Krishna's boyhood days when he wanted to go to the forest with other cowherd boys to lead the cows and calves for grazing. His mother said that he needed sandals for going to the forest when he would have to walk over thorns and stones. Krishna said that the cattle had no shoes and he as their protector should wear no shoes. He pointed out that the cows were selfless in giving their milk to others and the love of the cows and calves towards him was not equaled even by Yashoda's love for him. Swami said that Krishna set an example as to how a leader should behave in relation to those under his charge.

Krishna considered himself as the leader and protector of the cows. You may be a class leader, a room leader, a party leader or a social leader, but a leader of any sort should set an example to his followers and serve as an ideal to them.

In fact, every individual should aim at being an ideal person. Only then would his life be purposeful and self-satisfying. Take the example of a farmer. Before growing a crop on his land, he has to prepare the field, plough it, manure it, and sow the seeds. When the seeds sprout, he has to remove the weeds and protect the crop from birds and other depredators, only then he can reap the harvest.

A similar exercise has to be done in the cultivation of the heart by everyone. The heart is like a field. It has to be cultivated properly. It should be filled with the water of love. It should be tilled by the process of enquiry (vichara). Then the seed of the Divine Name has to be planted in it. You must erect the fence of vigilance to guard it. You must protect the crop (of devotion) by weeding out egoism. Only then you will reap the fruit of love for the Divine.

In the tree of every human life, there is the fruit of love. To enjoy this fruit, you have to remove the outer rind so that you can get at the juice within. Take, for instance, an orange. To enjoy the fruit, you have to remove the outer skin first. Then you have also to take out the seeds in the fruit and the fibrous parts. You should consume only the juice. You should realise that life has been given to you by the Divine so that you may enjoy this fruit of love. Get rid of ostentation and pride. Remove the seeds of bad thoughts and bad feelings. Throw out the acquisitive impulse (Mamakara). Then you will taste the juice of love.

This is the type of sadhana which everyone should undertake. Each is a kind of cultivator. Every heart is a field. This divine gift should not go to waste. What use is there in possessing land if you do not cultivate it properly? This is a sacred land. But if it is allowed to lie fallow, it becomes barren and nothing can be grown on it. Here is a boundless field, but you are failing to grow the kind of crop that should be raised on it.

Realise your potential

Your foremost duty today is to cultivate properly the precious and boundless land that has been given to you. You do have the abilities required for this purpose. Some students pray to Swami to give them the strength to live upto Swami's ideals. When they pray like this, they imagine that they do not have the strength at present. There is no need to give them this strength. It is already there. You are failing to make good use of it, because you are not concentrating your attention on it. If you realise your potential, you will know how to make the right use of it.

When God Calls

*If we listen to the silence,
Resounding deep within our heart,
We will hear GOD calling to us,
Prompting us to play our part.*

*It is then we'll suddenly realise
That our lives are not in vain,
That the pieces of the puzzle fit,
Made of joy, grief, and pain.*

*There's a winding road before us,
That has many a dangerous curve,
But the loving GOD gives us the lead,
And the help that we deserve.*

*As we tread that journey homeward
And find many a soul in pain,
Let's reach out to them and hold them close
To GOD, we're one, the same.*

—Bernadette Corbett, Perth.

The Quest for Unity

INTEGRATION—What does it really mean? The Oxford Dictionary defines it as UNITY OF PARTS OF THE WHOLE. Unity, however, does not mean uniformity or some sort of indescribable grey mass. The Lord's Divine play could not continue if we were all exactly alike. I have always found it helpful to think of creation as some kind of infinite mosaic containing countless pieces of different colours and shapes. Taken one by one they have little meaning, but when all are fitted into place they form a beautiful design, the dark and the light, the bright and the dull, the smooth and the jagged pieces all have their place in the design. If each piece was alike there would be no design.

So the secret of integration really lies in those few words—UNITY OF PARTS OF THE WHOLE. It is because we are not seeing ourselves as parts of the whole but as separate that we have to talk about ways of achieving integration. Laws have been made in Britain against discrimination on grounds of race, colour or sex but we all know they are only partially successful. Why is it that they don't work very well, then? When Swami is asked why He doesn't put all our troubles right in an instant, which He could undoubtedly do if He wished, He tells us that it would be a sheer waste of time, for lasting change can only arise from changed hearts. Baba tells us that no amount of legislation will ever bring a fair distribution of wealth and if you look around the world you will see that no country has managed to come up with a system that provides equally for all.

Swami says, "Respect all others as one's own kin, as having the same Divine spark and the same Divine nature, only then will there be effective production, economic consumption and equitable distribution."

Integration is something that has to come from the heart. True integration can only come from a spiritual understanding of the oneness of all life and to achieve this understanding the feeling of separateness must go. The feeling of brotherhood must emanate from the heart, it cannot be imposed from outside. We have to truly feel that the other person is none other than ourselves in a different guise.

Swami tells us that it is through merit acquired in previous lifetimes that we have the good fortune to be with Him now. I think we often forget just how wonderful it is to be alive here and now in the lifetime of the Avatar. This opportunity that we have is worth more than all the treasure in the whole world, even in the entire universe. But with this wonderful opportunity also comes an equally enormous responsibility. Swami is expecting us (devotees) to shine as examples of His teachings and He must be very disappointed when we behave like petulant children who cannot have their own way.

Swami does not want us to give up our various cultures; in fact He tells us we must preserve our heritage and look upon our country and traditions with reverence, not to the extent however that we lose sight of the essential underlying oneness of mankind and develop hatred of anything 'different'.

The Sai emblem includes the five major world religions but how much do we really know about the other religions, the ones we were not brought up with? The consequences of ignorance or lack of reverence for another's faith can be terrible indeed.

"God is simple"

We have to learn to bypass all the extraneous matter, the theology and dogma that clutters up religion and cut right through to the basic essence. As Swami once said, "God is simple, everything else is complex." The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, doing to others as you would have them do to you, this is the basis of all religion. The Kingdom of Heaven of the Bible, The Garden of Eden of the Koran, Nirvana of Buddhism, are simply different ways of expressing God realization. The goal is the same and the pathways, though they may appear different, are all leading in the same direction.

Spiritual growth is a slow process, no one can run before he has first learned to stand and then to walk. Swami has told us that there is no place in this world for an iron clad faith, He says, "Let the different faiths exist, let the glory of God be sung in all the languages and in a variety of tunes; that should be the ideal. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognise them as valid as far as they do not extinguish the flame of unity."

I shall conclude with Swami's own words from a recent discourse, "Learn to love your country without any hatred for other countries. Get rid of differences based on community, creed or caste. Regard all mankind as one family."

—Sylvia Bishop, United Kingdom

The Bhakti

Bhakti is not to be calculated on the basis of the institutions one has started or helped, the temples one has built or renovated, the donations one has given away, nor does it depend on the number of times one has written the Name of the Lord or on the time and energy one has spent in the workshop of the Lord. These are not vital at all, no, not even secondary. Bhakti is Prema, unsullied by any tinge of desire for the benefit that flows from it or the fruit or consequence of that love. It is love that knows no particular reason for its manifestation. It is of the nature of the love of the soul for the Oversoul; the river for the Sea; the creeper for the tree, the star for the sky, the spring for the cliff down which it flows. It is sweet, in bad times as well as good. It is not like pepper or salt with which you savour your dishes; it is the very bread and butter, the essential substance itself. It is not the pickle, which only lends a twang to the tongue and helps you to consume a little more of the food. It is an unchanging attitude, a desirable bent of the mind, standing steady through joy and grief, for the Ananda comes through Atmajnana, the Bhakta is the true witness.

—Baba

The Blessed: Then and Now

*Blessed were the people
Who saw the Buddha on the mound of
Rajgir,
Who heard His sermons
About the sorrows of existence
Sufferings of life
Of their reason and of remedy,
His words of wisdom
For the life that is noble
In peace, in renunciation,
Showing the ulterior path
Towards the Lamp of Truth
For the Great Emancipation.*

*Blessed were the people
Who saw the Christ
On the sands of Galilee,
Felt His healing palm
A touch of hope,
The sick, the suffering,
Heard His voice calm*

*The words of eternal life
In the Kingdom of God,
To love the enemies
Bless those who curse
To do good to those who hate.*

*Millennia passed by
Under the Wheel of Law,
Under the Cross, held aloft,
The world came to change
From its unknown vastness
To become a space, small.*

*Distances broke, mountains bowed down
Oceans turned lakes,
Time gained incredible pace.*

*Humanity turned larger
Compressed to small homes
In multitudinous norms,
Broken yet as ever before*

*So, at last,
In a lightless world of vast humanity,
Opened the Shiny Gates
Of the New Abode,
For the blessed to come
To see and hear the Lord,
To unite in love*

*The soul of mankind
For the path enlightened,
To rise high in spirit
To the Message of God,
For a New World, a New Age of Hope,
Of Love, Peace, Service and Happiness,
A World of Bliss
To All.*

The Unknown

*Where have I come from?
Where have I to go?
What have I to do here
So long as I stay?*

*Questions eternal ring and resound
on the strings of life
For mind to search and get to know
the answers from great sources.*

*But,
Unnecessary they seem
Unknown they remain
With the sources forgotten
Not to be known,
So, I walk
From the unknown to the unknown
On my path on earth
with dreams of my own,
Doing deeds,
Not knowing what I have done.*

*From blindness to blindness,
dark to darker,*

*I move in freedom
without fear,
Making the best of time
as long as I stay
Stalking over the earth
From age to years.*

*When the journey seems
nearing its end,
A question reverberates,
Where have I to go from Here?
The same old questions
descend to mind to get answers.*

*Mind turns to Soul,
The Soul vibrates to say,
Look to the Feet of the Lord,
To know who you are.*

**—Dr. Manmath Nath Das, Bhubaneswar.
(From "The Abode of Bliss")**

The best way to gain happiness is to choose God as the leader and guide. Then, He will guide and guard, from the heart itself. Emperor Sivaji once sent some persons from the Court to Samarth Ramdas, his preceptor, with a large quantity of provisions—grain, clothes, sweets and vessels. Ramdas asked them, "For whom have you brought these and why?" They replied, "For you. You have no one who can provide for you, and so, Sivaji Maharaj has sent all this." Ramdas laughed and said, "I have Providence Itself to provide for me; God alone has no one to provide for Him. Ask Sivaji to send these things to God!"

—Baba ("Chinnakatha")

For the consummation of human evolution, and the realisation by man of his highest goal, religion and spiritual discipline are very essential. Religion is the link between the individual and the Universe, between JIVA and DEVA. If that does not exist life becomes chaos. A cow caught on a hill, wanting to go to the hill opposite, but confronted with a flooded river in between, needs a bridge between the two. That is what religion is. Between the hill of individual life and the region of the Universal there is the flooded river of Nature, with all its confusions and complexities. It is difficult to discover where it comes from, how it accumulates all that uproar and where it ultimately ends. But fortunately, we have in every human community bridge-builders, who help people to cross.

—Baba

Socrates and the Judges

Socrates is among those great ones who have left their permanent mark on the pages of human history. Bhagavan Baba often refers to episodes from the Greek philosopher's life to illustrate a lesson or draw a moral. The opening article in the June issue of "Sanathana Sarathi" related Swami's accounts of the last moments in the lives of Socrates and Prophet Mohammed to convey their message that no one should leave the world with any undischarged debts. (Inadvertently, Plato was described in the article as the guru of Socrates. In fact, Plato was one of the younger students of Socrates and immortalised his guru's famous method of spiritual enquiry in his "Dialogues".) Bhagavan's vivid description of the manner in which Socrates ended his life brought home to the listeners the unique greatness of Socrates as a man and a philosopher.

We give below the spirited address which Socrates delivered after he had been condemned to death by the Athenian judges. The speech brings out in a nutshell Socrates' attitude towards life and death and why he came to be regarded as the wisest man in Greece

from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise, even although I am not wise, when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death I am speaking now not to all of you, but only to those who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them You think that I was convicted because I had no words of the sort which would have procured my acquittal—I mean, if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone or unsaid. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words—certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to do, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I maintain, are unworthy of me. I thought at the time that I ought not to do anything common or mean when in danger: nor do I now repent of the style of my defence; I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. Often in battle there can be no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, —they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong; and I must abide by my award- let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated, —and I think that they are well.

And now, O men who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my departure punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more inconsiderate with you, and you will be more offended at them. If you think that by killing men you can prevent some one from censuring your evil lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.

The inner oracle

Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about the thing which has come to pass, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then a little, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which had happened to me. O my judges—for you I may truly call judges—I should like to tell you of a wonderful

been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error in any matter; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either when I was leaving my house in the morning, or when I was on my way to the court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech, but now in nothing I either said or did touching the matter in hand has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this silence? I will tell you. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. For the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

"Death is good"

Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good; for one of two things—either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now, if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now, if death be of such nature, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead abide, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If, indeed, when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I myself, too, shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and any other ancient hero who has suffered death through an unjust judgment; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings with theirs. Above all, I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next; and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. What would not a man give, O judges, to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know of a certainty, that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the Gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that the time had

no sign. For which reason, also, I am not angry with my condemners, or with my accusers; they have done me no harm, although they did not mean to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them.

Still, I have a favour to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing, —then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. And if you do this, both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows."

Pilgrimage to Puttaparthi

Friends ask me why do I keep going to India? Is it to be recharged? Is it to be exposed to the cleansing fire of Swami's leelas or is it to melt once again at His feet and to feel the warmth of His all-embracing love? It is all these things and more.

Each visit is a new experience and this one (in February 1989) was no exception. I suppose it is imagination but His love appears to flow more sweetly each time. Being in the highly charged spiritual environment at Prasanthi Nilayam our senses and sensibilities seem to be bombarded relentlessly. We must continually look at our thoughts and our re-actions to 'happenings' and say to ourselves 'what have I to learn from this.' One of the boards alongside the Mandir entrance proclaims: 'Ask yourself every day, what have I come here for and am I achieving it?'

We all long for an interview and one day I had a very humbling experience. I rarely talk to people while we are assembling in the Darshan lines but this particular day, I spoke to three people about possible interviews. The first—an Australian—said that he didn't need an interview as he had received two smiles from Swami and had touched His feet. The second was a Canadian doctor whom I meet every year. I said to him, "I haven't seen you go up for an interview this year." He replied, "No, I haven't had one for four years but I am happy just being here." The third—a member of the U.K. group, who had taken a week to reach the ashram. He wanted to take photographs from outside the Mandir of Swami walking around the darshan lines. I advised him against it as the group might be called in for an interview. "I don't mind," he said, "I've had so much grace already" ... three lovely characters who love our Lord.

Sometimes I feel I have so far to go that I haven't yet started on the path but then during the interview He shows so much love by gentle taps on the cheek and shoulder-He knows that we

ourselves, our thoughts, our habits and our attitude to life. People's experiences are always interesting to listen to but we must have them ourselves for the full meaning of His power and glory to register.

Let us look forward to the day, hopefully soon, when the whole world will be at His Lotus Feet.

—*Harry Mansbridge*

From the quarterly magazine of the Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Hatfield, U.K.

Love and Peace

Lots of things represent LOVE,
Special things from up above
Such as clouds, rainbows too
And nice, quiet animals in the zoo.

Lots of things represent PEACE,
Beautiful living creatures such as geese.
Little cottages in the wood;
Quiet things that are good.

TRUTH is to tell the right thing.
If it's the truth it will get you out of anything.
RIGHT CONDUCT is to keep on going when the going gets rough,
Even though it's very tough.

In NON-VIOLENCE, if someone treads on your toe,
You don't just turn round and give him a blow.

It may not be his fault,
So halt.
He might say sorry.
But if not, don't worry!

When I first started EHV I thought peace
was about being quiet and thinking a lot,
but now I realise it means much more.
I feel peaceful after a silent sit
because I am full of nice, comfortable ideas,

I am glad I started EHV for now I know
a lot more about peace.
Peace has some symbols such as doves
and peaceful living things,
but you can always make up your own.
Peace means many things, but most of all
it is friendship; friendship is non-violence.
When I am happy and contented
I feel peaceful too. I love peace.
Peace begins with a smile.

—*David Peirce (Aged 12). U. K.*

DIALOGUE WITH THE DIVINE:

Japa, Tapa anal Dhyana

In private interviews with Bhagavan, students or devotees ask for clarification from Bhagavan regarding spiritual matters. Often such questions relate to doubts shared by many others besides the interviewers. We give below some of the questions and answers gathered by C. L. N. Murthy and G. V. Prabhakar during informal talks at "Trayee Brindavan" and published in the Vidyagiri Campus Magazine:

Q. Swami, how can people like us ever do `Tapas'?

Swami: Eradication of `Tamas' itself is `Tapas'. Always involve yourself in some beneficial act or other.

Q: How do we practise 'dhyana', Swami?

Swami: Bangaru! When you cannot sit quietly and concentrate for one moment on the Lord, what is the good of sitting in an erect posture with closed eyes? In my opinion it is ridiculous and sheer waste of time. From the time you rise in the morning until you go to sleep, always try to feel the presence of God with you and do everything with Him and for Him. This will bring you greater joy and benefits.

Q: Swami, can I do 'Japa'?

Swami: Doing Japa with a Japamala is a big hindrance for you to concentrate and at times may even cause depression. Do 'Ajapa-Japa', that is, chanting the Name without counting. Whenever you can, go on chanting the Name. That will bring you greater joy.

Q: Can one pray to Swami for anything?

Swami: Yes, you can pray to Swami for anything and everything. Not only this and that but everything. Instead of asking a subordinate for something, why not ask the master himself? Whatever a subordinate can give, the master can also give and much more. God is in all. He is the only `anaatha' in this universe. He grants everything. Do not hesitate before God.

*"All or nothing at all;
Half a love never appealed to me.
If your heart never could yield to me,
Then, I'd rather have nothing at all."*

It seems to me Baba, who often opens His Divine discourses by quoting an appropriate poem, might well have expressed the above sentiments. Half a love is not sufficient to win that ultimate Blessing He has come to offer us, liberation from the cycle of human birth and death. Just as He withholds nothing in His Love for us, He expects us to withhold nothing in our love for Him.

Several years ago I thought T had dedicated myself entirely to Baba. I did all the obvious things. I named my residence Prema House.

All these obvious and public things I have done, while waving my arms to attract His attention so He will notice and look kindly on my efforts. (Strange that although I accept His omniscience, I still feel the necessity to "let Him know" what I'm doing. Stranger still when you consider His admonition that whatever we do, we do it quietly, anonymously, and without concern for the results, but turn everything over to Him.)

However, it occurs to me that in offering my life's efforts to Him, I am like the houseguest who comes bearing gifts while tracking into your house a good bit of mud collected on his shoes when not paying attention to where he put his feet. If I am to dedicate my words, thoughts and deeds to Baba, must I not be sure that they are worthy of Him? Would I serve Him dinner on an unwashed plate? Or ask Him to sleep in an unmade bed? Of course not, but these are the obvious things that any thinking, civilized person would avoid. What of the scores of deeds, thousands of words and uncounted thoughts each of us "offers" to Him every day? For if, as Baba says, He is in each of us equally, then everything we do to or for each other, each word we speak to or about each other, each thought we entertain about each other is therefore being offered to Baba.

We accept His omnipresence, but are we *aware* of it? Even the crazies who chase each other around the metropolitan Atlanta freeways at 75 mph come to their senses momentarily when they spot a sheriff's car nearby. The true test of the good driver is what he or she does when there isn't a police car in sight. The driver wishing to arrive safely will concentrate on driving and consider the advisability of each move he makes in the light of existing laws and current conditions. It's a sort of litmus test administered to each contemplated move to determine whether it is the right or wrong thing to do. The good driver does it quickly and automatically. Those who drive up our insurance premiums and contribute to the ghastly toll of human life and property damage, do not.

Like all Babaphiles, I yearn to be acutely aware of His presence in my heart at all times. At those occasional moments when I achieve this, the joy is inexpressible. To warrant this joy at all times, I must learn to apply a litmus test to each contemplated item of my diet, activity of my

doesn't take long to administer the test, for it's a simple one.

I want Baba to be a happy resident of my heart, mind and body. Let me resolve today to programme the following test into my mind's computer: is this item of food, or planned activity, or spoken word or thought entertained, worthy of Baba? Will it make my heart a more suitable residence for His Love? Or am I offering Him a tainted gift by virtue of the muddy feet I have tracked in? Are the words I am about to speak (or write) fit for Swami's ears and eyes? Complete success requires complete effort. Half a love isn't enough.

If we all would apply the test daily, the potential improvement to the human environment boggles the mind!

—Jay Jarrett, California.

DISCRIMINATION

Buddhi or intelligence exhibits greater discrimination than the senses and Atma exhibits greater discrimination than Buddhi. In one village there were two beggars. One was blind and the other lame. The two of them became friends. The blind man could use his feet and the lame man could use his eyes. They came to an agreement. The lame man climbed on the back of the blind man and gave directions like a driver. On going from one village to another, they came to a field of cucumbers. The blind one asked if there was a fence or watchman around and the lame man said that there were none. The blind man then said that if the cucumbers were really good, no farmer would leave them like that in a field without a fence around or without a watchman. This meant that the cucumbers probably would be bitter to eat. The blind man could easily find out the truth of the matter because he had intelligence. This is the exercise of Buddhi. The senses cannot determine the difference between good and bad. Buddhi can discriminate but not implement because it does not have the sense organs.

—BABA ("Chinnakatha")

In El Salvador we celebrate Jesus Christ's birth on December 24th. It is a very special day and preparations for dinner are made in advance and the whole family and very close friends get together. We all go to mass at midnight. My family is a typical Latin American family and we all go for dinner at my parents' house.

The phone rang at 6.30 a.m. It was my mother telling me that my father was not feeling well that morning and she wanted me to go over to their home. Before I reached their place, my brother had already taken my father to the hospital. I picked up a few things I might need and went to the hospital. My father was feeling very very bad. He couldn't breathe easily even with an oxygen mask. He was then taken to the Intensive Care Unit. At that moment when I looked at my father's face, his condition seemed desperate. I called Baba from the very bottom of my heart and I saw my father waving us "goodbye". The Intensive Care Unit at the hospital is located on the fifth floor and nobody is allowed to go there except people that have someone very ill. The elevator opens to a small waiting room, where I decided to sit with my son, Juan Carlos, who had just arrived. All of a sudden, the elevator door opened and a Hindu lady wearing a light blue sari came out. My son and I looked at each other and said, "Baba is coming to give us company". We felt so good.

I want to explain that in El Salvador no one wears a sari. It is very rare to see a woman wearing a sari. We were so surprised to see the Hindu lady. She had red roses in her hands. She came directly to me and asked me: "Are you very much worried?" "Yes," I said. "Is it your husband who is ill?" she asked me. "No," I said, "It is my father." She said, "I am very sorry" and embraced me. She sat by my side and we talked. I told her how much I loved India and how much I loved Baba. She said, "I have my home in India and in America."

I felt so good talking to that lady. Minutes later my father's doctor came out and called me and said, "Connie, I am very sorry. I did what I could; your father has left us."

My father died in two hours with very little suffering and when I heard the doctor telling me of his passing, I felt my pain had been lessened in a very subtle way, because there is nothing that absorbs my attention more than thinking and talking about Sai Baba and about India. That lady in the blue sari was the instrument to make me think about the crucial moments my father was going through.

Our gathering on that December 24th was very different from the meetings in other years. In the streets thousands of fireworks were being burnt. It became a very auspicious night. I felt the gates of Heaven were being opened to welcome my father's return to his Source. My father was not Baba's devotee but I am sure Baba wanted me to know that He was there to console me.

I have written about this experience of mine to remind everyone that there is no limit to Baba's compassion and love and that His presence in our lives is real.

—*Connie Bolens, El Salvador*

What Bhagavan Means to Them

Bhagavan has often referred to the students of the Sai educational institutions as His only wealth: In a recent discourse in Prasanthi Mandir, Bhagavan told the students that He was devoting three-fourths of His time to them and sparing only a fourth for the devotees from all parts of the world This, He said, is a measure of His interest in their welfare and development.

How are the students responding to Swami's boundless love and concern for them? Revealing testimony to the profound influence of Swami on the younger students of the Sai schools was provided by a number of students (from the VIII to the XII standard) belonging to the Secondary School at Vidyagiri, who spoke on their experiences with Bhagavan and what Sai education has meant for them in inculcating human values and setting them on the spiritual path.

Bhagavan had arranged for these speeches to be delivered by two students every day from June 18th to 29th and subsequently on two days in a week in July '89. The speeches showed not only the excellence of the students in public speaking, but also their deep knowledge of Swami's teachings and their intense desire to prove themselves worthy of Swami's love and grace.

The calm assurance with which they spoke without faltering or hesitating in any way, evoked the warm appreciation of the devotees who heard them. They received a congratulatory pat on the back from Bhagavan. Swami was particularly impressed with the performance of the VIII and IX standard students, who are still in their teens.

Passages from some of the speeches are reproduced here, more by way of random samples of what the students were capable of and how they had imbibed Swami's teachings.

Gurudeva Vani:

Self-Control and Self-Realisation

Dear Students!

All things in the cosmos are the gifts of God. They are manifestations of His Will. Some of them, however, have to be used carefully. When they are used intelligently after due enquiry, they can serve as boon-companions and give us happiness. Indiscriminate and reckless use of these things may turn them into our worst enemies.

used in the right way that you can benefit from them. If fire is not handled properly, it can cause great harm. A knife is helpful only when it is used carefully. Electricity serves us in many ways—by lighting bulbs, running fans, etc. Because of its multifarious uses, if one tries to be friendly towards it by touching a live wire, he will get a shock.

Control of the tongue

In the same manner, man's sense organs have to be used extremely carefully. When the senses are used on right lines, they are of immense help. But if they are used in the wrong way, they can cause great harm.

Among the senses, the tongue is a very important organ. Each sense organ has a specific function to perform. But the tongue has two functions: speech and taste. Jayadeva praised the tongue as the author of all sweetness and declared that he would use it only to chant the names of the Lord: "Govinda, Damodara, Madhava," and not misuse it for any unholy purposes. "I will use the tongue only for speaking the truth and the good," he said. In the Gita also it has been laid down that whatever is spoken should be soft, truthful and well-meaning. The tongue is thus endowed with sacred qualities. You have to be ever vigilant in the use of the tongue. It can be the means of liberation or bondage. Hence it has been accorded pride of place among the sense organs.

The ancient sages attached great importance to control of the senses and evolved various practices to achieve this. For instance, the tongue should not be allowed to have its way with regard to food. If it is pampered by being given whatever it desires, ultimately it will swallow up the man himself.

To control the palate, the ancient sages prescribed various regulations. Chief among them is the "Chaturmasya vrata". The purpose of this vrata (ritual observance) is to impose severe discipline on the tongue. This vrata is observed each year for four months commencing from Ashaada. There is another reason for this observance. As the next three months are a season of heavy rains, it will be difficult for sanyasins (renunciants) to move from place to place. Hence they are enjoined to stay in one place and devote themselves to meditation for four months. Living in a forest for these four months, they had to live on fruits and roots. Thereby the tongue was brought under control.

At the present time, because of perversions of the Kali Age, this ancient four-month ritual of austerity has become an ostentatious observance. The sanyasins ask for tasty edibles. While staying in a village, they expect each devotee by turns to provide a feast. This is done in the name of "bhiksha"—pious offering by a devotee. With the change in the character of the religious observance, people's conduct also changes. The sanyasins of today should realise that the real purpose of these observances is to achieve control over the palate. How can they expect to realise the Divine without achieving mastery of the senses? If your house is on fire, you may try to escape by running out of it. But if your sense organs are on fire, how can you hope to escape from it? Today what is happening in the case of spiritual aspirants is their sense organs

fire.

Parable of two sons

(Swami here related an episode from the life of Christ). In a temple in Jerusalem, pigeons were being sold. Jesus entered the temple and objected to the traffic in birds in a sacred temple. The priests jointly questioned Jesus about his authority to raise such an objection. Jesus then related the following parable:

A farmer had two sons. He ordered the elder son to go and keep watch over the crops in the field. He said he could not go. The younger son was asked to go, and he agreed to go to keep watch at the field. The elder son, though he had at first declined to go, felt that it was not right to disobey his father and so went to the field. The second son, despite his promise, did not go to the field. Jesus asked the priests: "As between these two sons, who do you think obeyed the father's command?" They replied: "The elder son. He acted upto his father's command. The second son promised to go but did not go."

"Priests and teachers are proclaiming that they are adhering to the injunctions of the scriptures, but in actual practice are not following them. All of you are acting in the same manner," declared Jesus.

The priests got angry and levelled a number of charges against Jesus that he was preaching against the established creed and promoting disaffection against the authorities.

Adherence to truth

There is an old saying: "Truth creates enemies. Falsehood pleases many." Truth is not always pleasant and hence provokes enmity. Lies and falsehood appear attractive and pleasing. Nevertheless, people must adhere to truth for its own sake. To say one thing and act differently is destructive of the Self. It is opposed to the scriptures. One should try to practise at least one or two of the precepts one professes.

Purpose of yoga

The ancient sages betook themselves to the forest for practising yoga. Can Self-realisation be got through yoga? No. The Rishis practised yoga for the sake of acquiring control over the senses. Patanjali declared: "Yogah chittavritti nirodhah" ("Yoga is control of the movements of the mind"). It is believed that by controlling the senses life can be prolonged. Who should live longer? Good persons, righteous persons, kind-hearted persons, if they live long, the world will benefit. The world will only suffer more if the wicked and evil-minded live longer. For this reason, the ancients laid down that only selfless and dedicated persons should practise yoga for living long. Society benefits immensely from their longevity. They prescribed disciplines for this purpose. Students should take note of these disciplines.

The physical body is subject to certain limitations. For instance, there is the continuous process of inhaling and exhaling air. It has been found that by slowing down the time taken for inhaling and exhaling life can be prolonged. The faster the process of respiration, the shorter becomes the life span. There are examples of how this rule operates. Elephants and men inhale and exhale 12-13 times a minute. By adhering to this time-scale man can expect to live for 100 years. Snakes and tortoises breathe at the rate of 7-8 times per minute. Consequently their average life-span extends to 200-300 years. Monkeys, dogs and cats breathe at the rate of 30-40 times per minute. Hence their average life does not last beyond 12-13 years. The rabbit breathes at the rate of 40-50 times per minute. Its life-span is barely 5-6 years.

The faster the rate of respiration, the shorter is the life-span and vice versa. How is breathing to be regulated? Breathing should be so slow that if soft powder is kept near the nostrils the powder will not be disturbed. The practise of yoga helps to slow down the rate of breathing in this manner.

Dharana-dhyana-samadhi

How is meditation to be done? The first step is "Dharana." Twelve "Dharanas" amount to one "Dhyana". Twelve "Dhyanas" equal one "Samadhi".

"Dharana" is steady concentrated viewing of any object for twelve seconds. You have to look at any object, a flame, a picture or an idol for twelve seconds only with total concentration, without winking the eyelids. This is "Dharana".

Practising "Dharana" is a preparation for "Dhyana". The duration of Dhyana is twelve Dharanas. This means Dhyana should last $12 \times 12 = 144$ seconds, that is, two minutes and twenty four, seconds. "Dhyana" does not call for sitting in "meditation" for hours. Proper "Dhyana" need not last more than 2 minutes 24 seconds. It is only after "Dharana" has been practised well that one can do "Dhyana" (meditation) well.

Twelve "Dhyanas" equal one "Samadhi". This means 144×12 seconds, that is, 28 minutes and 48 seconds—very much less than an hour. If "Samadhi" is prolonged it may prove fatal.

These are the disciplines the yogis practised. These disciplines are not explained in any of the Shastras. If you want to proceed correctly in the practice of these disciplines, you have to begin with "Dharana". Start practising "Dharana" for 12 seconds a day from now on. This is very important for students. In the past, yogis like Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi practised these disciplines. Ramana Maharshi used to go up to the terrace and concentrate on a particular star for twelve seconds. In that state, the mind also was still and steady.

By continuing this practice of "Dharana", you develop the capacity to perform "Dhyana" for 2 min. 24 seconds. Continuing the practice of "Dhyana" in this way, you develop the capacity to be in a state of "Samadhi" for 28 minutes and 48 seconds.

What is the inner meaning of "Samadhi"? It is not a state of unconsciousness or some other kind of consciousness. It is nothing of the kind. The correct meaning of "Samadhi" is "Sama-Dhi"—the state in which the Intellect has achieved equanimity. Whether in pleasure or pain, in praise or blame, in gain or loss, in heat or cold, to be able to maintain an equal mind is "Samadhi". That is the real fruit of "meditation".

This is a sacred day on which you can begin this yogic practice. This will enable you to sharpen your minds and develop the keenness of your intellect. I have not revealed all this to anyone hitherto.

Likewise, "Dhyana" is an extremely easy process. "Samadhi" is even easier. But because of improper understanding of the methods, aspirants get involved in difficulties. Many imagine that all that "Dhyana" (meditation) calls for is sitting in the padma-asana (lotus pose). But one does not know where his mind is wandering at the time. The concentration is disturbed by a mosquito sitting on the nose. When the mosquito repeats its attacks, the man loses his patience and the entire purpose of the meditation is defeated. To maintain one's calmness and concentration during meditation, unaffected by any disturbing elements, "Dharana" has to be practised. Through Dharana, control of the senses is also achieved. Purity of mind is also secured. Through mental purity, the Divine is experienced.

Purity and love

Students! Practice "Dharana" and "Dhyana" and experience the results. Your joy, your purity and your brightness will be enhanced beyond measure. Now, you look sickly because of all sorts of impurities in you. There is no shine on your faces. It is purity that imparts effulgence to the face. When there is purity in you, your face shines brightly. I am now 64 years. (The clock in the Mandir chimed the hours and Swami remarked, "It is saying yes, yes, yes.") Look at Me and look at yourselves, who are in your teens. You look worn out. You lose your brightness because of impure thoughts. The more you develop your purity, the more youthful you will be. No illness will affect you. This is what you should aim at. And it should be achieved through love.

"Salokyam"

Meditation in these days is often confined to the puja room. As soon as one emerges from the shrine, one is filled with all sorts of mental agitations. Hence, it has been declared: "Sathatham yoginah" ("Be established in yoga all the time"). This does not mean giving up all worldly affairs. Pursue your studies. Fulfill your duties. But in all these activities, use your "Dharana" power, (the power of concentration). In the process, you develop your powers of meditation ("Dhyana"). "Dhyana" means single-pointed contemplation. Even in daily life, when one is in a reflective mood, he is asked, "What is the Dhyana you are doing?"

Dhyana means absorption in thought. It should be centered on only one specific subject. This is described in Vedantic parlance as "Salokyam". This means concentrating your thought on what you desire, whatever is the object of the subject. If it is a person, your thought is centred on

thoughts of Divinity.

Through Dhyana you have to achieve the sense of oneness with the Divine. The various types of meditation practised today are concerned with the trivial. Through these methods the Divine cannot be realised. The very first requisite is control of the vagaries of the mind. Only then meditation can be effective.

"Saamipyam" and "Saayujyam"

Students must first practice "Dharana". They may choose any object for the purpose of concentrating on it—a picture or a physical object. There is also an internal method of practising "Dharana". When you close your eyes, a small dark spot appears before the inner-eye. You may concentrate on this spot for 12 seconds without letting it move. By this practice, the power of meditation can be developed.

The practice of meditation leads to "Saamipyam" (proximity to the Lord). This leads to the next stage—"Saarupyam" (Experience of the Vision of the Lord). This may be compared to the arrival of a river to merge in the ocean. At first the ocean repels the advance of the river. After repeated attempts of the river to merge in the ocean, the latter allows the river to pass under its waves. Spiritually, this process of merger of the Jivatma with the Paramatma is described as "Saayujyam" (mergence in the Divine).

The first stage in the process is "Saalokyam"—continuous contemplation of the Divine. Think about the Lord in whatever action you do. Then, you achieve "Saamipyam"—nearness to the Lord. Coming nearer, develop closer relations with the Divine. In due course, the state of "Saarupyam" is attained. The realisation that "you and I are one" dawns. Then "Saayujyam" is experienced—complete oneness with the Divine.

This fourfold approach to the Divine is to be found in any philosophy or religion. The creeds may vary, but, the spiritual process is one. (Swami concluded His discourse with the bhajan "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho! Rama, Rama, Ram!*")

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on 29-6-1989

GURUDEVA VANI:

Experiencing the Omnipresence

"Many persons, including students, talk glibly about the omnipresence of God, without understanding what it implies or experiencing it even in a small measure. Students should make some effort to experience the omnipresence of God by cultivating self-control and limiting their desires," declared Bhagavan Baba, in the course of His discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir on June 19. Bhagavan said:

The Spring that has gone, will come again. The waning moon will wax again. But one's youth and the flowing water in a river will not come back. It is essential for students in the precious period of their youth to cultivate pure thoughts and good habits. Among the gifts of God, time is the most important. Only when time is properly utilised in sacred acts will the body and the deeds get sanctified.

At present, half a life-time of man is spent in eating and sleeping. Much of the remainder is wasted in useless talk and simian pranks or in back-biting and slanderous gossip. Little time is devoted to thinking about how he can improve himself or serve others. No attempt is made to understand the purpose of life, despite the preciousness and sacredness of human birth.

Man has to discover, as enjoined in the Bhagavatam, how he can get back to the source from which he came. This is the natural destiny of all beings. The secret of human existence is to know how to make the best use of time to realise one's Divine destiny.

Modern man has no idea of sense-control. He has no conception of self-restraint. He leads the life of a libertine. This kind of licentious living can only result in degradation and ruin.

The aim of sense-control is to achieve one-pointed concentration. It helps also to steady the mind. Without mental steadiness man gets dehumanised.

Three things are essential for every one: recognition of the goal; understanding the truth (about human life); and realising the Eternal. Today, students should realise the importance of the goal they have to aim at. Ignoring the goal students are leading aimless lives without achieving peace or joy. In spite of being near to the Divine, they are forgetting the Divine and taking to wrong paths. However many years they may have studied here, there is no change in their thoughts and behaviour. This is because they have not really understood spirituality, though they profess to know all about it. It is because they are completely wrapped up in the body-consciousness, they cannot grasp the nature of divinity. The body-consciousness is the product of Maya (illusion) or ignorance. It is not easy to get rid of this Maya.

The Lord and maya

There is a story to illustrate the hold of Maya. Once, Bhagavan summoned Maya and told her! "Maya! I am acquiring a great deal of bad name on account of you. Every man blames God as 'Mayopadhi' (wearing the disguise of Maya). I am getting into disrepute because you are always following me. Hence do not any longer remain with me. Get away from me." In all humility, Maya bowed to the Lord and said: "Oh Lord! I shall certainly carry out your command. But, please tell me anyplace where you are not present and I shall go there." The Lord had a hearty laugh and said, "There is no place where I am not present. You and I are twins. I put you this poser only to get your reply."

Every individual today declares that God is omnipresent. But no one conducts himself as having realised the truth of this omnipresence. It is not clear whether they are using this word

student similarly speaks breezily about Swami's omnipresence and omniscience. It may be based on book-knowledge.

Omnipresence and self-control

God's omnipresence is certainly true. But one gets the right to speak about it only when he has experienced it at least to a small extent. Even if a few drops of nectar are swallowed, a modicum of purity may be achieved. Of what use are potfuls of nectar which remain untouched? Hence, one should strive, in however small measure, to experience the omnipresence of God. Merely talking about it would amount to practising a deception on God. It is a grievous sin.

Some high-souled beings have striven to experience the omnipresence of the Divine. But the prevailing educational system cannot enable any student to get this experience. This is because they have lost the capacity to control the senses, which is the prerequisite for experiencing the Divine. The first step is control of desires. There must be unity in word and deed. You have also to enquire by what means you can experience the omnipresence of the Divine.

Take the example of a tree. One fruit cannot nourish another. All fruits are nourished by the tree. The tree is sustained by its roots. It is only when you look after the roots, you will have the tree and its fruits. When you nourish the roots by supplying manure and water, the tree comes up well. Likewise, it is only when you realise that the entire cosmos is sustained by the Divine that you can experience the omnipresence of the Divine.

Potharaju, Thyagaraju and Goparaju

In the Andhra country, there were three "Rajus"—Potharaju, Thyagaraju and Goparaju. All the three were spiritual giants. Potharaju is Pothana, the great author of the Telugu Bhagavatam. Seeing the extreme poverty of Pothana, his brother-in-law, Srinadha, appealed to him to dedicate his Bhagavatam to some ruler who will reward him with material riches. Srinadha said that by dedicating his work to Sri Rama, Pothana was getting no visible benefit and was steeped in poverty. Pothana felt that rather than seek material rewards from petty earthly rulers, it was far better to dedicate his work to God even if it meant living a life of penury. He declared that he would not choose to live on the largesse of proud and unrighteous rulers. He preferred to lead a godly life as a farmer living on the fruits of his toil. Because Pothana chose to dedicate his work to the Lord, his Bhagavatam has earned undying fame. From the moment he started composing the Bhagavatam, Pothana recognised that it was entirely the work of Sri Rama and should be dedicated to Him as a pious offering. He regarded Rama as the inspirer, the writer and enjoyer of the poem. Pothana told Srinadha that God was the Lord of everything in creation—the creator, the protector and destroyer. "Instead of offering the work to the Supreme Lord, it is not fitting to dedicate it to worldly men clothed in pomp and pride," he said.

Coming to Thyagaraja: Seeing the plight of the saint-composer, the Raja of Tanjore sent him many valuables in a palanquin. Looking at these presents, Thyagaraja smiled and prayed to his mind to declare truly whether these treasures would bring him real happiness or the constant vision of Sri Rama. He felt that proximity to Rama was his greatest wealth and turned back the

declared that God alone was all that he needed and he sought nothing from anybody.

The third devotee is Goparaju, who worshipped Sri Rama installed in the Bhadrachalam temple. He offered all his earnings and possessions to Sri Rama. He devoted even the dues collected by him as a revenue official to constructing the temple for Rama and making ornaments for the deities in the temple. When the Thanisha harassed him he declared that he had offered everything to Rama and nourished no desires of his own. "I have surrendered to Rama totally," he declared.

The realised devotees

These three saints had recognised the omnipresence of God. They firmly believed that God is the supreme protector of all. They are verily real Bhagavatas—devotees of God. Many who claim to be devotees today are not real devotees at all. The so-called devotees are only seeking external security—security from the authorities, from marauders, and similar external dangers. These are mercenary devotees and not genuine devotees.

The Bhagavatas of the old days lived a care-free life, placing their full trust in God as the supreme protector. Because of this faith, they were fully competent to declare that God is omnipresent. Those who use that epithet today are simply mouthing what seems expedient for the occasion. You can find God everywhere today, but you can find few true devotees of God. Today's devotees are not devotees who have totally surrendered to God.

A sinner's corpse

Once a traveller going on his journey approached an ashram near which there was a cemetery. He sought shelter in the ashram from the heat of the day. The Guru of the ashram was giving a talk to his disciples. The traveller welcomed the opportunity to listen to a sacred discourse. At sunset the Guru and the disciples came out of the ashram. They saw a strange spectacle and the disciples asked the Guru what was happening. The Guru smilingly said that what they were seeing was a corpse which jackals and dogs were trying to carry off. They had dug up the body that was buried in the morning and were trying to make a meal of it. Just then a big jackal came there and conveyed some message to the other jackals. Immediately all the jackals abandoned the body and retired into the jungle. The disciples asked the Guru why the jackals abandoned the body that had come their way. The Guru meditated for a time and then explained to the disciples the reason for the strange phenomenon. The Guru said: "The life-story of this corpse is a remarkable one. This man during his entire lifetime had not listened to the words of elders or the name of God. Even if he heard something, he never cared to follow them. He never did any good deed in his life. His eyes never turned towards anything holy. His hands were never used for anything sacred. He was greedy after other people's wealth, but never once fed a hungry man in his life. His feet, never went to a temple or any holy shrine. The elder jackal which came to the cemetery told the other animals that the dead body of such a person was unfit for consumption even by animals. The sins of the dead man would infect them also if they touched the body of such a sinner. The jackals abandoned the body on getting this warning."

The moral of this story is that we should not think that it does not matter what happens to the body after death. Even the body should be sanctified and for that purpose good deeds should be done during one's lifetime. Every limb of the body should be devoted to sacred purposes. A body that has not been sanctified in this way will be despised even by jackals. Remember the preciousness of the human body that has been given to you. Use it for rendering service to others. See that every organ in the body is utilised for doing sacred acts.

Duty of senior students

There is an appropriate time for doing anything. Krishna chose the Kurukshetra battlefield for imparting the message of the Gita to Arjuna, though they had been moving together closely for many decades. Remember that Swami knows all that is happening though He may appear as if he knew nothing. Recognise the difference between the Divine and the human. Divinity, although all-knowing and all-powerful, acts as if, It does not know anything. The human being, though he is totally ignorant and incompetent, pretends to be all-knowing and all-powerful.

Students should realise that Swami knows all about their misbehaviour. Because individual warnings in the past have had no effect, Swami has chosen to reprove them in public. Most of the students are well-behaved. It is the few undisciplined spoilt ones who are setting a bad example to the rest. If they do not reform themselves, they have no place in this Institute. We are not concerned about numbers. We are content even if we have a few good students. This Institute has been established for rejuvenating the nation and promoting the Dharmic way of life in the country through a generation of righteously educated students. It has no commercial aims. You must see that the good name of the Institute is preserved. Each one should examine himself. The senior students should be exemplary in their behaviour. If all of you behaved well, what a change would there be in the world!

Aim of Sai Institute

I am devoting 75 percent of my time to the students and giving only 25 percent to the devotees from all parts of the world. Realise how much I am lavishing on you. If you waste this sacred opportunity, you will not get it again. Conduct yourselves as the children of one mother. The elder students should be an inspiration to the younger ones. Be more concerned about acquiring good character than getting degrees. When parents and teachers are indifferent to their responsibilities, Swami cannot evade His obligation to highlight your lapses and to correct you. The good students will be helped in every way. But the bad ones will be given no quarter. Always bear in mind that the Sathya Sai Institute is a sacred institution. It has been set up for promoting the welfare of the world. Only good students can serve to improve the nation. We will be content even if we have a handful of them.

"Understand and Forgive"

others, said:

"Trailing clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home" says the poet. I came to Puttaparthi in 1984. I was just 10 years old then. After the initial stages of homesickness, life with Swami has been a unique, indescribable experience.

Since then five years have gone by. Back at home, people ask me: "What is special about Parthi?" Indeed, what is so special? Is it the education alone, or the hostel or the food? The answer comes in a flash. It is: "Swami, Swami" whose one smile brightens the hearts of millions. If Swami can be defined, I think the closest definition would be, as someone said, "Love, on two lotus feet."

One can talk at length on Swami and His teachings. I confine myself to one of His teachings: "Do not criticise." Criticism is futile because it puts a man on the defensive and usually makes him try to justify himself. Criticism is dangerous because it wounds a man's pride, hurts his sense of importance and arouses resentment.

One of Abraham Lincoln's favourite quotations was: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." And this is precisely what Swami stresses "PERFECT YOURSELF FIRST." Adverse criticism is a dangerous spark, a spark that is likely to cause an explosion in the powder magazine of pride. Bitter criticism caused the sensitive Thomas Hardy, one of the finest novelists that ever enriched English literature, to give up writing of fiction. Criticism drove Thomas Chatterton, the English poet, to commit suicide.

I am reminded of an incident in Shirdi Baba's life. Once, as Shirdi Baba was returning from the Masjid, he found two men talking and one of them was abusing a third person in his absence. Baba went upto him and said; "Do you know what you are doing?" Pointing to a dog eating filth, he said: "You are doing no better than that dog."

Instead of condemning people let us try to understand them and let us try to figure out why they do what they do. That's a lot more profitable than criticism. It was Benjamin Franklin who said: "Any fool can criticise, condemn, complain and most fools do." But it takes character and self-control to be understanding and forgiving. We can only pray to Swami for these.

The One in the Many

Whatever man seeks to achieve, he has to rely on Nature. Nature is not anyone's private property. It belongs to God. Without the grace of the Lord no one can enjoy the benefits of Nature. Not realising this truth, some people embark on the exploitation of Nature, out of arrogance and self-conceit. This is highly misconceived.

Without the sanction of the Lord, man cannot achieve anything in the world. The Divine is the basis for everything. Man, however, is filled with the conceit that he is the one who is doing everything. This pride is the cause of his ruin. It is the cause of his frustration and disappointment.

Man today is basing his life on reliance on Nature, forgetting God. This is a grievous mistake. You must place your faith in God, who is the prime supporter of Nature, and enjoy what Nature provides. Faith in God is the primary requisite for man.

But how should devotion to God express itself? Not in ostentatious external forms like smearing Vibhuti, wearing a special dress or flaunting a japamala. Devotees make a distinction between personal duties and service to the Divine. They look upon worship, meditation and the like as Divine service and what they do for their families and friends as personal duties. This kind of division amounts to practising a deception on God. God is omnipresent and subsumes all things. Hence there is no meaning in making a distinction between one kind of work and another. A policeman on duty wears his uniform and when he is off duty he is in his own plain clothes. He makes a distinction between his official dress and his "own" clothes. This is all right from the worldly point of view. But devotees should not make such a distinction. Whatever work they do, whether in their office or elsewhere, they should consider it as an offering to God. In any business in which you engage yourself, treat it also as God's work. This is known as "Bhava-Advaita" (The Advaitic attitude or attitude of oneness).

Next, you have the instance of people in different bodies, with different forms and names. But, irrespective of these differences, they are basically made up of the same five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. These elements are aspects of the Paramatma (the Over-Soul). Why, then, should any distinctions be made in our activities between different persons constituted by the same common elements? Hence, together with Bhava-Advaita, you should have Kriya-Advaita (the unitary attitude to work). This means that whatever work you do should be dedicated to God. All such actions become thereby sanctified and divinised. They acquire the unifying quality of holiness.

The next one is "Padartha-Advaita" (non-dualism relating to objects). When you begin to enquire into the fundamental basis of all objects, you find that it is only one. For instance, a cloth is made up of threads, which are made from cotton. The common factor is cotton. Distinctions are made when the underlying basic unitary substance is forgotten. When Bhava-Advaita, Kriya-Advaita and Padartha-Advaita are properly understood, we can have a vision of the basic Reality. Then the omnipresence of the Divine can be experienced.

God and nature

In this context, Swami referred to the modern attempts to understand God by concentrating on exploring the secrets of Nature. Swami said this is a wrong approach. The effort should be to realise that Nature has come from God. Only then God can be experienced. "You have to turn your mind from the mundane to the Divine, from Nature to Nature's God. By getting immersed

the phenomenal world presented by Nature is true. The Spirit is also Truth. Man's journey is not from untruth to Truth but from a lesser truth to a higher Truth. Truth is only One. That Truth is God."

Bhagavan went on to say

God can be realised only through love. Your devotion must be such that God seeks you. Like a child crying ceaselessly till the mother rushes to pacify it, like a calf calling for its mother-cow, like a forlorn wife praying for the return of her husband, the devotee should feel the pangs of separation from the Lord and yearn for His coming. Uddhava declared that only such yearning was true devotion.

Yearn for the love of the lord

"Students! Bhajans and japas do not constitute devotion (Bhakti). You must yearn for the love of the Lord. Along with your studies, cultivate devotion and spiritual discipline. Spirituality is the *summum bonum* of education."

Swami referred to the speeches of the young pupils of the Secondary School which had preceded Swami's discourses for a week and pointed out the deep devotion and sincerity that was evident in the speeches. Swami referred in particular to the moving speech of Srikanth (IX Standard) who brought out the various aspects of Bhakti by singing appropriate songs in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi. Genuine love of God could be seen in the innocent and pure outpourings of these children, observed Bhagavan. Swami concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho.*"

—*Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on 25-6-1989*

GURUPOORNIMA AT PRASANTHI MANDIR:

A Bouquet of Songs for Bhagavan

The well-trained orchestra of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning set up new standards of excellence in offering to Bhagavan on this year's Gurupournima day a bouquet of beautifully rendered devotional songs in different languages.

After the bout of heavy rains in the previous week, Prasanthi Nilayam wore a clean and fresh look on July 18th. The Mandir premises had been duly decorated for the occasion with festoons. Large groups of devotees, from all parts of India and from overseas countries, had started streaming into Prasanthi Nilayam well before Gurupournima. The weather was pleasantly cool and bracing.

programme, thousands of eyes were centered on Bhagavan.

The first item was a Telugu song highlighting the significance of the Narayana Mantram. The second singer expressed his deep-felt feelings of separation from his Beloved Krishna and his yearning to be in the presence of Giridhara Gopala. The third song eulogised the glory of Lord Narayana: "O Deva, You are the Eternal Principle, without beginning or end." This was followed by an orchestral exposition of the Raga Amrita-varshini, an appropriate selection for the occasion. It reminded one of those bygone days when Bhagavan used to distribute Divine Ambrosia (Amrita) from His own Divine Hands to all the fortunate ones present for the festive occasion. It was a splendid instrumental blend set in the North Indian classical tradition in which the artistes captured the mood of the Raga. The Jugal Bandi followed by the Jhala punctuated by the splendid ensemble of the two flutes, left every one spell-bound and enraptured.

The next item was a song extolling the glory of the Lord of Shirdi "Sainatha Tere Hazaron Hath" (^O Sainatha, You protect those who chant Your Name sincerely, with Your thousand Hands').

As Swami walked amidst the devotees gathered from all over the globe, the last song lifted everyone present to the height of devotional ecstasy:

"Which is the place on earth where one's marooned destiny is rewritten? In Your Palace, every doomed and broken destiny is re-made."

This melodious song was the prelude to the Qawalli, "Shirdi Wale Sai Baba", whose translation runs as follows:

O Sai Baba of Shirdi, we have come to Your door-steps to offer this Qawalli, (with) prayers on our lips and tears in our eyes, our hearts are full of expectation, but our begging bowl is empty...

My God Sai, everyone chants Your Name,
You love everyone, gods and men alike,
You are always aware of everyone's welfare,
Everyone petitions You for help and succour,
Whether big or small, no one returns disappointed from You,
You provide support to the rich and sustenance to the poor,
How can a puny person like me ever describe Your Infinite Mercy?

The splendour and grandeur of Khuda are latent in You,
We see God's visage in You,
Every sentient being reveres You, they know Your Abode,

You are the Goal of every wayfarer,
You are the beacon for every little raft,

You have taken under the wings of Your Care,
You always unite those who are
separated and light the lamps which have been blown off,
O Lord, pray, turn this dark night of gloom and despair
Into the glitter of Id and Diwali.

The musical bouquet was followed by Gita Parayanam in which all the students from the first standard upto the Ph. D. participated.

After the singing of a few bhajans, Bhagavan was offered Arati, bringing the morning's function to a close.

—S.G.

"Sai's Love beyond Words"

N. S. Chakravarthy, (VIII Standard), speaking on June 23, said that his experiences with Bhagavan, "though very few in number are high in value." He said:

I first saw Bhagavan in Ooty when I had joined there in the first class. After that also I had many a chance to talk to Him.

Though Swami does so many things for us, He expects only one thing from us and that is *Discipline*. It is our duty, our dharma, to make Him happy by following the code of discipline. What is this dharma? Swami explains: "Dharma is that which sustains peace and harmony in the universe."

Swami once said in His discourse: "God is the embodiment of Dharma. God's grace can be won by Dharma. God is ever fostering Dharma. God is ever spreading Dharma. God is Dharma itself."

Swami's love can never be described in words even by the greatest persons. Swami many a time came to Ooty. Sometimes He would tell us some stories.

Visits to Ooty

My most happy experience was in Ooty when Swami visited us twice during this summer. I will tell you about the first visit in a poetic manner:

Swami visited our school at Ooty,
We were all very excited and happy.
He arrived on 8th at about eight in the night,

The next day at assembly,
He gave us milk as sweet as honey.
He praised us for dispersing from assembly,
In lines as we do during P.T.

Like morning at evening too,
He told us as to what we should do.
He conveyed His message through three college brothers
What was the difference between Sai schools and others.

The speech in main was about the five D's
Which help all children to blossom into strong trees.
The five D's are Duty, Discipline, Devotion,
Determination and Dedication.

Swami's second visit was on Adi Sankara Jayanti. It was on this day that our Sai Sankara created a lingam for us.

To conclude, I tell you again that Sai's love can't be expressed in words even by the greatest of poets like Tagore or great writers like Bernard Shaw.

The world is now living apart, in compartments, on the basis of race, religion, colour, creed, caste, convictions etc. Those who question the validity and value of these compartments are themselves in a compartment by themselves. Metal pieces heaped together are still pieces; they have not become one. The world has become united only in the form of a heap; it has not been melted in the crucible of love and moulded in the image of God. The hearts of all men must be purged of hate. Speeches and writings cannot bring about the unity of man; can the ocean get hot, when the forests are aflame with fire

—Baba

Power of the Lord's Name

In the course of His discourse in the Mandir on June 22nd, Bhagavan explained the purifying and redeeming power of the Lord's name when it is recited in a spirit of total surrender to the Divine. Bhagavan said:

All religions have laid stress on purity of heart. They have also declared that without a pure heart all spiritual exercises are valueless. How can purity of heart be realised if the mind is filled

the Lord's name.

Prahlada, who was the son of an Asura, Jatayu, a bird, and an animal like Gajendra, the Lord of the Elephants, redeemed themselves by relying on the Lord's name. As long as one is filled with ego and relies on his own strength, the benefit of the Lord's grace will not come to him. It is only when Gajendra declared that he knew no one other than God who could save him here or in the hereafter that the Lord rushed to his rescue. When Draupadi was being humiliated by the Kauravas, who went to her rescue? All the prowess of her husbands could not protect her. She prayed to Krishna as her sole protector, as no relations or others could come to her aid. Men may help to relieve ordinary difficulties in life. But in times of grave crisis only Madhava (God) can save man. Believing in this, Draupadi prayed to Krishna for succour. The faith in the Lord's name saved her.

Tulsidas hailed Rama as the protector of the universe and declared that the very name Ra-aa-ma represented the three powerful deities, Agni, Surya and Chandra (the Fire-God, the Sun-God and the Moon-God).

Valmiki, who was a hunter in his early life, became a sage and the author of the immortal Ramayana by meditating on the name Rama taught to him by the Seven Sages. Association with the saintly persons and the chanting of Rama's name made him the "Adikavi" (the first poet).

The Lord's name is like a boat for a man crossing the ocean of life. It is supremely important in the Kali Age. It has been declared that there is nothing greater than the name of Hari in the Kali Age.

By no other spiritual or religious practices can peace be attained in this age.

The Divine name can turn poison into nectar. It can revive a lifeless thing. It is surcharged with infinite power.

Mira was so deeply immersed in chanting the name of Krishna that she was totally unmindful of where she was going and what others thought about her. Those who have firm faith in God should not bother about what others thought or said about them. They should adhere to their practices regardless of what others felt. This applies to students when they go to their homes for the holidays and some persons might comment about their uttering prayers before they took their meals. They should have the courage to practise what they knew to be right. They must be afraid to commit sin, but have no fear at all in chanting the name of God. The Lord's name will protect them upto the end of their lives even when all others desert them. You must practise chanting God's name from now on because no one can say when the end will come.

*Long ere the dark night would depart
At Brahmi hour, I sit up and start
My meditation. For, in my heart
Dwells OM! SAI OM! SADGURU OM!*

*When bathing, as the shower falls
On my head and shoulders, my mind recalls
The God within and softly calls,
SAI OM! SAI OM! SADGURU OM*

*While chanting mantras at Pooja time
Or singing bhajans sweet in rhyme
I only worship all the time
SAI OM! SAI OM! SADGURU OM*

*I come out into the open wide
And say: "Oh Lord! Please do not hide
Thy Self! In All dost Thou reside"
SAI OM! SAI OM! SADGURU OM!*

*My words sing all His glory sweet
My steps all lead me unto His Feet.
At my journey's end, HIM will I meet
SAI OM! SAI OM! SADGURU OM!*

*Let this body fall, let breath depart
No death will touch me. I on my part
Will embrace HIM Who's in my Heart
SAI OM! SAI OM! SADGURU OM!*

— **Bhrarnara**

What can I offer You?

What can one offer
to you, the source
of everything that is
The leaf, the flower,
the fruit and the water
are all yours,
What sense would it make then
to empty out the pitcher

into the vast ocean?

You will perhaps
not spurn
a modest grateful heart
anxious to lay itself
at your lotus feet
with no artifice or art.

Your benevolent glance
a smile of acceptance
will make this sullied spirit
fit for consecration.

To you, O giver of everything,
what offering can I make?
I bring to you
What's worse than
that you had given me.

You had in times past

from the simple hearted Shabari
the berry fruit defiled,
the same way, O Merciful,
condescend to accept
the heart of this errant child.
The sheer touch of your hand
will purge it clean
and make it shine
with its native splendour.

—*P. P. Sharma*

GURUPOORNIMA SANDESH:

“Love All: Serve All”

The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Your entire life will be sanctified thereby,” observed Bhagavan Baba, delivering His Gurupoornima message to a very large gathering in and outside the Poornachandra Auditorium, on July 18th.

Emphasising the supreme importance of service as sadhana, Bhagavan called upon all persons coming to Prasanthi Nilayam to engage themselves in one or other kind of service. There was no room in Prasanthi Nilayam for those who had no work to do. Bhagavan said He Himself was an example to everyone in this respect. He was ever at work from dawn to dusk. He extended His love to everyone. It is only through love and service that human life can be made meaningful and sacred.

Devotees, both from overseas and different parts of India, started pouring into Prasanthi Nilayam well before Gurupoornima.

In the morning, the Sathya Sai Institute orchestra presented a special programme of songs in praise of Bhagavan as the Divine Guru. Children from the Secondary School recited slokas from the Purusha Suktam and the Gita.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan delivered His Gurupoornima Sandesh in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Prior to Swami's discourse, three students—Ajai Deep Singh (VIII Standard), Sai Nath (M. Sc.) and Srikanth (IX Standard)—addressed the vast gathering on the significance of Gurupoornima and what Bhagavan and Sai education meant for them.

What nature teaches

Embodiments of Divine Love!

The trees provide cool shade and sweet fruits equally to all, whether they have fostered them or harmed them. They teach man this lesson of equal-mindedness. The mountains, by bearing heat and cold, wind and rain alike, teach man not to care too much for the body. The birds take no thought for the morrow and are content to live on what they can get. They teach man the lesson of contentment and indifference to the future. The departed convey the message of the impermanence of life and its pleasures. Nature thus teaches man in many ways to give up ideas of "I" and "mine" and look upon God as the supreme preceptor.

Although Nature has been teaching these lessons from the beginning of time, man has not learnt to give up the ideas of "my people" and "others" and to develop the sense of oneness and equality of mankind and realise his divinity.

God and the cosmos

Trees are foremost among teachers. By attachment to the body and developing self-conceit, man forgets the lessons of Nature and wallows in selfishness. The mountains, by their indifference to cold or heat, are teaching man that he should bear joy or grief with an equal mind and strive to realise God. Pleasure and pain relate only to the body. The Atma is unaffected. This is the lesson to be learnt from the mountains.

We are seeing people being born and people dying. In spite of all that is seen, or heard or experienced, man is unable to get rid of the delusions relating to the body. Hence he is caught up in the coils of bodily attachments. He does not learn the lesson of the impermanence and fleeting nature of physical existence.

The guru and prakriti

Nature (Prakriti), which is constantly teaching these lessons, is the true preceptor. The cosmos is a University. God is the Cause. The cosmos is the result. God pervades the entire Universe. Nothing can exist in the world without the power of the Divine. The Universe is a manifestation of the Divine.

In the invocation to the Guru, he is described as Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara and Parabrahma. Brahma, who is hailed as the Guru, is the creator of the universe. The One who creates, sustains and dissolves the universe is the Parabrahma (the Omni-Will). The Vedas have described the Divine as the One enveloping the Cosmos and existing beyond it. Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara are aspects of the manifestation of Nature. Nature is made up of the three gunas (Satwa, Rajas, Tamas) in their myriad combinations.

What we must seek to experience today is unity in diversity (Ekatwam). Oneness (Advaita) is expressed in three forms: Bhava-Advaita (oneness in mental attitude); Kriya-Advaita (oneness expressed in action); Padartha-Advaita (oneness as seen in all objects). Only when oneness is experienced in all these forms can Divinity be understood. In Bhava-Advaita, the unity of the basic substance constituting the cosmos is perceived as the underlying Reality. In Kriya-Advaita, every action is regarded as an offering to the Divine and is thereby divinised. Padartha-Advaita implies recognising that every being or every object in the universe is composed of the same five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth) which are divine in their origin. In every individual, ether (Aakasa) exists as Shabda (Sound). Breathing is based on air. The heat in the body is derived from the fire element. Sweat, urine and other fluids in the body indicate the presence of water. The body itself is based on earthy matter. As every being is constituted by these five elements, all beings are essentially one, though having different forms and names. Human equality is based on the oneness of the Divine essence of all human beings.

The ancient sages indicated in the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras, how this Oneness of the Divine is to be realised. Unfortunately, these texts came to be interpreted in contradictory and confusing terms, with the result that their basic truth has been forgotten.

The triple unity

Oneness must express itself in universal love. Those who speak about love do not practise it. It is the divorce between thought, word and deed which is at the root of all the troubles in the world today. It is also the cause of the rise of atheism in this sacred land of ours.

Harmony in thought, word and deed is the highest human value. Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love) are not mere words. They are fundamental values to be practised in thought, word and deed as far as possible. Only then can divinity be realised.

It is not necessary to undertake all kinds of sadhanas (spiritual exercises) to recognise the Divine. If the happenings in daily life are properly enquired into, the Atma principle can be recognised easily. "Hethu" (Cause) is one of the names of the Divine. This means He is the cause of creation. He is both the cause of and the means used in creation. Another name for God is "Vikshara" (Imperishable). All objects in creation are liable to decay and destruction God alone is beyond change and decay.

Divine love

God's love is unbounded. It knows no growth or diminution. Worldly love is momentary and fickle. Divine love is unchanging and eternal. God is the embodiment of love. His infinite love is offered to all in equal measure. Some may feel that they had experienced God's love for a time and had been deprived of it later. This reflects only their own feelings and not the attitude of the Lord. Nature is like a clean mirror which reflects your feelings and attitudes. It is your own actions and thoughts, whether good or bad, which are reflected back to you. The Lord's love remains the same always.

Bliss is the true nature of man. But it can be realised only when the love of God is experienced. The sense of "my-ness" has to be totally eradicated. You must strive for the welfare of all. This is Bharat's message from times of yore. Fill your hearts with this sacred feeling. Banish from your minds all thoughts of hatred and envy.

God and the wicked

Once, to remove the doubts entertained by Dharmaja (eldest of the Pandavas), Krishna explained why He allowed the souls of the evil-minded Shishupala and Dantavakra to merge in Him after He had killed them. Krishna said: "Dharmaja! Your doubts arise from your delusion. Praise or blame, good or bad, relate to the body and not to the Atma. Because of identification with the body one experiences troubles. As the body-consciousness grows, the Atma-consciousness declines. Only the mind is responsible for hatred and attachment, for joy and grief. If the mind is transformed, anyone (regardless of his past) can attain Me."

It is the inevitable destiny of everything ultimately to go back to the source from which it came. The body, arising from matter, goes back to matter. The Spirit (Atma) issuing from the Divine, goes back to the Divine. The Spirit is pure Consciousness. It ever remains as Consciousness. It is the embodiment of Love and Light.

Embodiments of Love! Do not make any distinctions between one person and another on the basis of caste or colour. All are children of one God. Do the trees make any distinction between one or another seeking their shade? Man behaves worse than trees today. Everyone should realise that the Divine is equally present in all.

The Sai name

The Sai name is proclaimed by trees when they wave their heads. The birds in their chirping call upon men to remember Sai's name. The flowers in spreading their fragrance declare the glory of Sai. The bees when they hum announce the bliss in Sai's name. "Sai! Sai!" is the sound that reverberates from the sky and earth. Sai can be experienced everywhere. "Sai" is not one's name. "Sai" is the Indweller reclining in the heart of everyone.

Today is Vyasapoornima day. Vyasa was a great Rishi. He is described as an incarnation of Lord Narayana. He set down in writing the Vedas which previously were known only in the form of sound. He was the great-grandson of Arundhati (the wife of Vasishta). He codified the Vedas. As he was born on the full-moon day in the month of Aashaada, this day is celebrated as Vyasapoornima. Vyasa glorified the Divinity that is equally present in all human beings and propagated this truth to the world. After writing the 18 Puranas, he summed up their message in one line "Paropakaarah punyaaya; paapaaya parapeedhanam" (Helping others is meritorious; harming others is sinful). "Help ever; hurt never."

God-the supreme guru

Vyasa was the great teacher who gave many profound and sacred truths to mankind. Hence his birthday is celebrated as Gurupoornima (The Full-moon day dedicated to the preceptor).

be called teachers or scholars, but they cannot be called gurus. Even those who profess to impart spiritual messages (Upadesha) cannot be regarded as gurus. God, is the Supreme Guru-the Guru of gurus.

To offer fruits, dakshina and other things to a teacher on Gurupoornima day is not the right way of worshipping the guru. Those who accept such gifts are worldly preceptors. Real gurus are to be worshipped by "pradakshina", by revering them with heart and soul. Most preceptors today are mercenary. The only true guru is God. He manifests Himself in Nature, which serves as the cosmic teacher. Nature is the best teacher.

Recognise the Divinity that is manifested in the cosmos. All things in Nature observe their laws with undeviating regularity. The sun, the moon, the seasons observe their respective laws. Man alone violates the laws of his being. Animals obey their instincts and have their seasons for regulating their lives. Man is the exception. He needs to be taught the rules of right living (Dharma). He has to cultivate morality and integrity. There is only one way by which this can be done. It is by pursuing the spiritual path. Without spirituality man cannot discover the Light within him.

Love and service

The most important thing to be noted today is that the body has been given to man for the performance of right action. Every person has to discharge his duties in life. It is a sin to ignore one's duties. When everyone performs his duties, the nation will prosper. Perform your duties, without regard to what others say or do.

Engage yourselves in service activity. Consider social service as service to God. To earn the love of God, this is the easiest way. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Your entire life will be sanctified thereby.

A large number of people are coming to Prasanthi Nilayam regularly. No one should remain idle here. Each one should render whatever service he or she can. This is not a place for mere eating and sleeping. Those who are not active in service have no place here.

From this Gurupoornima, you have to dedicate yourselves to service. There is so much to be done by way of service to the people. It is through service life can be made meaningful. The nation is in the doldrums today because men who have not learnt how to serve are in the seats of power. Only through service can one qualify oneself for leadership.

One should not feel proud about the position one occupies. The strength derived from wealth or position is undependable. Morality and purity alone can confer real strength. To develop these qualities, one has to take up selfless service. The spirit of service eradicates egoism and selfishness. In the process, not only is your life sublimated, but the nation also gains through the example of a dedicated servant of the public.

Remember that you must live up to whatever you say. You must practise what advice you give to others. This is what I am doing. Hence I have the right to advise others. I call upon devotees to show love towards all. I love all. I am always engaged in work from morning to night. You cannot know how blissful I am always. Happiness is My form. I am always happy. I do not worry about anything because I have no desires. That is the reason for My happiness. As your desires increase, your happiness diminishes.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Realising that the Atma in everyone is the same, extend your love to all. It does not matter if you do not practise any sadhana. Your love to others will raise you to the highest level of spirituality. Bear no ill-will towards anyone. When you harm anyone, realise you are doing harm to God. When you develop this kind of universal love, it will be the basis for unity.

In whatever you do, remember the name of God. It is a panacea for all human ills. Do not waste time, because Time is Divine. With faith in God, consecrate your life.

—*Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "Bhajana binaa sukha santhi nahi"*

"Bhagavan placed us in Orbit"

C. Sai Krishna (XII standard), employing an analogy from physics, spoke on LOVE. Bhagavan had placed all the students in the orbit of DUTY, DEVOTION and DEDICATION.

He said: In physics, while dealing with circular motion, we come across the concept of centripetal force. Technically it is defined as the force which continually deviates a body from its linear path compelling it to move along the circumference of a circle. All the planets and all bodies describing circular paths are governed by this concept. We were all bodies moving aimlessly and endlessly in the vast expanse of this ever-expanding universe. We did not have a goal or a purpose. We were in darkness and it was then that a great force intervened. It carried us far from the brink of disaster. It took us to a remote corner and kept us in circular orbit and this great force is Swami's love. Swami provided us with the centripetal force of love continuously deviating us from the path of bad thoughts, actions and words and compelling us to move along the circular path of discipline, duty and devotion.

As we move around Swami day in and day out we have the privilege of having glimpses of His multifaceted personality. We have all been provided with the centripetal force and are kept in orbit. In addition to the centripetal force, there is another concept of centripetal acceleration. For a body describing a circular path, its acceleration, invariably, at all instants should be directed towards the centre. This acceleration is known as centripetal acceleration. "Centripetal" means seeking the Centre.

How far have we succeeded in directing our acceleration towards the Centre?' Are we seeking the Centre? We have failed in directing the acceleration of our thoughts, words and deeds towards the Centre. If a body fails to direct its acceleration towards the Centre, it would be thrown off the orbit. Likewise if we fail to react even at this stage, we too would be thrown off the path of duty, discipline and devotion back to the darkness from where there would be neither return nor recovery.

Swami's love encompasses everything. Life is a pilgrimage where every man drags his feet along the rough and thorny road of agony. With the name of God on his lips he will have no thirst, with the form of God in his heart he will feel no exhaustion and the very assurance that the God is near, that He is within call, gives strength to His limbs and courage to His heart. We have to make ourselves worthy of His love so that we can have glimpses of His infinite glory as we move round and round Him.

—From the speech on 24-6-89

A Rose for the Lord

When the bud was born
In the daylight morn
The bud opened a bit
To see the world around it.

It was a rose
In such repose
It shone too bright
In the lovely sunlight.

Bathed in the sunshine
True happiness was the sign
Petals were like red dipped in milk.
They were smooth and soft as silk.

I went to it and it smiled at me
For it knew it was going to Thee!
It did not let a thorn prick me
It smiled and said: "I'm for Sai."

The Lord took it; the air was full of fragrant smell
The heart of the little rose beat loud as a bell.
I took padanamaskar

—*D. Sai Bindu (9 years),*
(Class V, Vidyagiri)

(Poem offered to Swami on 27-7-89 at darshan time).

The Bharatiya Heritage

The culture of India is founded, undoubtedly, on the bed-rock of spirituality. As Bhagavan Baba points out: "The sons and daughters of Bharat have been praying since the Vedic times *"Lokas Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu"* ("*May all the denizens of all the worlds be happy*"). The happiness of everyone is bound up with the happiness of all mankind. This, indeed, is the core of the teachings that have come to us down the ages through the stream of sages and saintly souls who, as manifestations of the Divine, have been continually appearing in different parts of the country.

The Avatars or Divine Incarnations occur when the decline of Dharma (Righteousness) and the degradation of human nature call for the advent of the Divine to save mankind and establish the reign of Righteousness. The saints, for their part, who are highly illumined souls, appear on earth from time to time as emissaries of God to propagate and spread faith and devotion among the people. The Avatar-Purusha, being Divinity Itself Incarnate, manifests right from His birth the truth of His Divinity in His life and in all activities related to His Divine Mission. The saints, on the other hand, take birth as ignorant mortals like ourselves and often go through the ordeals of physical, mental and even moral conflicts and crises in their worldly life. And, when their life takes a turn God-ward, they again go through a series of trials and tribulations such as the anguish of separation from God, the pangs of yearning for God, failure and frustration on the spiritual path owing to inner handicaps and outer obstacles, before attaining Self-Realisation. Consequently, their lives are marked by spells of distress, despondency and despair. This is what Bunyan calls the "Dark Night of the Soul " which, in fact, is a crucial stage in the Pilgrim's Progress when he is called upon to muster all the strength of determination, dedication and self-surrender to God to be worthy of His full Grace.

The hard way

It is this particular phase in a saint's life, namely, the hard way of getting himself out of the suffocating cocoon of worldly attachments and deluding sense pleasures and also getting over the odds and obstacles on his sadhana path, which makes the saint's life and teachings an invaluable treasure-house for us. This explains why Bhagavan Baba, referring to Adi Sankaracharya's famous stanza *"Sat-sangatve nissangatvam"* (From Satsang comes detachment from worldly bonds and ties), tells us, "Shankara suggests Satsang, the company of saints, as the very first step in sadhana. The company of the wise and the good develops in the Sadhaka detachment and love for silence and solitude. That will promote the disappearance of Moha,

develop in ourselves. Rightly has it been said that the saint's 'lakshana' is the sadhaka's 'sadhana' or guidepost. These 'lakshanas', says Lord Krishna, make the saints: (i) "*Anapekshaha*" (desireless and unattached to anything worldly); (ii) "*Machchittaha*" (the mind dedicated to God); (iii) "*Prasaantaha*": (always calm and serene, reflecting the transcendental peace of the soul); (iv) "*Samadarsinaha*": (perceiving the same auspicious presence of the Divine in all); (v) "*Nirmamaha*": (devoid of any sense of possessiveness); (vi) "*Nirahankaaraha*": (without the least trace of ego); (vii) "*Nirdwandvaha*": (free from the dualities of life such as joy and grief, success and failure, honour and insult) and (viii) "*Nishparigrahaha*" (free from acquisitiveness). Thus the life of the saint, who is rightly described as an eight-petalled lotus in full bloom in the lake of Chaitanya (the Higher consciousness), is a perennial message to those who follow him.

Beyond Distinctions

One more significant teaching of the saints, both by example and precept, is that Divinity knows no distinction of caste, religion or status. That is how we find the saints belonging to all religions and castes, high and low. Tulsidas (Uttar Pradesh) was a Brahmin, Mira (Rajasthan) a Kshatriya, Tukaram a Vaishya, Namdev (Maharashtra) a tailor, Kabir (Uttar Pradesh) a weaver, Kanhopathra (Maharashtra) daughter of a prostitute, Dadu (Gujarat) a cotton-comber, Savata (Maharashtra) a gardener, Narahari (Maharashtra) a goldsmith, Singaji (Madhya Pradesh) a cowherd, Gora (Maharashtra) a potter, Sena (Maharashtra) a barber, and Raidas (Rajasthan) a cobbler. Yet, all of them won the reverence and adoration of the masses because they manifested in their lives their oneness with the Divine.

Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram

This is the Truth, Purity and Beauty of the saints who take birth as mortal beings with their usual frailties and failings but bravely fight their way to realise their Divinity and leave their indelible footprints on the sands of time for the benefit of generations to come. They demonstrate vividly that our life is a painful and yet an enjoyable game of hide and seek with God culminating in the joy and ecstasy of one-ness with Him. No wonder, therefore, that Yudhishtira, in the Mahabharata, when asked by the Yaksha "*Ko dik?*" ("What is the right direction to take to achieve fulfilment in life?"), promptly replied, "*Santo dik*" (The direction shown by the saints.)

Bhagavan Baba has amplified this truth when He says, "Most of us, most of the time, are busy with the trivialities of life, not knowing that they are so. It is only when we put them aside and strive to rise to the dimensions of Eternity, which is that of the saints, that we truly begin to live. Meditation on the lives of the saints and their teachings is a potent means of elevating our lives and gaining sublimity." Shall we not then hearken to the call of the saints and keep at least one window of our heart open to draw into our life the light of their sublime teachings, the breeze of their yearning and fervour for God-realization and, not the least, the music of their melodious lyrics in praise of God and the ecstasy they have experienced from "Sakshatkara," on seeing God face to face?

(To be continued)

—Dr. B. Mavinkurve

As was reported in the August 1989, issue of "Sanathana Sarathi", students from the Sathya Sai Secondary School at Vidyagiri, Prasanthi Nilayam, had been asked by Bhagavan Baba to speak at the Mandir during June on their experiences with Baba and the impact of Sai education on them. Extracts from some of these speeches appeared in our August issue.

Passages from the speeches of some more students are reproduced in the following pages:

Gratitude and Obedience

Rakhal Gaitonde (XII Standard), in the course of his speech in the Prasanthi Mandir, recalled how he had got a second life after a serious brain injury in a car accident in Madras. The doctors had declared his condition as hopeless. That night his parents prayed to Baba "to do something to save the boy" His parents told him: "Baba in His infinite mercy has given you a second life." "For this great act of mercy I am ever in debt to Bhagavan," declared Rakhal.

Rakhal said: "Swami has done and is doing so much for us, but what are we doing in return? Swami says gratitude is very important. Yes, simple and plain gratitude. But I personally feel it is not only gratitude that is necessary but also obedience. For it is only through obedience that one can show one's gratitude to Swami. Obedience to Swami's instructions is most important. We may feel that this is difficult, but Swami's love will make the most difficult task easy. Obedience to Swami's message should be taken as a challenge. We should come out victorious to show our gratitude to Swami who is devoting so much of His energy for us, His students.

"Let us take it up as a duty to follow Swami's message so that we may become the ideal men He wants us to be."

"I end with a small prayer. Dearest Bhagavan! Please give us the power to recognise the infinite potential within us so that we may become worthy instruments in Thy Divine mission."

Power of the Lord's name

Speaking on "Namasmarana" at the Prasanthi Mandir on June 27th, Srikanth (IX Standard) dwelt on the unique value of chanting the Lord's name as a spiritual discipline in the Kali age, compared to the more rigorous and difficult spiritual practices prescribed in the Treta and Dwapara Yugas.

He said: "The chanting of the name of the Lord can be done at any time, anywhere. Even while walking or bathing, the Lord's name can be chanted. The Lord's name not only transforms one into a good person, but changes him to Divinity itself. Bharata is a very good example of

When Rama came back from Lanka, he took Bharata with him to Ayodhya in the celestial chariot. The people of Ayodhya welcomed them, but they could not distinguish between Rama and Bharata because Namasmarana had turned Bharata into Rama himself in appearance."

Srikanth next spoke about different types of Namasankirtan (group singing of the Divine names) and illustrated the different types by singing songs in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi. The Telugu song was Thyagaraja's well-known kriti. "Bantureethi Koluviyyavayya Rama!" The songs were rendered melodiously and their meanings were explained.

He gave examples of devotees who remembered the Lord's name even while they were engaged in their daily duties and thereby sanctified whatever work they were doing. He related the story of a lamp-lighter in Benaras who chanted Rama's name while cleaning the chimneys of the street lamps he was lighting. The lights in the streets he was serving burned brighter than elsewhere.

In conclusion, he said: "The Lord's name may be very small, but it is very powerful. Just as a small lamp is enough to cross a dark forest, and a small boat is enough to cross an ocean, the Lord's name is enough to enable one to cross the cycle of `birth and death'. What greater joy is there than chanting the Lord's name in the presence of the living God? Bhagavan is the Sai Mother whose heart throbs for us, whose every drop of blood seeks our welfare."

He ended his speech with the prayer, "Thvameva maathaacha pithaa thvameva..."

"Nobody Walks Alone"

B. Karthik, of the XII standard, who spoke on June 27th, said that Bhagavan's injunctions should be carried out implicitly to benefit from His grace. He said:

Our sweet Lord has said: "If you take one step towards ME I'll take ten steps towards you." Swami has also said: "*Why fear when I'm here?*" We can surely take heart and be entirely dependent on our Lord's utterances for they are becoming more and more justified by the change in the course and pace of life on Mother Earth.

I'd like to relate one enlightening experience that a devotee had with the Lord.

Devotee (praying fervently): O Lord! Please appear before me.

Lord: (pleased with the devotee appears): Ask for any boon and I shall grant it to you.

Devotee: O Lord! Do not forsake me throughout the rest of my life.

Lord: So be it.

The devotee was very happy and led a contented life. He turned back to see at the path of life he had trodden. He was pleased to see two pairs of feet, one of the Lord's and the other, his own.

But, as time passed, he fell upon bad times and had to face grave problems in life. Now, when he turned back to take a look at the path of life, he was disappointed to find only one pair of feet.

Soon, the bad times passed and he began leading a happy life. He was surprised very much to find the Lord standing by his side. Then, he complained to the Lord:

Devotee: O Lord! Why did you forsake me during my hardships?

Lord: My dear devotee! Never did I forsake you. The pair of feet you saw were mine. That was the time when I was carrying you in my arms.

Thus, we see that the Lord never leaves anyone alone.

The lord beside you

This is the same as what a poet has tried to express in one of his poems.

*When the highway of life seems to be rough;
And all of your dreams have flown
Just remember, wherever your road may go,
Nobody walks alone.*

*When everyone else has let you down,
And under your sins you groan
Just keep reminding your burdened heart,
Nobody walks alone.*

*Then, you'll suddenly feel His hands on yours;
And his eyes lifting up your own,
And you'll hear his gentle, forgiving voice
Nobody walks alone.*

After having come to Parthi, having heard and seen some of Swami's leelas I have found that whatever this poet has said is entirely true.

The Divine Doctor

I would like to relate an experience of my father's, which shows the Lord Sai as a divine doctor and also as a divine seer.

My father, in the late sixties, had been diagnosed for various diseases of the heart. He came to Parthi, a worried man, in 1969. He was waiting for Swami's darshan. Next to him was a fellow devotee who had been visiting Parthi often and each time he had got an interview with the Lord. But, this time ten days passed and he had not got any interview. Swami came! He beckoned to

Behold! The Lord was calling my father and not his neighbour. My father went in with his sisters. Inside the interview room, Swami took my father aside and told him that he needed to stop smoking and he was suffering from nothing more than a simple gas trouble! Swami rejoined the group and looking at one of my aunts asked her to study well. But, she thought she could brush through the portions just before the examinations and pass. That was not to be. She was down with chicken-pox and failed miserably in the exams.

This shows that if we do not follow the commands of the Lord implicitly, we would be a failure in life. Let us all follow His commands implicitly so as to get glowing success in life.

Do not shape your conduct with an eye on the opinion of others. Instead, follow bravely, gladly and steadily, the sweet and pleasant promptings of your own Satwic Manas, your own Awakened Conscience, your own Inner Self. Associate yourself with those who are richly endowed with Truth. Spend every second of your life usefully and well. If you possibly can, render service to others. Engage yourself in nursing the sick, but when thus engaged in service, do not worry about either the result, or the act of service, or the person to whom it is rendered. The service is made holy and pure if you ignore both the good and the bad, and keep on silently repeating in your heart the Mantram that appeals to you.

—Baba

GURUDEVA VANI:

Prema and Bhakti

Dear Students!

God is the embodiment of Love. The Cosmos is permeated by the Divine. Hence, the Cosmos is enveloped in love. Men in their narrow-mindedness are unable to recognise the nature of this infinite, all-embracing Love principle.

Man views love from three standpoints and experiences it in three ways. (1) Love relating to the body; (2) Love in relation to the mind; (3) Spiritual love.

Love assumes three forms according to the three qualities, Tamas, Rajas and Satwa. All the attachments and differences arising in the world, and the processes of birth, growth and dissolution, are based on love.

When you examine the nature of love, while coming together or experiencing separation, or in happiness and sorrow, the need for cultivating equal-mindedness in the different situations becomes apparent.

of the three types of love. It manifests itself as attachment to one's own kith and kin or possessions and is confined to a narrow circle.

The second category of love combines self-centred love with love for others for the purpose of gaining one's ends. These persons pretend to have love for their superiors or people in power and thereby seek to achieve their aims. They adore men of affluence or power and by their obsequious service to them they try to win favours from them. This is Rajoguna Prema (love that is prompted by self-centred urges).

Satwic love

The third category is pure Satwic love. In contemporary conditions, this type of love is rare. People filled with Satwic love recognise that the same Divine is present in all beings, and consider that without love towards all beings life is meaningless. By their universal love, they proclaim the truth about the omnipresence of the Divine. Their vision is spiritual, as they see the Divine in all beings. Such persons are fearless like lions, which roam about without any apprehensions of danger from any source. The person with bodily vision behaves like sheep, steeped in fear. The one who has acquired the spiritual vision has all his senses, mind and intellect under the control of the Atma.

There is no harm in pursuing one's worldly duties while having Self-realisation as the goal of life. Young people must cultivate this spiritual attitude from their student days.

Desireless sadhana

In the pursuit of the spiritual, one should not have any rewards in view. One who has mercenary motives becomes a wage-earner. He cannot be a master. One who works for wages will not have a deep interest in the work and what he does will not be pure or perfect. He will only be a clock-watcher. He considers himself an outsider in relation to his job. On the other hand, in his own house see how his wife and children work. They receive no wages. Their work is filled with love, purity and earnestness. They are masters of themselves and work in freedom. One who prays to God for something in return is like a wage-labourer. The devotee who regards God as his own kinsman and serves the Lord is like a master of the household. Conduct yourselves as masters and not as mercenary employees.

Devotion: three paths

To develop this kind of devotion, three kinds of disciplines have been indicated. They are: (1) The Matsya or fish path. (2) The Mriga or animal path. (3) The Kurma or tortoise path. The fish can only live in water. It cannot survive on land. The animal can live only on land and cannot survive in water. The tortoise is an amphibian and can survive both in water and on land. The devotee following the fish path practises his sadhana with concentration for the sake of himself and his family. The devotee adhering to the animal path can practise his sadhana in solitude and not in a crowd. One individual, for instance, who had a large family, sat down for meditation in his home. As one child or another was disturbing him, he locked himself in a room and started meditation. But he was disturbed by frequent knocks on the door by someone or

disturbed by the droppings from the birds on the tree. Disgusted with the disturbances at home and in the forest, he felt that the best thing was to end his existence. He was unable to realise that God was present in everything and cultivate forbearance. He exemplifies the devotee with the Rajoguna predominant.

To be able to concentrate wherever one may be is the mark of the devotee with Satwic quality. Whether in the midst of a crowd or alone, he is able to practise concentration. If anyone disturbs his meditation, he looks upon the disturbance as coming from God and accepts it.

It is necessary to understand the deeper meanings of Vedantic injunctions. Today people tend to go by the letter of the scriptures. The words of the scriptures should be interpreted and understood in the context of the prevailing time and circumstances. Then their real meaning will be clear.

Precept and practice

For instance, persons who take a pledge to observe certain disciplines in all circumstances, fail to do so when the circumstances are not congenial.

There is a story to illustrate this:

Once all the deer in a forest held a conference. They argued as follows: "Do the dogs have as much strength as we have! If we use our antlers against the dogs, they can be disemboweled. If we kick them with our legs, they will collapse. We are more fleet-footed than the dogs. While running we can jump over ditches and obstacles, which they cannot. We are in every way superior to the dogs. Why, then, should we be afraid of them? Henceforth we should not be afraid of dogs. We should face them courageously." All the deer came to this decision.

Hardly had they come to this resolution when the distant bark of a dog was heard. Immediately, not one of the deer stayed on the spot. All of them took to their heels and fled.

What was their resolution at their conference and what was their action later? The behaviour of those who preach Vedanta these days is very much on a par with that of the deer in the story. No one adheres to what he says or preaches. More than listening to spiritual discourses, one must try to practise at least a part of what one learns. Vedanta is being expounded at many places, not to speak of the discourses on the Gita. But how many understand the real spirit of the Gita and act up to its message?

(In this context Swami related the story of a pandit who was expounding the Gita to a king. When the pandit was explaining the sloka in the Gita in which Sri Krishna says that He will look after the welfare, both here and in the hereafter, of those who worship Him with one pointed devotion, the king found that the pandit did not behave as if he believed in the assurance given by Krishna. He was expounding the Gita to the king to secure a reward from him and not out of

king.)

Many scholars wax eloquent about what is said in the Gita, but how many of them practise the teachings of the Gita seriously? It is because of this dichotomy between preaching and practice that spiritual teachings have got into bad odour and are being treated with little regard. Only when the feelings emanating from the heart, the words coming out of the mouth and the actions one performs are all in perfect harmony will one's life be based on truth.

Cultivate divine love

Students! You need not make much effort to grow grass. But to grow a useful crop you have to labour hard. Likewise, it is no great achievement to experience the trivial and transient pleasures of mundane existence. It is like growing grass. You must strive to cultivate the nectarine, lasting bliss of Divine love. Those who aspire for such love are not easy to find. All appear as devotees. But one who has experienced the Divine Principle will not go after sensuous pleasures. Devotion these days appears more as a way of spending one's time rather than as the royal road to the eternal mansion of the Divine.

Education is no doubt necessary for living in the world. But you should be concerned about the basic purpose of life. Education is not for earning a living but to acquire a way of life. Whatever you may learn, you should try to put into practice at least some part of what you have learnt. Treating life as a righteous journey, you should devote at least a few minutes every day to thoughts on the true aims of life. Many hours in a day are wasted on selfish pursuits, but not even a few minutes are devoted to contemplation of God. Alas! What misfortune is this!

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna called upon Arjuna to regard himself an instrument of the Divine. Every human being is indeed an instrument. As such, he should carry out his duties, leaving the results to God. Men have to do their duties; success or failure is determined by the Divine. Do not esteem yourself as the doer. Develop the conviction that the Indwelling Spirit in you is directing you and enabling you to act.

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir on 27-6-1989

GURUDEVA VANI:

“Brahmamayam Jagat”

The Cosmos is saturated with Brahman ("Sarvam Brahmanmayam Jagat"). There is nothing in the universe unconnected with Brahman (the Omni-Self). While the Divine is thus all-pervasive, the ability to recognise this truth is not present in all.

rice in a vessel, placing it on a lorry load of wood, can the rice be cooked? Fire has two states: the inner and the outer. The fire that is invisible and latent is inner fire. This fire, though it is present, cannot burn anything. The external fire manifests its true form and can burn anything and reduce it to ashes.

Likewise, the power to experience the omnipresent Divine and envision it internally is possessed by each one, while only some have the capacity to demonstrate it externally

The Cosmos is rooted in Consciousness. Every object in the universe has emanated from the Divine. From a blade of grass to a mountain, from a drop of water to a mighty river, from the atom to the Supreme Spirit (Para-Brahmam), all are permeated by the One Divine principle. It is not easy for all to realise the oneness of this all-pervading Divinity. It is only when the rays of Divine love unite with the devotion of the individual that the Vision of Divinity is experienced.

The theist and the atheist

The fire of spirituality burns equally in the theist, who declares constantly that God exists, and in the atheist, who repeatedly denies the existence of God. The feelings of love are present in the heart of the atheist, no less than in the heart of the believer. But, the feelings of love of the theist are directed towards God. The atheist's love is turned towards Nature (Prakriti). Because of his love for the objects of the world the latter gets bound. When he directs that love towards God, he will become the instrument of his own liberation. Love is the impelling force for both bondage and liberation. That love is a manifestation of the Divine.

Love can be experienced only by love and by no other means. The Bhagavatam expounds the union of love with love. In this context, some doubts may arise. It may be asked how in the Bhagavatam not only theists, who are lovers of God, figure in the work, but also avowed enemies of God. When you have accounts of wicked men like Hiranyakasipu, Hiranyaksha, Kamsa, Shishupala, Dantavakra and others in the Bhagavatam, can the Bhagavatam be regarded as a work which deals only with the intimate relationship between God and devotees? The answer to this query may be made clear by a simple illustration. If, supposing, someone comes to your house asking for water to quench his thirst, you have to offer him water, buttermilk or some drink. To offer this drink, you need a container. This may be made of silver, brass or other material. The material of the container is not important. What is important is the drink. Likewise, Hiranyakasipu and others are a kind of containers for serving the drink of devotion. What is significant is the transformation of the contents of the vessel into the Divine substance.

Demons and devotees

In your eyes, Hiranyakasipu and others may appear to be demons. But in the view of the Divine they may appear as persons who help the devotees to affirm their faith in God. The Lord makes an example of the demons to teach the devotees the truth of the Spirit. The good is wedged in between two bad things. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Indeed, if there had been no Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu, there would have been no occasion for the advent of the Narasimha Avatar to bless Prahlada. Without hatred on the one side, the power of faith on

a great devotee of God, to numerous ordeals, Prahlada emerged from them as an ideal lover of God, who acquired undying glory. Hiranyakasipu was the instrument for revealing the greatness of Prahlada. The Lord creates hostile forces to demonstrate the power of faith in the Divine and to confer peace and plenty on the believers.

When two sticks are rubbed against each other fire emerges. The fire that is latent in the wood becomes manifest thereby. But this happens only when the sticks are rubbed continuously and not in leisurely stages. Likewise, when the Lord's name is chanted without intermission the fire of Divine wisdom manifests itself in the devotee. To bring peace and joy to devotees, there must be some wicked elements present in the world. Just as a mother provides toys and sweets to a child for its pleasure, though they are of no use to her, God creates certain things for the sake of the devotee, to bring out the depth of his devotion.

Take another example. The sugarcane's fibre is essential for preserving its juice. What we have to consume is the juice. But the juice is contained in the fibre, which is useless for us. It is only by squeezing the fibre that the juice can be got. Likewise, only by confronting the hostile elements can the benevolence of the Divine be experienced. Even in small matters, we find that their true nature is discovered by experiencing the elements opposed to them. For instance, if one wants to develop physical strength, he has to subject the body to severe gymnastic exercises. Can jaggery be got by seeking favour from sugarcane? Can it be got without crushing the cane and boiling the juice? Even a diamond requires to be cut and polished to enhance its brilliance and value.

The Narasimha avatar

Likewise, although Divinity resides in everyone, only in some persons it manifests itself externally. The reason for this external manifestation is the combining of the devotional feelings of the individual with the grace of God. Who is responsible for the appearance of Lord Narasimha before Prahlada? Is it Prahlada or Hiranyakasipu? Both are responsible. Hiranyakasipu's doubts and Prahlada's faith came together. Hiranyakasipu asked, "Where is God?" Prahlada replied: "There is no need to entertain doubts as to whether He is in one place and not in another. He is everywhere." Hiranyakasipu then asked: "Is He in this pillar?" Prahlada replied, "Yes." Hiranyakasipu hit the pillar. Then Narasimha emerged from it. It is the combination of the opposing elements in Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada which accounts for the emergence of Narasimha Avatar. God is present in one form in Hiranyakasipu and in another form in Prahlada. God is the doubter and God is the believer. He is the one who adores and also the one who derides. He is the giver and the recipient. When this Omnipresent oneness of the Divine is comprehended, then the significance of the statement, "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat" (the Cosmos is permeated by the Divine) will be understood.

The three states

The same entity is present in all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. In the waking state, you are listening to the discourse in this hall. In the dream state, you experience certain incidents. You feel there is no relation between the body and the dream state experiences.

neither the body nor the mind exists. Who, then, is the experienced? It is the same entity that has experienced the bliss in Sushupti, the dreams in the dream state and the sensations in the waking state. In the waking state, it is through the senses that the experience is had. In the dream state it is through the mind in the subtle body (sukshma sarira). The experience in the deep sleep state is by the divine power which transcends the body and the mind. The states are different, but the experiencer is one. It is difficult to understand the workings of the Divine. But one who seeks to understand them with devotion and persistence, will find it easy.

How the divine functions

From time to time this divine power assumes numerous forms. In devotees it shines as the fire of wisdom (Jnana-Agni). In non-devotees it burns as the fire of hatred (Krodha-Agni) or the fire of desire (Kama-Agni). Fire is a dreadful power. Even when it is at a distance, it evokes a sense of fear and danger. But man today has this fire (of hatred, etc.) in his heart and has become a victim of fear and delusions. The fires of lust, anger, hatred and jealousy can do a lot of havoc to man. All other types of fire subside in due course. But these fires (of hatred, etc) never completely cease. They may flare up at any moment. How, then, are these fires to be extinguished once for all? What do you need for putting them out? Vairagya (detachment) and Prema (love) are the two requisites to extinguish these fires.

It is only through Prema (love) that man can acquire peace. Although man today has a surfeit of comforts and amenities, he is steeped in fear and worry. Despite all his attempts to ensure security, the fear remains. All the amenities he enjoys do not confer peace of mind on him. Why is he haunted by this fear and lack of peace? It is because he entertains in his heart the fires of hatred, jealousy and the like.

Purity and peace

Only pure thoughts can confer peace. An innocent and pure person is always at peace. It is the guilty man who lacks peace. It is only when a man rids himself of evil that he can be free from fear. How is one to get rid of evil? Men imagine that they lack the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad. Of all beings in this world, man alone has the highest capacity to determine what is right and what is wrong. Despite being aware of this capacity, he indulges in wrong deeds. Knowing what is wrong, he commits wrongs. Consequently he becomes a victim of fear and anxiety. He would not suffer from these, if he did anything wrong out of ignorance. There are insane persons who are not conscious of right and wrong, because they have no discriminating power. They act without any sense of fear because they are not conscious of the character of their actions. It is the person who indulges in wrong actions deliberately who is haunted by fear and worry.

Forms of fire

The discriminating power has to be used in the right way. You should follow the dictates of your conscience and act according to the promptings of the Atma (the Indwelling Spirit). You are filled with fear when you do something against the injunctions of your conscience. To get rid of fear, you have to perform all actions in a spirit of dedication to the Divine. Remember that fire is

its use it can be good or bad. The fire that is used for burning a body in the burning ghat is fire. But will any one use it for cooking purposes? No, because it is not pure. Consider the fire burning in a Yajna Kundam, in which offerings are made to the deities with sacred mantras. That is also fire, but it is sacred fire, surcharged with divinity. It is worshipped as divine. Then, you have fire used for cooking, in the kitchen. That fire is confined to the purpose of cooking. Will anyone offer worship to the fire in a cigarette? But when a joss-stick is burnt, it acquires sanctity as an offering to the Divine. Thus fire may be one, but it can be used in different ways.

Sat-chit-ananda

Divinity is one, but manifests itself in many forms. Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss) is One, but its manifestations assume many names and forms. In every object, there are these three attributes: Sat-Chit-Ananda. These three qualities are present in this table and this mike. You can recognise "Sat" and "Chit", but not "Ananda". "Sat" means, "It is there" (it exists); "Chit" means you can perceive it. Both these are true. But we cannot know whether it is experiencing "Ananda" (bliss). Such objects are described as inert (Jada). Now look at N. there. He is both "Sat" and "Chit" (He has both a form and a name). But we can also notice that he is experiencing Ananda". He is deriving joy from Swami's discourse. It is only in man that "Ananda" (bliss) is recognisable. In all other objects "Sat" and "Chit" are cognisable. It is evident that in every thing (padartha) the Divine is present. The aim of Sadhana is to convert Padartha (the physical object) into Parartha (Divinity). This Divinity should be regarded as embodying the Love Principle.

Divine love

Without Love, you cannot comprehend Divinity at all. This love should not be chasing after ever-new objects. It should be concentrated on the One. Only then you can have the right relationship with God. For instance, when a stranger comes to your house, you treat him with special respect. But when an old friend comes, you welcome him freely with familiarity and love. That is the freedom you should have in relation to God. How is that freedom acquired? Through complete dedication, "Mine" and "Thine" should be totally eschewed. The Vedanta has declared that the elimination of "I-ness" (the ego sense) is Self-realisation. You must reach the state of "All-is-you" from the state of "I". You must see the Divine in everything in the universe. "You (the Divine) are everything- the seen and the unseen." This conviction must come to you. When you switch off the current, the light does not burn. Because you cannot see the light, you cannot say there is no current. The light will appear when you turn on the switch. Hence the presence or absence of light (current) is related to your behaviour. It does not affect God's omnipresence. In your ignorance, you do not put on the switch and complain that there is no light. This is one reason for the absence of light. There may be another reason also. There is a main switch which governs all other switches. If the main switch is off, all the rooms will be in darkness and if the individual switches are put on, the bulbs will not burn. What is that main switch (in man)? It is Divine Love. When this switch of Divine love is turned on, love will manifest itself in every limb and part of the body. Your words will be filled with love. Your actions will be saturated with love. Your eyes will gleam with love. You will be listening to

are steeped in selfishness and self-centred actions, every limb will be plunged in darkness.

The gopikas' prayer

Therefore, Love is Supreme. Develop love in your hearts. Let love flow through every part of your body. Make love the reigning principle of your life. Develop love through love. This was the prayer that went forth from the hearts of Gopikas: "Oh Krishna, play on your flute so that our parched hearts may be flooded with your nectarine love and we may be filled with love in all that we think and do. Plant the seeds of love in our hearts so that the saplings of love may sprout and grow."

It is when one is filled with joy that music flows spontaneously from him. Krishna was filled with joy always. Hence, whether He was on a village green or on a battle-field, His words turned into song.

To experience this joy, you have to have firm faith in God and shed all fear. Cultivate Divine Love and experience this joy. Sanctify your lives by dedicating it to the Divine.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Madhura Madhura Murali Ghana Shyama!*")

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on 28-6-1989*

KRISHNA JAYANTI SANDESH:

Krishna's Prema Tattwa

"Prema tattwa (the Love Principle) is the Supreme message of the life of Krishna. The nature of Divinity can be properly understood only when the Love Principle arising from the heart is rightly understood. Making selfless love the basis and treating the phenomenal world as the super-structure, you have to lead a life of purity which unifies both love and the world," observed Bhagavan Baba, in the course of His discourse on Krishna Jayanti day, August 24th, in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

The Auditorium was filled to capacity, with a large number of devotees from overseas, besides devotees from all parts of India. Bhagavan's discourse was preceded by a short speech by Sai Prasanna, an M. Sc., student of the Sathya Sai Institute, who spoke on the impact of Sai education and on the significance of the Krishna Avatar.

The premises of the Prasanthi Mandir and the grounds around it had been gaily decorated with multi-coloured flags and festoons for the Krishna Jayanti celebrations. It was a pleasant cool morning. As Swami came out onto the Mandir verandah precisely at 7 a.m., the students of the Primary and Secondary School and the Institute greeted Swami with recitations from the

The bhajans began appropriately with Bhagavan's favourite bhajan, "Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai." While the bhajans were going on, Bhagavan went round the Mandir grounds giving blissful darshan to the thousands gathered there.

At 8 a.m., the morning's main event began with the arrival of the finely robed cows from the Gokulam in a grand procession, headed by Sai Gita and a Nadaswaram troupe. Each cow was led by a batch of three or four students. The cows were all lined up in front of the Mandir. It was a glorious sight to see Swami offering bananas to each of the cows from His own divine hands. The cows seemed to know that it was their most blessed moment at the end of a year of dedicated service.

After Arati was offered to Bhagavan, the cows were led back in procession to the Gokulam.

In the afternoon, the devotees assembled in the Poornachandra Auditorium for Bhagavan's Krishna Jayanti Sandesh.

BHAGAVAN'S DISCOURSE

In the course of His discourse, which was punctuated with cheers from time to time, Bhagavan said:

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Love is God. Everything is filled with love. This love can be experienced only through love. There is no other way than love to realise the One Who is the embodiment of love. This (Divine) Love is not something which grows in one moment and falls off in another.

This Love dwells in man as Atma (the Spirit). The body has been described as the temple of God. In this temple Love is enshrined as Atma. Such sacred and pure Love can dwell only in a pure heart.

Fear and anxiety get entrenched in a heart devoid of love. A heart filled with love of the Divine will enjoy peace and be totally free from fear. True love is not a momentary feeling. In the eternal Spirit of man love shines as a pure and eternally effulgent flame.

In this context, it would be more appropriate to describe God as love itself rather than as an embodiment of love. Recognising the Divine as Love, spiritual aspirants have been worshipping it as the Supreme Spirit. Because love is Divine the body is considered a temple. It is also regarded as a mansion. "Nirdosho nirmalo naathah: sadosho chanchalo vadhuh". ("The Master or husband is immaculate and pure; the wife is fickle and prone to go astray.") A husband who is pure and a wife who is fickle are residing in this body. When a pure husband and a fickle wife live together, how can there be peace in such a home? To ensure peace and happiness in such a home, either the husband has to follow the wife or the wife has to follow the husband. When these alternatives are examined it will be seen that it is not proper for a pure and immaculate

wife to follow the ways of the husband. In this instance, who is the husband and who is the wife? It is the Atma, pure, unsullied and steadfast, that is the husband. The mind is the fickle, wavering and wayward wife. The effort to make the mind follow the pure, unsullied Atma is Bhakti (devotion).

Many names are attributed to this devotion. The Bhagavata equates devotion with service (to the Lord.) "Bhaja Sevayam" (Adore Service as worship). Hrishikesa sevanam Bhaktir-uchyathe" (Service to Hrishikesa, the Lord of the Senses, is termed Bhakti). In other words, devotion means directing the mind towards God. Leading a life with the vision of the Divine in view is Bhakti. Leading a life with the body-consciousness is "Moha" (delusion). Hence, the lovers of Vishnu, the worshippers of the Lord, are devotees; the lovers and adorers of the world and worldly objects are mere humans.

How to experience God

The Gopikas were worshippers of Krishna. They always yearned for Him and were devotees in the highest sense. Those who hanker after worldly things are ordinary beings (jivis). For jivis to get divinised they have to develop the spiritual vision. The Gopikas sanctified and redeemed their lives by constant contemplation of Krishna.

It may be asked in what form the Lord appears to man and how is man to experience God. God has the following six attributes or characteristics: Aishwarya (Divine sovereignty); Dharma (the source of all Righteousness); Yasas (fame); Sampada (wealth); Jnana (wisdom); and Vairagya (non-attachment). He has another name called "Vishatkara" (One who has six forms of wealth). He is also known as "Vibhuh" (One with matchless splendour). He is the Master of the past, the present and the future. For this reason He is called "Bhavah". He is the One that abides in all the three aspects of Time. Another meaning for the word "Bhavah" is that of creator of the universe. He illumines all the stars, suns and planets in the universe and hence is called "Bhavah". He is the prime cause of the process of creation, growth and dissolution.

What is the proof for the existence of such an omnipresent God? A simple illustration will suffice. If you seek to know where God is, the answer is that He is present wherever you have air and water. Both air and water have come from the Atma. Air and water are essential for life. They represent the spiritual principle of the Atma.

Thus, while there is clear evidence of the omnipresence of the Divine, man is not able to recognise this. God is subtler than the subtlest atom and vaster than the vastest. He dwells in the human body in the form of Atma. This Atma, however, is present in every being. The Upanishad declares: "Pervading everything, everywhere, inside and outside, the Lord Narayana is omnipresent."

The head and the heart

Man has two important organs: the head and the heart. The head is ever engaged in seeking external objects. It desires only transient and mundane objects and the things and beings of the

thoughts arise out of contact with the external. Qualities like truth, love, kindness, forbearance and compassion, which are signs of inner vision, emanate from the heart. Man becomes pure only when he concentrates on the heart. Hence the Vedanta has enjoined cultivation of the inner vision (Antardrishti). The first is the path of the external (Pravritti marga), the second is the path of the internal (Nivritti marga). One who is absorbed in the Pravritti marga cannot understand the Nivritti marga. One who regards enjoyment of worldly objects and transient sensory pleasures as the *summum bonum* of life and continually strives for securing them cannot understand the promptings of the heart and cannot experience its ecstasies. Although the heart is inside the body, the body is unable to grasp the unique significance of the heart. Can the tree know the sweetness of the juice of the fruit which it bears? Can the creeper know the fragrance of the flowers that bloom on it? Can the sweetness of a poem be experienced by the book in which it is printed? Can a scholar preoccupied with knowledge of the external be aware of the joy arising from the experience of the internal (Nivritti)?

The juice is in the fruit of the tree, but the tree cannot taste its sweetness. Our body is like a tree. In it the heart is like a fruit. The love flowing in the heart is the juice. The physical body can have no understanding of the sweetness of the love that fills the heart. Nor can it experience or share the joy of that love. It is because of this that man is a prey to sorrows, disappointments and despair.

Love and fear

As long as one is unable to understand the principle of love, one can never be free from fear and anxiety. The moment love awakens fear flees. For instance, a railway passenger, who has a ticket, even while travelling by second class, is free from fear. But a ticketless traveller, even if he has got into a first class compartment, is haunted by fear of being caught and punished. Likewise, if a person has the ticket of divine love in his heart, he has no fear of anything in the world.

Life is one long journey. In this journey if you have the pure selfless love of God within you, you can go anywhere free from fear and worry of any kind.

Today every man is harried by some kind of fear or other. Fear follows him in whatever he undertakes, because he lacks the love of God. If you have the love of God, you can accomplish anything. However great one may be as a scholar, whatever riches and comforts he may command, if he has no faith in the Self he will be haunted by fear. Self-confidence is the prime requisite. Without it you cannot succeed in any enterprise; you cannot enjoy anything.

By filling the mind with all kinds of desires, you become subject to worry. Wherever you turn you see only worshippers of Mammon ("siri" or wealth) and not devotees of God (Hari). In whatever one says or does, self-interest is predominant. How can enduring bliss be derived from this?

humanness. You must have one-pointedness and strength of mind. The mind must be unwavering and the heart must be pure and unpolluted. You must fill your life with unselfish deeds.

Uddhava and the gopikas

Once, Uddhava went to Gokulam with a message from Krishna to the Gopikas. Uddhava told them: "I have brought for you a remedy for the pain you are suffering as a result of separation from Krishna. You must take this medicine. Through this yoga you will be relieved of the Roga (the ailment) from which you are suffering."

The Gopikas replied: "Oh, Great One! We do not suffer from any malady. Hence we don't need any yoga. It is enough if we know the yoga by which we can get back Krishna."

Uddhava asked: "What is this yoga?" A Gopikas replied: "The ordeal we enjoy on account of renunciation (Tyaga) is itself a kind of yoga."

Uddhava observed: "How can there be anything common between renunciation and enjoyment? The renunciant does not seek enjoyment. The one who enjoys is not concerned about renunciation. As the two are irreconcilable, how can you regard the enjoyment of separation as a form of yoga?"

The Gopikas said: "You simpleton! Is this all you have learnt from your nearness to Krishna? When a person gives up egoism in his doings and attachment to the enjoyment of their fruits, then, Tyaga (sacrifice), Yoga (spiritual austerity) and Bhoga (enjoyment) become one. First get rid of the conceit that 'I am the doer'. Then free yourself from the desire to enjoy the fruits of your actions. When you have no attachment to the fruits of your actions and have no sense of ego in what you do, then there is no difference between Yoga and Bhoga (enjoyment)."

In the world, you have rains and rivers, which enable crops to grow. The sun and the moon illumine the sky. For whom does all this happen? All this is not for the sake of any single individual. It is for the benefit of all mankind. Everyone is entitled to benefit from these phenomena. All beings in the natural state are entitled to enjoy the benefits provided by Nature. But only a few can acquire the competence to experience the Divine. Only those who have firm faith in God can secure this blessing.

Uddhava asked the Gopikas: "If you are not prepared even to listen to Krishna's message, what sort of devotion do you have towards Krishna? What is the form of your devotion?" The Gopikas gave the essence of yoga in one sentence: "Uddhava! We have only one mind. That mind is no longer with us. It has gone to Mathura along with Krishna. As we have no mind of our own and have become totally mindless, how can we receive your message? If we had ten different minds like you, we could listen to your message, think about Krishna, attend to the commands of our mothers-in-law and husbands and do other things."

that the same Divinity dwells in all beings. The mind is the cause of all worries. Even the yearning for God is through the mind. Man is pursued by worries from birth to death, all through his life. There is only one means by which all worries can be banished and that is love (Prema).

God's transcendence

In this love there is no room for any kind of difference. The Divine presence is recognisable in everything. Divinity is omnipresent. God transcends the categories of time (Kaala), space (Desa) and matter (Vastu). No one can say God is present in one country and not in another. It is not possible to declare that He is present in one thing and not in another. This means that God cannot be assigned to any particular place, time or object. The term "Bhagavan" means One who pervades everything. That being so, can any particular place be assigned to Him? He is immanent everywhere. It can be firmly asserted that God is everywhere. Again with regard to time, it cannot be said that God was present at one time and did not exist at another time. How can one, who has no beginning, middle or end and who is present in all the three categories of time, be limited by time? Because of His omnipresence and all-pervasiveness, God is described as "Sarva-atmaka" (the Spirit present in all things). Every term that is used to describe God is pregnant with significance.

God is not a specific definable entity (Vyakti Swaroopa). He is the Indwelling Spirit in all. The Atma Principle that permeates the universe is One only. That Atma Principle assumes a form from time to time for the sake of redeeming the world and establishing Righteousness.

Gopikas and Krishna

The Gopikas experienced the presence of Krishna in everything. What joy can be had when God's omnipresence is experienced can be known only to those who have had the experience. Many have treated the Gopikas as deluded simpletons carried away by their own fancies. This is a grievous mistake. Their hearts were pure and filled with selfless love. Mundane love believes only in receiving and not in giving. God's love revels in giving and not receiving. This is the difference between worldly love and Divine love. The Gopikas were able to experience the Divine by pure selfless love. For them there was no difference between Krishna's words, Krishna's music and Krishna's form.

The body as a temple

The body has been described as a temple. But when does it become a temple? Only when it is filled with thoughts of God. When there is no thought of God, it becomes a mere dwelling place (Bhavanam) and in due course becomes a jungle (Vanam). There is no need to go elsewhere in quest of a temple. When the name of the Lord dances on your tongue, your body itself becomes a temple. Once you regard your body as a temple, you will have to keep it pure and unpolluted to be worthy of God's residence.

This is precisely how the Gopikas considered themselves. They were totally indifferent to gold and other worldly goods. For them God was everything. They were totally immersed in Krishna Consciousness and were oblivious to everything else. They were aware that Krishna

is true of other devotees of God. Mirabai adored the Lord as "Giridhara Gopala." Sakkubai worshipped the Lord as "Ranga! Panduranga!" and was devoted to that particular name and form. Other than "Gopala" Yasoda was not interested in any other appellation of Krishna. That name alone was sweet and dear to her. Likewise, the Gopikas, though they knew that Krishna was the omnipresent Lord, adored Him only in the form of the flute-playing Krishna. The Gopikas alone fully understood the Krishna Principle because of their intense and unqualified faith in His divinity.

The Krishna Tattwa

What sort of personality is Krishna? Although He moved amongst all kinds of persons, sported and played with all, He was not attached to anyone. He was ever content, ever blissful. He transcended all qualities. He was free from egoism. He was a sovereign without a crown. Though He conquered many kingdoms, He did not rule over any of them. He enjoyed witnessing others rule over the kingdoms. He was totally free from all desires. Whatever He sought was for the sake of others. In this way He revealed His divinity.

Love and divinity

Like the rays emanating from the sun and the trees growing out of the earth, love sprouts from the heart. The nature of Divinity can be properly understood only when the Love Principle arising from the heart is rightly understood. Making selfless love as the basis and treating the phenomenal world as the superstructure, you have to lead a life of purity which unifies both love and the world. Love is the impelling cause and the world is the instrument. Love is related to the Divine. The world is associated with Nature.

The changeless and the changing

Take, for example, this silver tumbler. Silver is the basic material. The silversmith was instrumental in making the tumbler from the silver. The creator of the silver was none other than God. The person who made the tumbler is a human being. What is a tumbler now, can be remade into a cup or plate or something else. Whatever the change in the form, the silver remains as silver. That is the basic factor. From this it should be understood that the Divine is unchanging while the phenomenal world would be subject to change. In this changing world, there is the Divine that is eternal and unchanging. The universe is the combination of both.

The need for an unchanging basis for a changing world will be clear from the example of a car going on a road. The road is firm and steady and because of that the car is able to move on it. It would be hazardous if the car had to travel on an unsteady and unstable road.

This relationship between the changeless Divine and the ever-changing phenomenal world is not properly understood. Very few, in fact, care to seek the truth. If the true nature of Divinity is grasped, one will not be affected by all the vicissitudes in the phenomenal world. He will have no fear regarding the ups and downs of life. It has been well said that one who knows how to swim need have no fear of the depth of the water in which he is plunged. Likewise, if you have

the world. It was the privilege of the Gopikas to have earned such love.

You are celebrating the birthdays of Rama and Krishna as festive occasions. What is the use of celebrating such festivals? You should put into practice the teachings of those whom you worship as God. All the worship you offer is of no use if you do not practise the teachings of the Lord in daily life. At best, they can only be regarded as pious actions.

Krishna the attractive

Among all the Avatars, the Avatar of Krishna is the most attractive incarnation. The very word "Krishna" means one who attracts ("Karshatiti Krishnah" Krishna is one who attracts). "Krishyatiti Krishnah" is another derivation for the name. Krishna is one who cultivates. In the case of the Avatar, this means that Krishna is the Lord who cultivates the heart of the devotee by removing the weeds, sowing the seed of good qualities and growing the crop of love. "Kushyatiti Krishna" (Krishna is one who gives delight). Krishna thus means the one who cultivates our hearts and raises in them the crop of bliss.

Faith in Krishna

The difference between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was this: the Kauravas had no faith in the Divine and turned away from Krishna. They believed only in worldly pleasures. The Pandavas had implicit and unwavering faith in Krishna and did not care for anything else. In the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the Kauravas were utterly destroyed, while the Pandavas were victorious. The Mahabharata reveals the difference between the Kauravas and the Pandavas in their attitude to Krishna and what reliance on Krishna as the Divine means for believers.

The Pandavas placed God first, the world next, and "I" (themselves) last. The Kauravas placed "I" (self-interest) first, the world next, and God last. Whoever places God first and foremost is bound to be successful in life. This was the lesson which Sanjaya gave to Dhritarashtra at the end of the Bhagavad Gita.

Faith in God is the guarantee of victory. Thyagaraja said: "Oh Rama, if I have the benefit of your grace (Anuraga) all the nine planets (the Navagrahas) will be subject to me." Hence, if we acquire God's love we can achieve anything in life. Love is the one all-pervading element. Everyone has to strive to make that love the basis of his life.

Krishna's prema tattwa

The supreme message of the life of Krishna is the uniqueness of the Love Principle (Prema tattwa). This message is all that the world needs. Krishna is the embodiment of Love. This love can be understood only through love. This love is strong, brilliant and unbreakable like diamond. It is extremely precious. If you want to secure such divine love, your love (for God) must be equally strong. You can cut diamond only with diamond. If there is any defect in your love, it should be removed only through love. Love begets love. Hatred can only beget hatred, not love.

get rid of hatred, jealousy and anger.

To attain Krishna, the very embodiment of love, love is the only way.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajans, "*Prema muditha manase kaho; Rama! Rama! Ram!*" and "*Govinda Krishna Jai! Gopala Krishna Jai!*" in which the vast gathering in the Auditorium joined with full-throated gusto. It was a moving finale to a soul-stirring discourse. The function concluded with Arati to Bhagavan).

VICTORY IS SURE

The last sloka of the Gita says: "Yathra Yogeswarah Krishno Yathra Partho Dhanurdharah, Thathra Sreer Vijayo Bhuthir Dhruva Neethir Mathir Mama" "where there is Krishna the supreme Yogi and where also there is Arjuna bearing his bow, there victory for truth and justice is assured." This verse assures victory not only when the Mahabharata Arjuna wields the bow in the presence of Krishna. Every one of you can be Arjuna and wield the bow and achieve victory. For the bow is but the symbol of courage and faith, of high resolve and undaunted action. And how can you become Arjunas? Arjuna means white, pure, unsullied, without blemish. As soon as you become that and hold the bow (the Upanishads declare that the Pranava or Om is the arrow and God is the target), Krishna is ready with His presence, for He is everywhere at every moment. There is no need to invite Him or install Him. He will answer from your very heart.

—BABA ("*Chinna Katha*")

Power of the Spirit

On the vast ocean, countless waves are continually forming and disappearing. Each wave has its own form and shines in many colours. But none of them is separate from the ocean. Likewise, all the myriad beings in the world have their different names and forms but are all tiny droplets from the infinite ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda (The Cosmic Being-Awareness-Bliss). All beings are manifestations of the Divine. "*Atmavath Sarva Bhoothaanaam*" (All beings are akin to the Atma) declare the Bharatiya scriptures. They have affirmed that the Atma principle is immanent in all beings as sparks of the Divine. They have shown that the Spirit is One in all beings.

Our sense organs are not the Atma (Spirit). Through the senses, things can be seen or touched. But the Atma is separate from the senses. The eyes can only see. The ear has only the power of hearing. The tongue has only the power of taste. Each sense has a distinctive power of its own. It cannot discharge any other function. The eyes cannot hear. nor the ears see. Only the Divine Spirit possesses all the potencies of the senses.

The Atma is infinite. It has been described as "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram"—Truth, Goodness and Beauty. From a worldly point of view, these three qualities appear to be different from each other. But there can be no Goodness (Sivam) without Truth (Sathyam). Without Truth, there is no Beauty (Sundaram). Beauty imparts effulgence to an object. Truth reveals its real nature. Thereby its Goodness (Sivam) or usefulness is brought out. The unity of these three aspects reveals the Divinity of the Atma. Like cloth and thread, which have their basis in cotton, the Atma is the basis for all three. Truth dons the mantle of Goodness (Sivam) and appears as Beauty. The three terms are descriptive but refer to the same object.

There are four words: Love (Prema), Beauty (Soundarya), Sweetness (Madhurya) and Brilliance (Sobha). They are descriptive terms. When the heart melts, love flows from it. When love matures, it turns into Beauty. When the taste of Beauty ripens, it is sweetness. In that experience of sweetness everything appears brilliant and shining. The whole process maybe likened to what happens when a flower ultimately becomes a ripe, sweet fruit. Ripeness is all. The Spirit is all sweetness. Hence, the devotee sang:

Your eyes are sweet
Your words are sweet
All is sweet, Oh Lord of Mathura
Sweetness, Sweetness everywhere.

It is this Divine sweetness that illumines the world. This Beauty, Sweetness and Bliss are all within you. When you turn your mind to God, the whole universe will wear a new aspect. Without this internal change, all changes in the external physical world are of no avail. Only when the individual changes, the world will change.

Wise sages: righteous kings

It is because of the spiritual life led by sages in the past that in olden times the country was blessed with timely rains and all people enjoyed peace and prosperity. The people led righteous lives and were happy and contented. It is because people have strayed from the path of righteousness that today they are beset with discontent, disorder and misery. The kings in ancient times had for their counsellors great sages, men of virtue and wisdom, who gave the right advice to the rulers. These sages were totally selfless and had only the public well-being in view.

The sages were adepts in the practice of Mantras and Yantras. Pursuing Brahma Vidya (the knowledge of the Spirit), they acquired great powers through mantras. They were endowed with these powers because they knew how to use them for righteous purposes. The weapons (Yantras) which they wielded were surcharged with the potency of mantras and hence had tremendous power. These weapons were used only for the good of the world and not for selfish purposes.

There were two kinds of education in those days. (1) Education for promoting the well-being of all people in the world. (2) Education for causing harm to others. The first type of knowledge

knowledge).

In today's education, as long as selfishness and self-interest are dominant, education will be of no good to the people. Along with academic education, there should be spiritual discipline (Tapas). The ancient sages held that knowledge and penance should go together. All actions done as dedication to the Divine become Tapas (spiritual austerity). All selfish actions are Tamasic (evil-minded).

A student had stated that there were three kinds of love: physical, mental and spiritual. In fact, there are no three types. Love is only one. But according to the object of one's love, it appears to be different. When this love is directed towards God bliss is experienced, it achieves fulfillment. When love is prompted by selfish feelings, joy and sorrow inevitably follow. Hence all actions should be done as an offering to God.

Action and reaction

Scholars have expressed different views regarding the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies (sthoola, sookshma and karana sarira). In my view the gross and subtle bodies are like twins, resembling sound and its echo, an object and its image. In certain places, when you raise a cry you hear the echo. In other places it is present but not audible. The whole universe is an echo of God. It is like a mirror which reflects the image of God.

Just as your own voice is reflected back by the echo, your actions return to you as reactions. Hence, you should learn not to abuse anyone or harm anyone. Good and bad are nothing but reflections of your own inner being. It is on the basis of this truth that I advise people to be good, see good and do good as the way to God.

Right use of knowledge

Today great advances have been made in science and technology. But human character and morality have not made corresponding progress. Knowledge without discrimination is dangerous. Atomic power is being harnessed for destructive purposes. How much could be done for improving production and raising the condition of the people if all this energy could be used for peaceful and productive purposes. Knowledge should promote people's well-being and not cause harm to them.

Students should realise the differences between one nation and another. Each country has its own special features and its own problems. The same system or remedy will not suit all countries. Four persons may go to a doctor complaining of trouble in the stomach. Each case has to be diagnosed individually and the treatment should vary according to the needs of each person. It may be a pill for one person, an injection for another and an operation for a third. Likewise, each country's problems should be solved with reference to its conditions and needs. The same prescription should not be applied to all.

anyway. To day there are many people all over the world steeped in poverty and squalor. You should not be content with satisfying your own wants. You must strive to relieve the poverty and misery of your fellowmen.

Through knowledge, you acquire humility. Through humility you become worthy of responsibility. Through responsible positions you get wealth. Through wealth you must practise righteousness. Righteousness ensures your well-being in this world and the one beyond it.

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir on 2-7-1989*

Man and the Cosmos

Bhartrhari was a great devotee, a very wise person, a poet and an ideal example to all spiritual aspirants. Once he embarked on an enquiry into his failings. He observed: "When I was a man of little wisdom, I behaved like one who felt there was no one equal to him and acted recklessly. But thanks to association with sages and listening to their wise teachings, I was able to realise the truth about myself." Just as a specific medicine serves to cure a particular malady, the teachings of wise sages enable one to bring under control the vagaries of the mind.

Why should anyone feel conceited? 'What are you in this vast universe? In the boundless firmament, the sun is a small star. The earth is a small planet, of which Asia is a small part. In it, Bharat is a small country and Anantapur is a district in it. You are in a small room in Prasanthi Nilayam. In relation to the cosmos, is there any reason for anyone to feel proud about himself? Such pride can only be the result of delusion born of ignorance.

If you explore in depth the true nature of the human condition, you will recognise the various aspects of its impermanence and mutability. In the vast universe with its millions of stars, what is the reason for divinity manifesting itself in the human form? Very few care to recognise the truth behind this. The highest wisdom is required for securing this understanding.

Three kinds of knowledge

In the world today, knowledge about the universe falls into three categories. (1) In terms of daily life, there is factual knowledge based on perception. To treat facts as truth and fiction as untruth is practical knowledge. (2) In the second category are those who regard the phenomenal world as real and treat all that cannot be seen or heard as unreal or nonexistent. They regard nature as real and God as non-existent. (3) The third category consists of those who make no distinction between one thing and another and hold the view that the whole universe is a projection of the Divine and is permeated by the Divine. This is spiritual knowledge.

Doubtless, knowledge of the phenomenal world is necessary. But one should go beyond it to know the Eternal and Unchanging Reality. Once Nehru asked Gandhiji why he was looking so worried and depressed. Gandhiji answered that he was finding that the education the young people were receiving was making them hard-hearted. "What good can such hard-hearted persons do to the world? This is what worries me," said Gandhiji.

Modern education makes a man pursue what appeals to his mind and not what is good for his mind and soul. Even the heart which is soft and sweet by nature is turned into a hard and unfeeling organ. The sharpest intellect gets blunted.

Parents of children are anxious to see their children become scholars rather than men of character. Only those parents are worthy of esteem who desire that their children should develop good qualities even more than academic distinctions. Education is not the be-all and end-all of life. It is only a part of life. Virtues are the backbone of life. The spiritual path is the only means of cultivating virtues.

"Svechha"

In pursuing the spiritual path, one should not get disinterested or indifferent at any stage. Devotion does not admit of rest or revulsion. Steadfastness is the sign of true devotion. Students should cultivate such devotion because they do not have sufficient control over their senses,

Students are inclined to regard freedom to act as they like as their primary goal. But this is not real freedom. Unrestrained freedom is enjoyed by the animals. But how should a man, an educated being, conduct himself? "Svechha" (freedom of will) consists of the two words "Swa" and "Ichha". "Swa" refers to the Atma and "Svechha" means acting according to the dictates of the Spirit and not of the body. One must use one's discriminating power to decide whether a thing is right or wrong and act according to the dictates of one's conscience. That is true freedom of will. Only then can one have self-confidence.

Faith and purity

Students must strive to acquire good qualities even more than academic knowledge. To understand the nature of divinity, devotion is essential. Once there is firm faith in God one can face with ease all the vicissitudes of life. Every devotee has to have as his aid firm faith in God on one side and purity of character on the other.

Students! Gratitude is a cardinal virtue. You must be grateful to all those who have helped you in your lives. You may earn money by your efforts. There is nothing wrong. But it must be spent in righteous ways. Today one sees everywhere the worshippers of "Siri" (wealth) but few worshippers of Hari. This is the irony of devotion today. Spiritual wealth alone is true wealth. It is not dependent on anyone's favour. Fire cannot burn it. Thieves cannot steal it. It will protect you like your life-breath. It leads you on the right path. Strive to acquire this spiritual wealth. Then Bharat will become the moral leader of the world.

A Rare Opportunity

Man's life is like a garland, with birth at one end and death at the other. Between the two ends are strung together flowers of all kinds, troubles, worries, joys, sorrows and dreams. Few men are aware of the string that runs through all the flowers. Without the string there can be no garland. Only the person who recognises the string can become a real man. This string is called "Sutra" or "Brahma-Sutra" (The Divine String). The Divine Atma Principle is the string which is found in all human beings and which is the source of all the potencies in them.

Bharat, which was the home of spirituality and a treasure-house of supreme wisdom, is today in the grip of demonic forces revelling in falsehood, chicanery, violence and wickedness. Out of the conviction that, in this crisis, only students can help to bring about peace, integrity and goodwill, we established educational institutions.

Students! You must realise that those whom you regard as elders, leaders, persons holding positions and people worthy of respect, were once students like yourselves. Today's students will be tomorrow's citizens, administrators and respected leaders. Having regard to your future role, you must use the present opportunity after assessing the merits and defects of the older generation.

Spirituality and morality

You make intense efforts to acquire your degrees. You should make much greater efforts to develop your character and integrity. Human life will be meaningless without morality and goodness. You students should remember that "Sai Mata" (Bhagavan) feels a thousand times more distressed when you fall back in spirituality and morality than what your parents feel when you do not fare well in your academic and scientific studies. Look upon spirituality and morality as the two eyes of human existence.

Despite the striking progress in the fields of science and technology, there has been deterioration in moral, and social behaviour because of the growth of selfishness. Self-interest is predominant in every action. If one's entire life is governed by selfishness, what happens to society? Every individual has a responsibility to society, from which he derives so many benefits. Society is based on the principle of mutual give and take. Your primary duty is to show your gratitude to your parents, your kith and kin, your friends, teachers and others who have helped you in various ways to make you what you are.

Source of true joy

You must also realise that the source of true joy is within yourself and not in the objects of the external world. When Sita was a prisoner in Ravana's Ashoka Vana, none of the beautiful

Lord Rama, gave her great joy because all her thoughts were centred on Rama and Hanuman sang the glories of Rama and described how he came to adore Rama.

This shows that man cannot derive joy merely from things that are beautiful or from individuals who are beautiful. Man derives joy from the objects he loves and not from other things. It is the love that lends beauty to the object. Hence joy is equated with beauty and the sweetness of honey. Anyone who seeks joy should not go after things of beauty. The fountain-source of joy is within himself. To bring forth that joy man should cultivate the inward vision.

The divine within

Students! There is a divine power that is inherent in every human being. You must strive to manifest it. Recognise that all the knowledge you have been able to acquire is because of this divine power within you. You must cherish and foster that power. Most people make use of this power for selfish purposes to promote the well-being of themselves and their families. It should really be utilised for the good of the whole world. You should live up to the Gita ideal: "Sarva loka hithe ratah" ("Rejoicing in the well being of all"). Recognise the divinity in you and share that experience with all. Use the divine power in you to cultivate virtues, which constitute the essence of education. Lead a life which will earn for you the love of the people more than their respect.

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir on 24-6-1989*

Misconceived

You may be compassionate, but, that emotion must be regulated and wise. A compassionate man once brought home a fish he found struggling on the bank of a river in full flood, he placed it between the folds of the warm blanket and poured hot coffee down its throat. He thought it was suffering from a fit of cold. The hot coffee killed the poor thing. He could have saved it by throwing it back into the floods. He lacked the intelligence which would tell him what to do to express his compassion.

—**Baba ("Chinnakatha")**

Inherit the Eternal

*Through myriad lives and countless journeys,
Through the aeons of relentless time
Must I have travelled and Oftentimes*

*But a stranger to the sublime TRUTH
 In frivolous pursuits and wasted endeavours
 HOW OFTEN, O SAI, have I stumbled
 Into the erroneous meanders of flooded rivers
 Rivers that break their banks.
 In the pellucid waters of thy compassion,
 YOU have brought myself to myself,
 YOU whom I have been searching for
 Was none other than Me.
 Masquerading in the guise of the deluded.
 A barren oasis is this materialistic world,
 Hiding a lion in a glass cage.
 Its roar is shattering,
 But it awakens the sleeping giant,
 The giant of IMMORTALITY.
 Says Sai;
 "My child! re-inherit your eternal realms."*

—**Kamesh Durvasula, New South Wales.**

The Appointment

*You have left me waiting here
 Till You reappear across the Threshold
 With the same I-know-You-well smile
 And have-faith-in-me assurance.*

*I tilt over someone's shoulder
 To look into Your wandering eyes,
 Cock my ears to catch a word or two
 That fall from those shapely lips
 For a distant receiver, and realise
 Meanings are poor substitutes for the word.*

*Your eyes may touch me
 The passing brush of a moody painter,
 Your words may reach me
 The whisper of unseen wind;
 But a ripple that ruffles the landscape within*

Would threaten the cobwebs of the mind.

*Even this, Your unnoticed generosity,
 A rare crumb from your table,
 Even this, a most necessary ingredient
 Of my poor feast, is precious morsel
 When I think of Your promises.
 Though You are in great hurry
 To retrace Your steps across
 And turn away from me.*

*I sit here waiting all the time
 When You would step across
 Another Threshold,
 And keep Your Appointment with me.*

—**B. K. Misra, Prasanthi Nilayam**

TWO SONGS FOR SAI:

A Stranger at the Door

A Stranger, knocking at our door
Has often come and called before,
Has waited long, is waiting still
For us to answer when we will.

And if we open, there He stands,
With loving eyes and laden bands
That work for us, and never rest.
Who can resist so great a Guest?

When we "admit" Him to our heart
We find He always was a part
Of all we love and all we are,
From smiling flower-to shining star.

He gently calls each human name,
Then lights in every heart His flame;
His reign will surely so increase
That all will know the Lord of Peace

Where Wonders Never Cease

The moon shines bright; the stars give a light
A little before the day. Our Lord, Our God,
He calls to us to wake, to work, to pray.

Awake, awake, you milkmaids all, out of your drowsy dream
The Lord has come to His Dairy below to steal your butter and cream.

He came as Krishna long ago to soften hearts of stone.
He returns whenever we are lost and wandering all alone.

The fields are green as green can be around His holy Feet.
Our Lord, our God, he waters us with His heavenly dew so sweet.

O fair Prasanthi Nilayam! O holy place of peace,
Where our cares like butter melt away, and wonders never cease!

—(Adapted from an old English Carol) - H.H.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

"Good and bad are the obverse and reverse of the same coin," says Baba. A coin cannot have only one face; two are inevitable. The coin acquires value as medium for monetary exchange; both sides are essential, not merely the side on which its value is indicated. Heads are as important as tails! The imagery of the coin is used by Baba to make us understand that the value of an experience depends on its good and bad reactions. There are always two sides to any story. No experience can be completely good or entirely bad. Shakespeare has said, "There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so!"

Without experiencing life, we cannot gain any insight into the good and bad for, the value of all experience depends on the impressions it leaves behind on our own minds, the tendencies they strengthen. How do we evaluate an experience? That is the crux of the matter! Do we judge something as good because it has been very pleasant and profitable to us? Then the experience is selfish and exclusive. It reinforces self-centredness. Such a limited experience cannot help us in our spiritual unfolding; it can only hinder.

Raynor C. Johnson writes in his book, 'Imprisoned Splendour', "The value of an Experience is clearly, not primarily—and may not even be at all—in what is achieved on the physical level. Its value is primarily on the personality of the doer; and perhaps on other personalities. "He emphasises that the" effort of will, the courage and fortitude which went into the doing of the act are imperishable things, for they have been built into the character of the doer." Johnson clarifies what exactly constitutes good and bad. Both aspects of any experience must be recognised so that it can leave lasting imprint on the doer. The quality of this experience will depend on "motivation". If we use any experience for the benefit of a number of people then the quality of our experience automatically undergoes, a remarkable change, and benefits indirectly by what the experience has done to our character.

Our reaction to any event is determined by our motives. When something goes wrong in our estimation or calculation, and in our plans, we feel sad; we name ourselves as losers! If the same happens when we are doing it for the sake of not merely ourselves but for others too, then the feeling changes. We find that the very good-will generated by the expansive act brings great contentment and joy. Then opposition will only strengthen our will and bring to light latent skills, and gather greater good-will to our enterprise. All this can unfold our personality.

Baba says, "Good and bad are of the nature of the world." They are as natural as light and shade! They form the very texture of the world; there can be no cloth without warp and woof! The trouble arises when we yearn to choose one without the other. We cannot, because as Baba says, "good is the head and bad is the feet! When a person enters our room he must bring in both the head and the feet!" In truth things by themselves are neither good nor bad. We label them as either good or bad.

The laws of nature operate without consideration for our judgement of things or events. Lack of oxygen may be bad for animals, but some of them do thrive on carbon dioxide. The human body may succumb to bacterial attack. But the bacteria are following their dharma all the while, their Swadharma while the white corpuscles in the blood, phagocytes, and fight with them according to their *dharma*. Baba has declared, "He (God) does not even will that creation, protection and destruction shall take place. They follow the innate law of the *Maya*-ridden universe." Good and bad refer to a value system which is beyond the natural system.

Too much of even good things may often prove bad; money may be useful and good when it meets specific and spiritually satisfying needs. "*Blooddu* and *dabbu* (blood and money) must be kept circulating" says Swami. If blood does not circulate we get boils. Baba has given another meaningful simile regarding *dabbu* or money. If dung of cattle is dumped and allowed to accumulate in one spot, the entire neighbourhood stinks. But if it is scattered in the fields, it not only does not stink but acts as good manure, increasing the yield of crops. Good or bad cannot be isolated from 'ends' nor from considerations of time, place and circumstance.

After the statement, "good and bad are of the nature of the world," Baba says, "If all are engaged in selling who will be the buyers?" The question of sale comes in when we have excess of something and the lack of something which we need. If everybody has everything then there need be neither selling nor buying. Selling and buying are complementary relationships. It also depends on points of view. The one who gets what he wants by paying for it is a buyer; the person who parts with it for money is the seller. The goods exchange hands. Depending on your role at the time, you may call the transaction buying or selling. Good and bad are similar; what is good to one may be bad to another. What is good now may be bad at another time. What is good under one set of circumstances may be bad at another.

The only way to avoid the snare of dualism inherent in the illusion of 'good' and 'bad' is to recognise the role of the mind and reject the idea that the object itself is either one or the other. When one has recognised this Truth one can deal with world 'currency' wisely and safely!

—**Dr. M. V. N. Murthy** (*From The Greatest Adventure*)

Truth has set us Free

*Sisters and brothers, Love unites us all;
Here we are together, gathered in one fold;
All faiths are one as former barriers fall;
We meet in the centre, like the wise of old.*

Once we thought one banner led the way to heaven,

*Following one colour as our faith's true light;
Now in the fullness of the rainbow's seven,
Dearer is our birthright, wider is our sight.*

*Once we were divided. Truth has set us free.
Many names we worship, working hand in hand;
Under many flags we sail a common sea,
Seeking Peace, our harbour, in one Spirit land.*

—A Devotee

A Pledge to Baba

*Baba, your picture hangs on my bedroom wall,
And I wonder if you are tall.
I look at you in your robe so red
And all that hair on top of your head.*

*I wish I could sit upon your lap
And talk with you about my cat.*

*But you are busy so far away
Helping people every day
May be someday I can visit too
So I could have this talk with you.*

*Until then I will pray every night
And try not to get into any fights.
I will sing my bhajans out loud
For my gurus to feel very proud.*

*I'll remember the stories my guru told
About Rama, Sita and the deer of gold.
I'll watch no TV on Saturday morning
So I could help the handicapped with their bowling.*

*I'll always honor my mother and father
And be good for my older sister.
I'll learn my lessons well at school
So I will not be a fool.*

—By Joshua Bennett, Edmonton, Canada

VIDYARTHI VANI:

"Transformation from Within"

Parthish Dubey, XII standard student, speaking on June 23rd in Prasanthi Mandir, said:

In today's world of competition and corruption, jealousy and hatred, transformation is what man needs most. How are we to achieve it? This transformation should come from within and that too on a mass scale. Just as one tree does not make a forest or one house a village, so also one man's transformation does not serve the purpose of society. According to Swami, for the transformation of humanity, first each individual has to transform himself, next there should be transformation in the family, then transformation in the community, thereafter transformation in the nation which finally leads to transformation in the world.

This transformation is of two types—mental and spiritual, (Swami corrects me saying that it is for good transformation, as transformation can be good or bad). We can take the example of Gautama Buddha who even after attaining 'Nirvana' was not satisfied. He moved from place to place preaching to the people the joy of spiritual life and trying to transform them. He preached only what he had practised and realized.

Swami Himself is the greatest example in this, as He works day and night for only one cause and that is to transform humanity into Divinity. It is for this reason alone that He has opened these educational institutions so that we may make the best use of our stay here. We are all aware that Swami's message is spreading to every nook and corner of the world. I will just narrate two incidents relating to people staying near the Pakistan border.

Two examples

The first person is a farmer. He was at loggerheads with his neighbour over some land problem. Even after becoming Swami's devotee, he could not be on good terms with his neighbour. One day as he was working in his field his enemy came from behind and gave him a hard blow. Next minute, with the spade in his hands he decided to pay him back in the same coin. But then a sudden thought stopped him. He thought, as a Sai devotee, would such retaliation be proper on his part? This thought made him let that man (neighbour) go. The next morning when he got up from his bed he was all in smiles and full of peace. Do you know why? Swami had given him 'darshan' in his dream, as though to commend his tolerance.

The second person is a carpenter. He had the good fortune of coming to this place (Prasanthi Nilayam) and seeing the activities going on here. After returning home the first thing he did was to end a twenty-year old enmity with his neighbour. The entire village was stunned at this change. Such is the transformation going on outside.

We are all aware that Swami's method of transforming us is through His infinite Love. Love goes straight to the heart and can melt the hardest of hearts.

There is a wonderful incident in the life of Basaveshwara; a well known social reformer of Karnataka, which proves the power of love. One night some thieves entered his house. Hearing some noise his wife got up shouting, "Thieves, thieves." Hearing her, Basaveshwara got up. Now fully aware that the owner of the house was awake and that there was no chance for them to escape the thieves started shivering. Basaveshwara went upto them, and what did he do? He added a few more valuables to their collection. When his wife objected, his answer was, "Their need is greater than ours, so let them have it." The thieves were surprised. They fell at his feet begging for pardon, took a vow never to steal again. It was the love of Basaveshwara which went straight into the hearts of these thieves and transformed them into better men.

Sai Literature for the Blind

All the works of Bhagavan Baba, including ten volumes in the Vahini series and 11 volumes of "Sathya Sai Speaks", have been produced in Braille for the benefit of the blind by the Sathya Sai Society, Sathya Sai Baba Braille Project, 305 W, First Street, California, U.S.A.

In addition to these books, the four volumes of "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram" (on the life of Bhagavan Baba), "Easwaramma", "Loving God" and "Prasanthi", by Prof. N. Kasturi have also been produced in English Braille.

Altogether 196 volumes in English Braille have been brought out so far. Other books in the list are: six volumes of "Summer Showers" (Bhagavan's discourses), the books on Baba by Howard Murphet, Dr. Hislop, Dr. Sandweiss, Prof. Gokak, Peggy Mason and Ron Laing, Dr. M.V.N. Murthy, Dr. Fanibunda, Dr. H. K. Takyi, and Dr. M.N. Rao.

These books can be purchased at the cost of reproducing them or borrowed from the free lending library which has been established at the Sathya Sai Book Center of America, Box 278, Tustin, California, 92681, U.S.A.

Sets of these books have been made available to Sai Centres in Australia, England, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, and Kuala Lumpur.

GURUDEVA VANI:

The Ganesha Principle

The world has many exemplary leaders, but none like Vinayaka. He is also called Vighneshwara, because he is regarded as the presiding deity for obstacles. Even as Yama is the presiding deity for births and deaths, the grace of Ganapati removes all obstacles. Ganapati means the Lord of Ganas. He is the Lord of Sound and has the form of Pranava (Om).

What is the esoteric meaning of Ganesha's elephant head? The elephant is noted for its acute intelligence. Ganesha's elephant head symbolises sharpness of intellect and the highest power of discrimination. Because of the purity of his intellect, Vinayaka is also called the giver of Buddhi (intellect). He responds to the prayers of devotees and hence he is known as Siddhi Vinayaka (the Vinayaka who grants what is sought).

Once Vyasa embarked upon writing the Mahabharata. Because of the immensity of the task of writing down millions of verses, Vyasa sought the help of Brihaspati, the preceptor of the Devas, for a suitable scribe. Brihaspati told Vyasa that none but Vinayaka could carry out the work. Vyasa appealed to Vinayaka for aid. Vyasa stipulated that everything that was written should be understood by the scribe. Ganesha, in his turn, laid down a condition that Vyasa should not pause in dictating the verses so that the stylus with which he would be inscribing the verses on the palm leaves should have no rest. Vinayaka could write down the entire Mahabharata because he was the very embodiment of all knowledge. Vyasa could accomplish his prodigious task with Ganesha's aid.

The mouse is Ganesha's vehicle. The mouse is a clever and lively creature. As a symbol it means that we should be clever and diligent in our actions.

There is special significance in placing Vighneshwara in the forefront before embarking on any undertaking. In a forest, when an elephant moves through the jungle, it clears the way for others to follow. Likewise, by invoking Ganesha, the path is cleared for our undertakings. The elephant's foot is so large that when it moves it can stamp out the footprints of any other animal. Here, again, the symbolic meaning is that all obstacles in the way will be removed when Ganesha is accorded the place of honour. The journey of life is made smoother and happier by the grace of Ganesha.

On Vinayaka Chaturthi day, students place books in front of the Ganesha idol and offer worship. They pray to the deity to illumine their minds. Hence Ganesha is known as "Buddhi Pradayaka ", one who grants intelligence. No one should regard Ganesha as uncouth because of his elephant head and his immense belly. Vinayaka is a deity who encompasses the universe within himself. He is a deity of infinite potency.

Vighneshwara is described as one wearing a white cloth. His body is ash-grey. He is depicted as having four arms and a cheerful countenance. The white cloth signifies purity of mind and heart. By worshipping him, you must endeavour to achieve similar purity. Vinayaka always appears serene and calm. By his grace, the devotee must seek to achieve similar equanimity, whatever may be the ups and downs in life.

—*From Bhagavan's address to the Sathya Sai Institute Hostel, on September 4, 1989*

Two sides of the same Coin

"Good and bad are the obverse and reverse of the same coin," says Baba. A coin cannot have only one face; two are inevitable. The coin acquires value as medium for monetary exchange; both sides are essential, not merely the side on which its value is indicated. Heads are as important as tails! The imagery of the coin is used by Baba to make us understand that the value of an experience depends on its good and bad reactions. There are always two sides to any story. No experience can be completely good or entirely bad. Shakespeare has said, "There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so!"

Without experiencing life, we cannot gain any insight into the good and bad for, the value of all experience depends on the impressions it leaves behind on our own minds, the tendencies they strengthen. How do we evaluate an experience? That is the crux of the matter! Do we judge something as good because it has been very pleasant and profitable to us? Then the experience is selfish and exclusive. It reinforces self-centredness. Such a limited experience cannot help us in our spiritual unfolding; it can only hinder.

Raynor C. Johnson writes in his book, 'Imprisoned Splendour', "The value of an Experience is clearly, not primarily—and may not even be at all—in what is achieved on the physical level. Its value is primarily on the personality of the doer; and perhaps on other personalities. "He emphasises that the" effort of will, the courage and fortitude which went into the doing of the act are imperishable things, for they have been built into the character of the doer." Johnson clarifies what exactly constitutes good and bad. Both aspects of any experience must be recognised so that it can leave lasting imprint on the doer. The quality of this experience will depend on "motivation". If we use any experience for the benefit of a number of people then the quality of our experience automatically undergoes, a remarkable change, and benefits indirectly by what the experience has done to our character.

Our reaction to any event is determined by our motives. When something goes wrong in our estimation or calculation, and in our plans, we feel sad; we name ourselves as losers! If the same happens when we are doing it for the sake of not merely ourselves but for others too, then the feeling changes. We find that the very good-will generated by the expansive act brings great contentment and joy. Then opposition will only strengthen our will and bring to light latent skills, and gather greater good-will to our enterprise. All this can unfold our personality.

Baba says, "Good and bad are of the nature of the world." They are as natural as light and shade! They form the very texture of the world; there can be no cloth without warp and woof! The trouble arises when we yearn to choose one without the other. We cannot, because as Baba says, "good is the head and bad is the feet! When a person enters our room he must bring in both the head and the feet!" In truth things by themselves are neither good nor bad. We label them as either good or bad.

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dioxide. The human body may succumb to bacterial attack. But the bacteria are following their dharma all the while, their Swadharma while the white corpuscles in the blood, phagocytes, and fight with them according to their *dharma*. Baba has declared, "He (God) does not even will that creation, protection and destruction shall take place. They follow the innate law of the *Maya*-ridden universe." Good and bad refer to a value system which is beyond the natural system.

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—*Dr. M. V. N. Murthy (From the Greatest Adventure)*

Sai Geeta and Swami

Almost each day of my stay at Prasanthi Nilayam, I walked through the village, past the schools, past the new planetarium, to the large plot of tropical land that is Sai Geeta's home. Often I would stop at one of the many small fruit and vegetable stands along the roadside and pick out five or six ripe bananas to take for the elephant. Usually, the gentleman who took care of Geeta allowed me to feed her and stroke her trunk.

Some days, if Swami was going to the Gokulam, He would drive by Geeta's lush area and wave. Geeta would run to the gate and bow, holding her trunk out in a salute to her

adored Swami. I witnessed this many times during the two months I had been at the ashram. Sometimes Geeta would trumpet her love to Swami, sending elephant sounds deep into the sultry jungle that surrounds her.

There were other days when Swami would drive by and not glance Geeta's way. Unhampered by this, the faithful elephant could still be seen at the roadside, knees bent, trunk outstretched, in praise to the Divine, as His car slowly passed.

Geeta's keeper was ever ready with assistance. Each day she was bathed, Indian designs were painted on her large forehead, usually in white, and a brass bell hung lazily from her neck. Purple bougainvilleas adorned the fence around Geeta's yard as well.

One morning, as was my practice, I waved at the keeper and held up my gift of bananas. Holding up his hand in returned recognition, he walked toward the entrance. Speaking to me, he said, "I will not have you feed these to Geeta today," taking the fruits from my hand.

I responded quickly, "Is she sick?"

"No, no," came his reply. "Swami may stop and feed her these bananas today."

I thought to myself, 'I have been here almost every day, and Swami has never stopped to feed her. Why, sometimes He hasn't even looked her way. This man must be dreaming.' I finally decided the keeper was going to consume the bananas himself.

No sooner had this thought gone through my mind than a student, neatly dressed in fresh, white trousers with matching shirt, galloped up to the gateway and shouted to the elephant keeper that Swami was indeed on His way.

Wiping Geeta's trunk and straightening her bell, the keeper walked with Sai Geeta to the entrance. He opened the gate and she stepped out on the sand to wait in anticipation of Swami.

She bowed low and trumpeted loudly, as the red car came to a stop in front of her. The door opened and Swami stepped out. Walking several steps toward Geeta, He reached out and put His arms around her trunk and gave a hug. Geeta closed her eyes in ecstasy. Swami then took the bananas and fed them one by one to Geeta, stroking her trunk as she ate.

I was breathless. How had the keeper known Swami would stop there that day?

Nudging me gently, the elephant mahout pointed to the camera that hung forgotten around my neck, then to Swami, reminding me of the opportunity to take pictures.

What went on between God and beast that day was inexpressible. But the love that passed between them was glorious.

As Swami's car vanished down the narrow road, I turned to the keeper in near hysteria. "How did you know Swami would stop and feed Geeta today?" I asked in an almost scream.

Softly, the man replied, "I didn't know. What I did know was that Geeta needed to be close to Swami. It had been waiting for a long time. God gives each of us what we need; not just to humans alone, but to each species of creation. Every being is in His ever knowing hands."

We should all be like the elephant. Ever ready, ever watchful; taking each opportunity to praise the Divine, not only in Swami, but in each person or thing that our life touches. We should run to the gate, and wait faithfully for the moment of answered prayer. Bowing low, let us each in our own way trumpet our devotion to Swami through sadhana. When He comes, we shall be ready. And He will come with the need. Ask Sai Geeta—she'll tell you!

—Joy Ziegler, U.S.A.

Memorable “Onam” at Prasanthi Nilayam

If the 1988 Onam festival at Prasanthi Nilayam was historic for the circumstances in which Bhagavan delivered His memorable message, this year's celebrations will be remembered for the excellence of the cultural programme presented on two evenings and Bhagavan's inspiring discourse on the many facets of devotion as the path to God realisation. Bhagavan gave new insights into the advent of the three avatars—Varaha, Narasimha and Vamana—for the redemption and protection of four persons in the same lineage—Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakasipu, Prahlada and Bali.

Bhagavan explained the greatness of Bali as a devotee and as a ruler who was intensely loved by his subjects. (Details of Bhagavan's discourse appear elsewhere).

Keralites from all parts of their home State as well as from other parts of India started pouring into Prasanthi Nilayam well before the Onam celebrations were to start on September 11th. The Prasanthi Mandir and its environs were elegantly decorated for the occasion with flags and festoons. A Kerala touch was given to the decorations by the liberal use of coconut palm leaves and the display of bunches of coconuts.

On the 11th evening an interesting and varied cultural programme was presented by Bal Vikas children in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bhagavan watched the programme from His seat in the aisle of the Auditorium, which was filled with thousands of Keralites, men, women and children; besides the large number of devotees from all parts of the world.

The programme began with a presentation of Vallom Kali—the exciting boat race for which Kerala is famous. The movement of the boat to the rhythmic movement of the oars by the rowing boatmen was strikingly presented on the stage, to the accompaniment of appropriate music. The second item was 'a brief musical recital by Srimathi Laila. The next item was a dance drama depicting the story of the competition between Ganesha and Subrahmanya for the "Fruit of Wisdom" (Jnana Phalam) offered by Narada to be awarded to the one who came first in circumambulating the world. Ganesha wins the prize by going round Lord Siva and Parvati and claiming that the whole universe is within them. Subrahmanya leaves for Pazhani ostensibly in anger, but in reality to confer his benediction on devotees in the South. The presentation was well done, with appropriate settings, dances and music.

The last item was a "Kavadi dance", a form of dance dedicated to Sri Muruga.

The function concluded with Aarati to Bhagavan.

On the 12th, Onam day, the celebrations began in the morning with greetings to Bhagavan by children carrying lamps coming in a procession, with Poorna-Kumbham and performing the Kaikotti Kali and Nirapara, pandits reciting Vedic hymns, a troupe of musicians playing the pancha vadyams (five kinds of musical instruments), and a Nadaswaram troupe. The band team of the Sathya Sai Vidya Peeth, Srisailam, marched past Swami, and a variety of folk dances by children depicted the multireligious character of Kerala. The entire programme was thoroughly enjoyable. The morning function concluded with distribution of prasadam to all devotees and Aarati to Bhagavan.

In the evening, Bhagavan was received at the Poornachandra Auditorium with Vedic chants by pandits from Kerala. The hall was filled to capacity and large numbers of devotees watched the proceedings from outside.

The programme began with recitation of slokas on Gita Mahatmya by two young Bal Vikas children. There was a musical rendering of Jayadeva's Dasavatara song from the Gita Govinda. Mr. B. Wellington, former Health Minister of Kerala, spoke on how 'he was transformed by Swami when He visited Kerala in 1967. Prof. Vaidyalingam Sarma spoke on the significance of Bhagavan Baba's advent.

Bhagavan Baba then delivered His Onam Message.

After a brief interval, there was a cultural programme, which included a dance drama on "Sabari Moksha". The scenes and settings were well done and the acting was impressive. Bhagavan took a photograph with all the participants in the cultural programme.

Let my heart be a Mirror

The Sun with splendour divine

rises from yonder hill,
To fill the minds of all with happiness all Divine!
The mountain blue, meeting the blue skies echoes
Your name—which is uttered in the form of sweet,
 charming tunes, From Nature's beauty-birds.

At this hour of dawn, let me, Oh Lord!
Fill my mind with thoughts all Divine!
Let me utter Your name, to add
 Fragrance to the balmy air;
Let Your Name be embedded deep in my heart,
Spraying its rays of Divine bliss! Oh Lord Sai!

 The birds, animals, trees, all
Adore You-and in them is Your Glory seen;
Let my heart be a mirror
To Your teachings, so that in it,
I shall find You!

—*Ajitesh Kishore*
(From "*Smruti*").

Change your Course

When walking in rapid strides on earth,
 in joyous exhilaration,
In cheers of fame and fortune,
 proud of the works done,
A phantom from distance asked me, who am I?
I thundered back my answer, 'I am I'.

I am I, the centre of the earth
and of the universe,
Sunrises for my work, sets for my rest,
Stars smile from above, planets move, for me,
The world knows my name, my home, my deeds,
Men adore me, 'I am I'.

The phantom laughed and laughed, and asked

How far should I: go?
 To what destination?
In surprise, I stopped,
 found no answer to its question.

A precipice came to sight in front,
 a sea beyond, a gloomy horizon, next,
I began to ponder,
 after miles and miles of walk in
 bright sunshine,
Is that the destination ahead!
Mind reeled in pain, thinking ceased,
When the phantom laughed again to say,

You the I, you have walked astray
 Out of your reckoning running after a mirage,
Change your course, before it is late.

—*Dr. Manmath Nath Das, Orissa*

Human Unity and Holistic Understanding

All intelligent people today have some understanding of the need for the spirit of unity in human affairs. It alone enables us to meet the great challenges raised by the first global culture in

history, such as the exhaustion and pollution of the natural environment and the unjust inequalities between peoples of different races, creeds and countries.

To practise correctly in worldly matters, both 'theory' and knowing how to apply it are required. It is on questions of application that clashes arise between two fundamental approaches. The one starts from the worldly interests of the individual, be these economic, social or cultural interests. The other approach is supra-individual and regards all things in terms of the universal good: of what is true, necessary and best for mankind and the entire world. Putting unity into practice involves the meeting of these two approaches.

Self-interest v. universal good

Every question, every matter about which we wish to know the truth, can thus be regarded from *the individual viewpoint or the universal viewpoint*. These always mark respectively the base and the apex of a pyramid of intermediate viewpoints.

These days people are brought up and educated to regard most matters mainly from a relatively individual viewpoint.

Even when we are taught to identify with and protect the best interests of one party against another, be it our group, our society, our nation, our culture... the appeal often relies most heavily on the individual concerned perceiving this as in his 'own' partisan interest. The perceived self-interest, even of a very large grouping, is indeed not always compatible with the universal good. Such a clash of apparent interests—the individual against the common good—almost always lies somewhere at the root of human conflicts and also those between man and environment. All taken into account, however, the true, long-term interests of the individual cannot conflict with what is best for all.

Examples of policies said to be for the sake of 'unity' but conflicting with the overall interest of humanity still abound today. Trade protectionist policies as well as the levy of high interest rates cripple poor borrowing countries. Further, their natural resources are over-exploited, more or less for the sake of the enormously wasteful consumer industries of rich, hi-tech countries. Thus are the poor discriminated by the regional power blocs of rich countries with their market-place mentality. The unity called for by the big powers mostly stops short of those outside the 'club'. Yet nothing but full inclusiveness can be the guiding light of true unity.

Unity in diversity

Fortunately unification does not mean that everyone must believe the same or do the same or strive to look and be as like one another as possible, for Sai Baba calls for unity *in diversity*. The plurality of society and of nations is itself a value carefully to be preserved, just as the proliferation of species of flora and fauna has its great value. Variety is still 'the spice of life' and standardisation of everything is no worthwhile end in itself. Diversity is in outward things, unity is of the heart.

In helping us realise our interdependence as brothers and sisters of a common origin in the same one Spirit, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba teaches how to put that spirit of unity into practice in our daily lives and worldly engagements. Instead of trying to influence and change others through publicity or media at a mass level, Baba himself demonstrates what he insists on: that we instead always work first and foremost to develop the spirit of unity at the level of our own personal behaviour. Unity cannot be produced at national or international level unless the sum of individuals thinking and practising it provides a sufficient basis for it:

Freedom and licence

Looking at personal behaviour from the viewpoint of unity may seem to conflict with the much-honoured belief of modern democratic societies in the freedom of the individual and certain rights that supposedly follow from this. This freedom is often confused with sheer licence to say or do almost anything. The only sort of freedom that can reasonably be called 'democratic' must surely be that which allows for individuals to act righteously (in accordance with *dharma*), for the aim then accords with universal

The results of looking at things exclusively or even mainly from the individual end of the spectrum is eventually to invite disharmony and disunity. Most human problems remain insoluble until the various contrary views are brought together under the universal standpoint so as to hammer out an overall solution. 'Holistic' understanding arises when all partisan interests are viewed as parts of a whole.

Holistic understanding

Understanding is definitely not just a matter of mastering some theory, getting the right solution to some mental riddle, or of becoming an expert in whatever field of endeavour. It is a faculty we all already possess, whatever the present degree of articulation, and are all necessarily using in all we do!

In practically all our doings we relate one thing to another with an eye to some result: we understand the hammer and nail by their use in erecting a wall, the wall as part of the building and that again according to its intended use. If it is a school, we know that it signifies further ends like the education of children, the basis of a good society and so forth. This quite simple model requires essentially the same elements as all other forms of understanding. If a very abstruse theory cannot be related meaningfully to practice, it contains no worthwhile understanding whatever.

Even an advanced scientific theory is virtually no more than a mental construction kit with many intricate parts. In lifting the hammer we understand much more than that we are knocking in a nail, for we know what it is all for. When the school is built, we again see this as an integral part of a whole system of education. All understanding aims likewise at some such unity of purpose, which leads on toward attaining peace and unity of a more universal nature.

Truly holistic understanding (which aims at a unitary '*whole*') can be said to consist in an ongoing process of broadening the scope of comprehension of all aspects of life according to *the*

principle of unity. It is not some abstruse method merely for scholars but an inclusive widening of consciousness so as to open to all manner of connections to outer and inner reality and not least the heart-to-heart connection that goes with true understanding. Such a method is however also valid for unifying theories in philosophy, the sciences and the humanities, such as in the interpretation of theories and of written texts.

For understanding to be whole it must be self-consistent. All the various facts or values involved must be accounted for so that they fit together in the way the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle make up one whole picture. Where perceptions on some question are at variance with each other, for example when there are opposing views on some moral issue, one strives to harmonise them. This may mean applying to a wider frame of reference for the solution, or sometimes simply the rejection of definitely erroneous views. Only the universal, non-exclusive viewpoint enables us to find the mediating factors between a collision of views and interests. Any sort of conflict is soluble first 'in theory' when the common key is found the appropriate moderating principle to the case. This in turn lays the ground for practical constructivity.

Diversity in understanding

Due to the inexhaustible variety of life and the necessity of practising in our own ways in order to learn properly, many types of experience and insight lie behind each personal holistic vision if it is at all comprehensive and general. Each of us needs to strive towards the universal vision by ourselves from the rich perspectives of our own lives. It would therefore probably be impossible to state logically in step-by-step fashion any single master method of understanding for everyone to follow. Yet there must surely be crucial differences in the progress of one's understanding—whatever its particular subject—depending upon which guiding principles one tries to realise both in theory and practice. Those of Sathya Sai, being clearly of the most universal and holistically-embracing principles taught in history, must therefore give the greatest advancement.

The call to unity, explained in Swami's discourses and exemplified in his daily practice, is a principle of the very highest order of generality and thus surely cannot be understood fully or expounded at the highest level by any but He who is One. In the meantime, we can but try to develop the necessary inclusivity of understanding that is required to recognise and become aware of the Divine in everything and everyone.

—Robert Priddy, Oslo

ONAM SANDESH:

“Experience Oneness with the Divine”

"The Onam festival In Prasanthi Nilayam is unique. Only here you have a prodigious gathering of Keralites for the celebration as one family. This type of mass observance cannot be seen anywhere in Kerala. This is an occasion when the Divine Presence can

be experienced and the sense of oneness with the Divine can be promoted,” observed Bhagavan Baba, delivering His Onam Sandesh to a vast gathering in the Poornachandra Auditorium on September 12.

In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Devotion means seeking unity with the Divine through purity in thought, word and deed and concentrating on the oneness of the Godhead. Devotion aims at acquiring friendship with God through this triple purity.

Devotion is of three kinds: Ordinary devotion (Samanya Bhakti); Ekanta Bhakti (Devotion in Solitude) and Ananya Bhakti (Exclusive, one-pointed devotion).

Samanya Bhakti (Ordinary devotion) has nine, forms: Shravanam (listening to the glories of God); Kirtanam (Chanting the praise of God); Vishnu Smaranam, (ever remembering the name of the Lord); Padasevanam (Worshipping the Lord's feet); Vandanam (Prostration); Archanam (Worshipping the figure of the Lord); Dasyam (Service); Sneham (friendship) and Atmanivedanam (Self-surrender).

Of these nine forms of devotional worship Parikshit exemplifies the first one, Shravanam. Destined to live for only one week on account of a sage's curse; the emperor Parikshit attained salvation by listening to the glories of the Lord as related by Sage Suka.

The devotee should not be content with merely listening. He should reflect on what he has heard and put into practice the teachings. These are called Manana and Nidhidhyasana. The triple process of listening, reflection and practising leads to God realisation.

Narada is the supreme example to the world of one who realised the Divine by continuously singing the glories of God in all circumstances and at all times. Narada, who was born out of the mind of Brahma, demonstrated to the world the supreme spiritual efficacy of singing the Lord's glories.

Prahlada demonstrated the power of constant remembrance of the name of the Lord, whatever the ordeals one had to face. He chanted the names of Vishnu without fear or anguish when the demons thrust their javelins at him at the bidding of Hiranyakasipu (Prahlada's father). Prahlada was an unflinching devotee of Vishnu, whom his father hated as an enemy.

The Goddess Lakshmi is the supreme example of one who earned unique distinction by devoted service to the feet of the Lord. Though she was the Goddess of wealth and presided over all prosperity, she showed to the world that serving the Lord's feet was greater than all the treasures on earth. Today's devotees worship "Siri" (wealth) more than "Hari" (the Lord). They do not realise that by worshipping the Lord's feet, even wealth can be got. What foolishness is it

to go after money, forgetting the lotus feet of the Lord, which are the fountain source of all prosperity!

Worshipping the Lord by constant prostration was the form of devotion exemplified by Akura, a devotee of Krishna. "Namaskar" (the act of worshipping the Lord with folded palms) signifies the total offering of the body and the senses to the Divine as a mark of complete surrender to the Divine. It signifies the elimination of the ego and seeking merger in the Lord whole-heartedly.

Anga-archanam

Archanam was the method adopted by the emperor Prithu to worship the Lord. By offering sixteen kinds of service to the image of the Lord every day with deep devotion, he earned the grace of the Lord. In this form of worship, Prithu demonstrated the unique significance of "Anga Archana", using every sense organ in worshipping the Lord. "Netra kamalam samarpayaami" (I offer my lotus eyes to the Lord). "Srotra kamalam samarpayaami" (I offer the lotus ears to the Lord). "Hridaya kamalam samarpayaami" (I offer the lotus of my heart to the Lord). In this manner Prithu regarded every organ as a lotus to be offered to the Lord in worship.

Today, unfortunately, when this type of worship is performed, there is no genuine feeling of dedication of the organs to, the Lord. When the mantra "Netra kamalam samarpayaami" is uttered, the real meaning is that the eyes are dedicated entirely to having visions of the Lord and nothing else. Likewise, when the devotee says, "Srotra pushpam samarpaysami" he should realise that he is dedicating his ears solely to the Lord and will not listen to anything bad or evil. The ears should be used only for listening to stories about the Divine and spiritual teachings. This should be the feeling with which the offering is made. This was the spirit in which emperor Prithu performed Anga Puja and attained God-realisation. He demonstrated thereby the efficacy of this form of worship.

Hanuman is the supreme example of a devotee who practised service as the form of worship to realise God. His great acts in the service of Rama show how he was completely free from ego and how deep was his devotion to Rama at all times.

Arjuna exemplifies how devotion can be developed by cultivating the friendship of the Lord through complete faith and loyalty. Friendship implies also love. Arjuna's love was totally concentrated on Krishna. He acquired all powers by the grace of Krishna.

Bali's atmanivedanam

Emperor Bali is the example of "Atmanivedanam"—complete self-surrender in the devotion to the Lord. "I offer to you, Oh Lord! all my wealth and possessions, as well as my entire self. I take refuge in you, protect me, Oh Lord!" This was the sense of abnegation with which Bali offered himself to Lord Vamana. Bali welcomed Vamana with open arms and promised to him that he would offer the young Brahmin lad whatever he desired. He offered to wash the feet of Vamana and sanctify himself by sprinkling that water on his own head. Bali's preceptor; Shukracharya was an all-knowing counsellor. Aware that Vamana was an incarnation of Vishnu,

he advised Bali to go back on his offer to Vamana. But Bali's magnanimity and greatness may be seen in the fact that he refused to accept his preceptor's advice. Bali said, "When the Lord Himself has come to me with out-stretched hands asking for a gift, what greater good fortune can I have than making the gift from my humble hands? I am prepared to give away everything regardless of what happens to me."

The Vedas have declared that in observing Dharma and doing one's duty by the Divine, the opposing words of no one—father, mother, preceptor or anybody else—should be heeded. Bharata, Prahlada, Meera and others are examples of those who went against the injunctions of mother, father, husband respectively in adhering to their devotion to the Lord. No one is entitled to be a barrier between the devotee and the Lord, whatever is his relationship with the devotee.

The land of three avatars

Bali was a great devotee. He identified his well-being with the welfare of his subjects and was an exemplary ruler. He considered the people as limbs of his own body. The people also regarded him as the heart of the body of citizenry. In Bali's realm poverty and want were unknown. The country enjoyed prosperity through timely rains and good harvests. Even today Kerala is a land of luscious vegetation, enjoying the bounties of nature. Because it was such a sacred region, it witnessed three Avatars of the Divine: the Varaha Avatar (in which Lord, took the form of a boar to destroy Hiranyaksha), the Narasimha Avatar (for the protection of Prahlada) and the Vamana Avatar (for conferring immortal glory on Bali). It is significant that all the three avatars were concerned with redeeming members belonging to the same lineage: Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakasipu, Prahlada and Bali (Prahlada's grandson).

Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were brothers who were originally the gatekeepers of Vishnu, Jaya and Vijaya. They were born as demons as a result of a curse by sages whom they had offended. They had been filled with pride because of their constant nearness to God and the service they were rendering. In their pride they slighted even the sages and consequently they had to take birth as demons. No room should be given to self-conceit which is an incurable disease. Because of their conceit even the great ones are made to be born as demons. This was the fate of Jaya and Vijaya, the guardians of the Lord's abode—Vaikuntha.

The Lord's mystery

Prahlada was the son of Hiranyakasipu. The father was the avowed enemy of Hari. The son was the steadfast devotee of Hari. Virochana was the son of Prahlada. To a great devotee like Prahlada, a wicked son like Virochana was born. Bali was the son of Virochana. Bali was a great devotee of the Lord. Such is the mystery of the Lord's creation; its inexplicable wonders. The stories of the Lord are filled with a myriad marvels, which are as indescribable as they are countless. A wicked man having a virtuous son and a virtuous person giving birth to a wicked son are phenomena which are not without reason, though the explanation may not be apparent. In the Divine plan nothing happens without a proper reason. The universe cannot function for a moment without the impulse of the Divine. Sri Krishna declared in the Gita "Oh Arjuna! There is nothing in the world that I need. But nevertheless I am active." If the Lord is not active, the

cosmos will perish. Not understanding this truth, the ignorant indulge in futile speculation and controversy.

Significance of Onam

The story of Bali is full of significance spiritually and otherwise. The mutual love and regard that prevailed between the ruler and the ruled made them a composite whole. Out of his love for the people Bali gave a promise to the people, after he had given away everything he had to Vamana, that once a year he would appear amongst them to give them the joy of his presence. The Onam celebration marks the fulfillment of that promise. The people of Kerala believe that every year on Onam day, Bali appears in spirit and otherwise in their midst. It is not easy for people to understand the inner significance and sacredness of this celebration. It can be understood only by those who have full faith in the power of the omnipotent Lord.

Although the nine forms of devotion described above have been grouped under "Samanya Bhakti" (ordinary form of devotion), they are indeed not so. They embrace every aspect of devotion. They envisage all forms of the Divine. Every devotee who achieved God-realisation has pursued one or other of these forms of devotion.

Ananya bhakti

"Ananya Bhakti" refers to that kind of devotion which is based on the conviction that there is nothing in the universe other than God and that everything in creation is a manifestation of God. God is immanent in the subtlest particle in the universe. The devotee sees God in everything, experiences God in every action. Nothing exists for him apart from the Divine. Wherever he goes, it is a pilgrimage. Every action is dedicated to the Divine. Such devotees have attained God-realisation by this type of one-pointed devotion.

This form of devotion cannot be practised easily by all. It is easy to say that God is all-pervasive. But it is not so easy to experience that truth. There are countless persons who profess to be devotees of Rama. But few can be found who have earned the love of Rama. The word "Rama" consists of the two letters "Ra" and "Ma". "Ra" means "Atma". "Ma" means "the Jiva" (the individual soul). The Rama principle signifies the unity of the Atma and the Jiva (The Universal Spirit and the individual spirit). The oneness of the Supreme Omni-Self and the individual Self (Jiva-Atma) is indicated by the term "Rama". This inner truth is not understood by many.

A true devotee is one who acts on the convictions he professes. This is what is implied in the concept of purity in thought, word and deed ("Trikarana Shuddhi"). The Ananya Bhakta is one who continually acts on the basis of his belief that the Lord is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.

Seeing the Lord within

Ekanta Bhakti is the form of devotion in which the devotee believes that the Lord, who pervades the external and the internal, is residing within him. He individualises the Divine that is immanent in everything. The distinction between the particular and the collective should be

properly understood. One tree does not make a forest. There can be no forest without trees. This is the relationship it between the particular (Vyakti) and the collective (Samashthi). The same relationship may be seen between the individual (Vyakti) and society (Samajam). The Divine in its universal cosmic form is the Paramatma (the Omni-Self). The Ekanta Bhakta individualises the Divine and worships him in a particular form. The Divine is present in a myriad forms with a myriad names.

There is nothing sweeter in the world than the Divine name. The Name and the Form go together. The inextricable connection between name and form has to be rightly understood. The name is a fort of wealth. The form is an object to be purchased. Once you have money you can buy whatever you want. Likewise with wealth of the Lord's Name in your hands, you can obtain whatever you desire. Therefore every devotee has to acquire the wealth of the Name. This can be done through bhajans and meditation on the Name of the Lord. In this context, devotees have to develop four types of spiritual discipline: Maitri (friendliness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (rejoicing) and Upeksha (freedom from attachment and aversion). There appear to be simple terms, but they embody all human values. Each quality had to be cultivated in a spirit of devotion and dedication to the Divine. (Bhagavan explained in detail how each of their qualities is to be expressed in daily activities).

Onam at Prasanthi Nilayam

Today the Onam festival is celebrated in every part of Kerala. However, only the Onam that is celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam is the true Onam festival. The reason is: in Kerala the festival is celebrated and enjoyed in each home privately. You cannot witness there the coming together of all Keralites in such large numbers for the celebration. The kith and kin may come together to observe the festival. Here you have a prodigious gathering of Keralites for the celebration. This is a uniquely fortunate occasion because so many have gathered to celebrate it in one home and as one family as it were. This is the greatness of this occasion. This type of mass observance cannot be seen anywhere in Kerala. This is an occasion when the Divine Presence can be experienced and the sense of oneness with the Divine can be promoted. Cherish this celebration as a glorious event. Install in your hearts the Divine that is the Indweller in everyone. I bless you all with the assurance that you will make the Lord's name the means for sanctifying your lives and living righteously.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with three bhajans: "*Bhajana Binaa Sukha Santhi Nahi*," "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho*" and "*Subrahmanyam! Subrahmanyam!*" The Poornachandra Auditorium reverberated with the bhajans when the entire audience joined in the bhajans

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 12-9-1989*

Evergreen Trees

Winter came and the birds went away. They went south. The air is warm in the south and the birds find food. But one little bird did not go. His wing was broken. He could not fly. He was cold and hungry and lonely.

"What can I do?" he said. He saw the woods. "It is warm there," he said. "There are many trees. I will go to the woods. I will live in the trees." So he went to the woods.

The little bird saw a birch tree. "Oh, beautiful tree," he said. "Please help me. I cannot fly. My wing is broken. All my friends went south. May I live in your branches?"

"No" he said. The birch tree continued. "There are too many birds in the woods. I cannot help you, too."

The little bird was sad. "Probably the birch tree is weak," he said, "I will ask the oak tree."

So, the bird said to the oak tree. "You are strong. Please help me. May I live in your branches? In the Spring my friends will come home. Then I will go with them."

"In the Spring?" said the oak tree. "That is a long time. Probably you will eat all my acorns. I cannot help you: You must not stay here."

The little bird walked away. "I will ask the willow tree," he said, "Oh, kind willow tree, my wing is broken and I cannot fly. My friends went south, but I must wait. It is cold and I have no home May I live in your branches?"

The willow tree was not kind. She was angry. "I do not know you," she said, "and so I cannot help you. Go, away."

The poor little bird was very sad. "What can I do?" he said. "My wing is not strong. I cannot fly. It is cold and I have no food." He began to walk again.

"Little bird, where are you going?" a tree asked. It was a spruce tree and it was green and beautiful.

"I do not know," the little bird said. "I am very cold and I have no home. I have no food."

"Come here, then," said the kind spruce tree. "My branches are warm. Winter is cold but my branches are warm. You may live with me."

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!" said the little bird. "You are very kind. I am very happy."

"Your friends went south, but they will come home in spring. The trees must help you. Here is a very warm branch. Come, please sit here," the kind spruce tree said.

The spruce tree's friend was near. He was a pine tree. He was very kind too. "My branches are not very thick, but I am big. Winter is cold and I can help you, too," he said.

"I can help you, too" the juniper tree said. "I have many red berries. They are sweet. You may eat them."

The little bird now had three new friends—the spruce tree, the pine tree and the juniper tree..

The birch tree, the oak tree and the willow tree were talking: "I do not know 'the bird'," said the birch tree. "He cannot live with me."

"I will not" give my acorns to the strange bird," said the oak tree.

"I do not like strange birds," said the willow tree.

They were angry. They closed their branches. They did not laugh in the morning, many trees did not have leaves. It was very cold. The wind blew. Leaves fell again. Soon all the trees did not have leaves. The birch tree, the oak tree, and the willow tree were not beautiful. They were not happy.

But the leaves did not fall from the spruce tree. They did not fall from the pine tree. They did not fall from the juniper tree.

"You may keep your leaves," said the Wind. "You were very kind. You helped the little bird. I will not take your leaves."

And so, the leaves of the spruce tree and the pine tree and the juniper tree are always green, in, winter. They are evergreen trees.

(From Canadian Sathya Sai Newsletter)

Among The Great

The greatest sin: Gossip.
The most satisfying experience: Doing duty first.
The best action: That which is based on good judgement.
The greatest blessing: Good health.
The biggest fool: One who lies to himself.
The greatest joy: Being needed.
The most potent force: Faith in God.
The greatest victory: Victory over one's senses.
The greatest handicap: Egoism.
The most expensive indulgence: Hate.
The most ridiculous trait: False pride.

The greatest loss: Loss of self-confidence.
The greatest need: Common Sense.
The, greatest Teacher: Bhagavan Sathya Sai.

—**Kumari S. G. B. Patro, Anantapur Campus.**

It is only by the cultivation of detachment, by denying the senses the thrills they thirst for, it is only by diving deeper into the depths of one's being, by believing that you have some depths that will reward exploration, that one can capture the exhilaration of that tranquility. This is the highest morality, for when this is done, man is saturated with love and has no trace any more of malice or hate or greed or lust. The vision is purified by the ideal of the unity of all in One and the proliferation of One as all. The tendencies towards hate, malice and greed which cause individual and social conflicts and complexes can be overcome by Yoga and Thyaga, the practice of emotional imperturbability and the reduction of wants and mental cravings. This is the message of Bharat, through the centuries, declared and demonstrated through clear convincing precept and countless unimpeachable examples.

—**Baba**

Baba's Greatest Gift

Were He not truly Divine Baba must surely despair of ever getting His most important message across to those of us who claim,, to follow His path. With infinite patience He repeats the basic tenets in clear, simple terms. He illustrates them with charming analogies and anecdotes so that even the unschooled can understand His Word.

For my part, I have read more than 40 books by and about Baba in the years since I found Him. I enjoy the boundless moral support of the Atlanta Center. I have been to Puttaparthi and experienced a group interview. I have even assumed the mantle of mentor by having my interpretations of Swami's teachings printed in several of His various publications. And yet, until very recently I had not truly recognized and accepted Baba's Greatest Gift. Thus I am the perfect example of the devotee who reads and reads without truly absorbing and putting into practice what he has read. I have been full of knowledge and empty of wisdom.

If I now claim a modicum of wisdom on the issue at hand, I must thank not only Baba for offering it, but St. Francis of Assisi for delivering it, assisted by a good spiritual friend in Long Island. When the direct approach fails, Baba takes a circuitous one.

My friend recently sent me a copy of Johannes Jorgensen's charming biography *Saint Francis of Assisi*. In it there is the delightful account of St. Francis's attempt to enlist one of his younger followers, Brother Leo, in performing a part-prayer with him. In the prayer, St. Francis beats his chest and cries out most abjectly that he has sinned so

extensively and committed such wrongs against God that he is worthy only of total damnation. Brother Leo's part is to follow St. Francis's words with a statement that "Truly you are worthy to be among the damned." Yet each time St. Francis invokes his part of the prayer, Brother Leo follows instead with: "O Brother Francis, God will do such things with these that thou shalt be happy before all the Blest.

Time and again St. Francis repeats his confession of worthlessness. Each time he expects Leo to confirm his lowly condition with suitable words in response. Each time, Leo's words convey not a sense of condemnation, but of exaltation as God rewards St. Francis with boundless grace. With tears of exasperation St. Francis asks Leo one more time to speak the words he is instructed to speak. But try as he may, Brother Leo cannot speak the words, explaining, "I cannot say anything else; for God is speaking through my mouth."

As I read of St. Francis's travail during the episode, I found myself saying: "Foolish little man. Stop berating yourself. You are God! You are capable and worthy of only the best that can be!" Suddenly it dawned on me that this sense of dualism was all that separated St. Francis's teachings from Baba's. So long as we accept the thought that we are separate from God, on a lower plane, incapable of His perfection, we are doomed to grovel in the dust, begging God's pardon for exhibiting our human failings.

But Baba says we are not some lower form of life. We are as He is. He is us. To believe otherwise is to refuse to accept Baba's Greatest Gift—that of shared Divinity with Him! Granted, in accepting the gift of Divinity we must also accept the responsibility to behave as Divinity. Until we do, we can fumble along, making excuses. "After all, we're only human!" No! We have Baba's word that we're not "only human."

There are countless stories in newspapers and magazines of men and women, under stress, performing feats of strength and endurance far beyond what we accept as humanly possible. In each instance was a matter of the individual realizing that he would have to reach back for whatever strength the situation demanded. Most never dreamed they had such capabilities until faced with the desperate need to summon them.

Each of us has this hidden strength, not only in physical matters, but in the spiritual realm as well. Baba offers us the ultimate gift—proof that we share His God-nature. It is a gift rarely offered. How can we refuse to accept it? It is what He has come to give us!

—*Jai Jarrett, U.S.A.*

AVATAR VANI:

Disciplines of the Spirit

Yama and Niyama—which lay down the practices for control of the senses and pursuing spiritual sadhana—should form an essential part of true education,

observed Bhagavan Baba, in the course of His discourse on Sept. 3rd, in the Prasanthi Mandir in connection with the celebration of 'Ganesha Chaturthi'.

Although Bhagavan's, discourse was primarily directed to the students, His message was relevant to all the devotees who had assembled for the festival.

In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

Whatever one's scholarship, position or affluence, all of them will be of no use if one has not acquired the capacity to face the vicissitudes of life with fortitude and equanimity. The perennial message of the hoary culture of Bharat should be adapted to the needs of the present as part of the educational process.

Students tend to go astray because they have not properly imbibed human values during their academic career. The significance of human values can be grasped only if the concepts of *Yama* and *Niyama* are properly understood.

Yama includes the following practices: Ahimsa (non-violence); Sathya (truth); Astheyam (non-stealing); Brahmacharya (continence) and Aparigraha (not receiving anything from others),

Ahimsa: This means avoiding causing harm to anyone by thought, word or deed. Out of selfishness and self-interest, men do not practise this estimable virtue. All evils arise from the sense of "I" and "mine". This trait can be eliminated only by developing purity in thought, word and deed.

Sathya: Truth relates not only to what is factually correct, but what is true for all time. Moreover, truthful speech must be both pleasing and beneficial to the person concerned. It should not excite passion or promote ill-will. You should not indulge in falsehood to please others.

Astheyam: In any circumstance and under any kind of compulsion one should not steal another's property.

Brahmacharya: (continence and studentship): In everyday life, this may not be easy to observe. Brahmacharya calls for the complete eschewing of all bad actions and living constantly in the contemplation of the Absolute (Brahmam). In practical life, this means dedicating all thoughts, all speech and all actions to the Divine. Doing everything as an offering to Brahman is Brahmacharya. Study of the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures also constitutes Brahmacharya.

Brahmacharya is the foundation for the other stages in life: Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (recluse) and Sanyasa (renunciant).

Aparigraha (Non-acceptance): The Upanishads have regarded Parigraha (acquiring things from others) as sinful. Whatever help we may render to others, we should do it

with no expectation of any return. The scriptures declare that it is natural for human beings to reap the fruits of their actions. One is entitled to receive benefits from one's father, mother, teacher and God, but not from others. As God is the creator, sustainer and protector, you can claim anything from God. From your parents you can receive what they are in a position to give according to their capacity. But you should not seek more than that from them. From the preceptor you must receive only knowledge. From the preceptor, who teaches you what promotes your well being, you have to seek ways of satisfying him and not any other benefits. Students today lack these qualities. The result is they become indebted to others in various ways. No one can tell what sort of births they will have to take to discharge these debts in future lives. Limits should be observed even in accepting the hospitality of friends. It is, wrong to overstay even in the houses of friends, who themselves might be dependent on their parents. Hence, the cultivation of restraint in accepting offerings from others is essential. You should be ready to offer a fruit, flower, water or other simple thing to a guest, but you should be wary in accepting anything from others.

Niyama

The second set of disciplines is covered by the term *Niyama*. It consists of five practices: *Soucham* (purity); *Tapas* (austerity); *Santosham* (contentment); *Swadhyaya* (study of scriptures); *Easwara Pranidhaanam* (offering to the Lord).

Soucham (Purity): This is of two kinds: external and internal. External purity is achieved by the use of water and cleaning agents. But apart from bodily cleanliness, in daily life we have to ensure purity of the clothes we wear, the food we consume, the places where we live, the books we read, and the like. All organs of the body have to be kept completely pure. This is essential not only for maintaining perfect health, but also to enjoy a state of bliss. The environment around you should also be kept pure.

As regards internal purity, it should be noted that the mind is polluted by bad thoughts and bad desires, by attachments and aversions. You must strive to fill the mind with good and sacred thoughts. Qualities like love, kindness, compassion, forbearance and sympathy have to be developed to get rid of negative and bad thoughts.

Tapas (austerity): *Tapas* does not mean merely meditating in certain postures. Real penance consists in striving for the realisation of one's higher aims by maintaining purity in thought, word and deed and pursuing the aims with one-pointed concentration. "Satatam yoginah". ("Always established in yoga"), it is said. You must yearn for the realisation of the Formless Absolute. That yearning turns into penance in due course. Merely going to a forest and living on roots and leaves does not constitute penance. To get rid of evil thoughts and passions and to fill the mind with sacred feelings is real penance.

Santhosham (Joy): Man can experience joy and happiness only when he has contentment. As desires grow, discontent grows and worries multiply. You must yearn to be content with your condition. He who has got much satisfaction is the richest man.

Swaadhyaayam: This does not mean merely study of the Vedas. All the basic triple scriptures—the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita—should also be studied. One must be acquainted with all sacred literature. Thereby one gets rid of impurities in the mind.

Easwara Pranidhaanam (Dedication to the Lord): All actions that we do should be pleasing to the Lord. In whatever action we perform, the question must be asked: "Will this please the Lord or not?" God means in effect your conscience. You should not do anything which does not give you self-satisfaction. Whatever you do that pleases God will be holy.

When *Yama* and *Niyama* are practised in this manner, you will be simultaneously pursuing the four Purusharthas (goals in life, namely, Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (earning wealth, etc.), Kama (right desires) and Moksha (liberation) and observing *sama* and *dama* (spiritual disciplines).

Sama means control of the senses, the mind and the intellect and ensuring that they do not go astray. It is only when the internal sense organs are controlled that the external organs like eyes, ears, etc., can be controlled with ease.

Dama refers to the control of the organs of perception (Jnanendriyas) and the organs of action (Karmendriyas). The spiritual transformation of man calls for the control of the sense organs.

Vighneshwara is the deity presiding over the intelligence and he endows devotees with purity of intellect and the power of discrimination between right and wrong and between the permanent and the transient. Mundane pleasures are momentary and fleeting. Your aim must be to seek that spiritual bliss which is enduring and unchanging and which transcends the pleasures of the earth and heaven. Keeping this ultimate aim in view, one should do one's duties in this world and lead a life of righteousness.

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on 3-9-1989*

A Kavi Sammelan in the Divine Presence

Growing up under the watchful eye of the Lord is an elevating experience for the alumni of the Sai educational institutions. Life is no longer drab and dull, but it full of surprises. The undercurrent of loves throbbing ceaselessly and this is what makes life so special in Prasanthi Nilayam, where the Lord has manifested Himself in all His glory.

The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning aims to produce students possessing individual and national character. Keeping this in view, an hour on Thursdays is devoted to student activities every week in order to promote the integrated development of students. It was on one such Thursday that some of us, students, thought of holding a "Kavi Sammelan" a get together of "poets" from among the students. But this was to be a programme with a difference in that it would involve boys from different states and different languages so as to be representative of every part of Bharat and every linguistic group. But what was conceived as a modest undertaking to bring out the poetic talents of the students was transformed into a notable public event, on the suspicious occasion of this year's Dasara, by the blessings of Bhagavan.

It pleased us students no end when Bhagavan began taking a keen interest in the programme. From its very inception, Bhagavan kindly graced the practice sessions of the programme by His divine presence and corrected each and every poem in each of the thirteen languages to perfect them. He enjoyed so much these practice sessions that He granted us an interview, in which He guided and encouraged us and gave us permission to hold the programme in the Institute Auditorium, on Krishna Janmashtami day, August 4th, 1989. By Bhagavan's grace the programme was highly successful and was well appreciated. This provided the stimulus for repeating the programme before a much larger international audience during the Dasara celebrations in the magnificent. Poornachandra Auditorium.

Preparations began in full awing with Bhagavan's divine guidance inspiring us, all. He gave numerous suggestions for making the programme lively, interesting and meaningful to the countless devotees from all parts of the world who would be, present far the Dasara. He fixed October 8th for the programme. The programme presented on that day offered the essence of Bhagavan's teachings regarding national, character and national unity. Poems were presented in the many languages of India along with a representative dance on a screen from each region. The languages in which the poems were presented include:

1. Sanskrit (G. R. Praveena, Research Scholar); 2. Hindi (A. R. S. Nagar, H year M.A., and Umesh Dang, II year M.Se.); 3. English (G. V. Sanjay, II year M.B.A.); 4. Telugu (A. M. S. Sai Ram, I year M.B.A.); 5. Malayalam (C.V. Su, bash, II year M.B.A.); 6. Tamil (R. Ravi Shanker, III year B.Sc.); 7. Bengali (Basab Sur, I year M.B.A.); 8. Urdu (S. V. Guru Prasad, III year B.Sc.) and Adapa Gopalakrishna, II year M. B. A.); 9. Kannada (K. Balasubramaniam, III year B.Sc.); 10. Maratbi (Nitin M. Kanade, I year B.Com.); 11. Gujarati (Kamalkant Patel, I year B.Sc.); 12. Punjabi (Rajdeep Singh, I year B.Sc.); 13. Nepali (Dhiraj Mukhiya, I year B.A.)

The programme, thus, was a symbolic representation of the National Unity brought about by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the Sathya Sai Institute. It demonstrated that the students of Bhagavan are a living testimony to this grand unification process. The poems were recited with feeling in a manner that would appeal to a lay audience. Each poem in its way revealed what Bhagavan meant to the students and what Bhagavan's message meant to the world.

At the end of the Sannelan, Bhagavan, who watched the performance from His seat in the central aisle of the Auditorium, went up to the stage and presented to all the participants silk shawls as the most appropriate way of appreciating poets. Bhagavan covered each student with the shawl in His own hands.

Looking back on this immensely rich experience we find that this was a supreme opportunity for us to express our deepest and sincere feelings—in poems, songs, and couplets—regarding Bhagavan's majestic form, His glorious mission, and the intimate relation that we students have with Bhagavan.

—*Kavi Sannelan participants*

Sacrifice is the highest step. One who has the true spirit of sacrifice gives to others without any hesitation or reservation, smilingly and gladly, even his dearest and highest possession. Surrendering the fruit of action to the Lord is real sacrifice. A Tyagi does not hesitate even to give up his body, regarding it as worthless straw. Sacrifice means something more than giving up of wealth gold, and material objects. Evil qualities like hatred, jealousy wrath and malice which have become ingrained) in man over many life-times should be discarded. There is no happiness greater than that obtained from sacrifice. Only those who sacrifice are the children of immortality because they live forever.

—Baba

When the Lord came

Among the forsaken places on earth,
slept Puttaparthi, a quiet hamlet,
Where men lived and died, in Nature's breast
through centuries that passed.

Time did not touch its misty tranquility,
Forgotten, forlorn, it lay unknown,
For ages past,
perhaps, never to be known.

Outside its thick veil of seclusion
 history ran its course,
Kingdoms rose and fell, thrones tumbled,
 Palaces and castles crumbled to dust,
New epochs came,
 on the ruins of the old

But, unconcerned, unmoved, lay Puttaparthi,
With smiles and sorrows of its tiny humanity.

So, moved on and on,
 the circling seasons,
As Puttaparthi lived and slept,
 in dark oblivion.

Little did the place know
 that a time would come at last,

To knock on its door
 with an enticing call,
To wake up its mortals
 to see on its sands,
An Ayodhya of yore,
 a Mathura of past,
A garden of Lumbini,
 a new Bethlehem,
When the Lord is born
 on its soil sacred.

Came that day,
Puttaparthi rose to emit its light,
With the world's attention turned upon it.

For the vast humanity
 blossomed, up a Heavenly beauty,
A place of places,
 holding on its breast, the Abode of Bliss.

—*Dr. Manmath Nath Das,*
(*From "The Abode of Bliss"*)

23rd NOVEMBER

In the Epic story of our Kali-Age
One date will shine like the blazing sun
And leave its trail on every page
For endless ages yet to run
—The Date which changed, as they will find,
The destiny of all mankind.

It's 23rd of November
The year Nineteen-twenty six
When the Lord descended on earth—remember
In a humble home of mud and bricks.

His Light and Love, spreading East and West
Are transforming Man now into his best.

Many calendars I gathered to scan
This hallowed date in red to see,
But the sweet Lord said, "My dear man,
That red date is etched in Eternity
So seek it not in print nor art
You'll find it enshrined in My devotees' Heart."

—*Bhramara*

The Haven of Healing Peace

"I found that if we but reach out to God we can touch Him. Sing to Him and He will sing through us. Place our entire life in His Hands and we feel His warmth. Such love is for all who answer His call." —Charles Penn

There are hymns in praise of pilgrim centres (*Tirtha mahaatmyas*) which extol the holiness of a place by saying each ordinary action performed there is sanctified to a greater degree. For example, in the holy city of Banaras, whatever one eats is *Prasad* (consecrated offerings received as grace). There, just relaxing and enjoying oneself is a meritorious deed, conversation is repetition of God's name, and lying down in one's bed at night is equal to prostration before the Lord. Because of the extraordinary holiness of the place, commonplace acts are transformed into more meaningful processes.

How true this is of Prasanthi Nilayam! Experiences there have made me realize that the ideas expressed in pilgrim poems like the one mentioned above are not just poetic figures of speech or

imaginative hyperboles. Such descriptions are really, attempts to report accurately, to "tell it like it is."

To rise in Prasanthi Nilayam in the customary predawn hours and bathe and be drawn toward the Mandir is to be blessed. To circumambulate the Mandir, to sit and meditate, to recite OM, to listen to Suprabhatam, to take part in Nagarsankirtan to participate in any or all of these activities is to start the day most auspiciously, turned toward God, enacting a holy way that automatically orients us to, and brings us closer to, the divine.

In the course of the day at Prasanthi, Nilayam we pilgrims perform simple actions which minimize attachments to, the world and focus us on the spiritual. Simple food, simple comforts, simple accommodation keep us healthy, and indulging in consciousness-diverting luxuries and frivolities is not missed. The reduce number of distractions and activities calm the mind and concentrate it on deeper truths. To do a small service lets us experience an expanded sense of unity.

"Wisdom and leelas everywhere"

When we go to sit patiently and wait for Swami to come through a door, we deepen our yearning, clarify our hopes and find insights revealed—we find inspiration. To observe Sri Sai in action is to, study Holy Scripture.

When we speak with a friend, ever mindful of Sai's near presence, His omnipresence, we practise Satsang and chanting, seeing the light in all. We find wisdom and lilac everywhere.

Every bite of food does become Prasad, sanctified by being offered to, and received from, Baba. In the healing haven of Prasanthi Nilayam every nap can become a taste of pure calm consciousness. Every conversation, because Baba's name is on everyone's lips, is a, prayer or mantra. Every moment spent waiting for darshan is a meditation on Him. There is naturally a strenuous rigour here which tones one up, though it does not harmfully strain. It is a 'striving toward the light, which is rewarded with a tuning up, harmonizing, a closer synchronization with spiritual rhythms. No mechanical rituals, but outlets for heartfelt worship. No greedy overdoing it, but a gradual ripening.

Cleansing vibrations

If one is squeezed together with others to sing bhajans, it is a pleasant *Tapas* (purifying austerity), as- well as a chance to enjoy with fellow pilgrims an ocean of blissful song. Cleansing vibrations wash over the ashram resident, like ablutions in holy *Tirthas* (pilgrimage sites), from Banaras on the Ganges to Rameshvaram at the Southern tip of India. The peace inside the walls of Prasanthi Nilayam makes it a haven, a heaven up to which the noisy demonic cannot climb. The beauty of trees and flowers, pastel buildings, and devotees from many lands make it pleasant with variety.

The bliss of being with Baba, enjoying His love, basking in His mystery and glory are a foretaste of ultimate realization. Thus it is usual to depart from Prasanthi Nilayam feeling

charged, freshened, empowered, re-energized and full of thanks. At peace, one feels purified by one's pilgrimage, re-focused, ready for life's adventures, as if one's unravelled nerves had been magically knitted together again to perfection by Devas. One's debilitating worries are dissolved, replaced by faith in the will of God.

But it all happens so naturally, so spontaneously, as a matter of course. "I had Baba's darshan, and am healed. I saw Sai and sighed."

And after leaving Prasanthi Nilayam in Andhra Pradesh, one finds one has taken that safe haven of spiritual possibilities with one, wherever one may go, and Baba's healing presence is inside.

—Dr. Bill Jackson, Indianapolis, U.S.A.

HIS OWN ROCK!

There was a monk near Haridwar who had given up for many years both hearth and home and was living on alms; he used to heap all the food he collected on a fiat rock that jutted out of the Gangs, and used it as a plate from which he took his meal. One day, he came to his rock and found another monk sitting there, taking food I He got enraged at this trespass on his `property': Then the new-comer said, "Alas t you have renounced all sense of I and mine; you have shaved your head, so that you may not be recognised by erstwhile companions; you yearn to be free from all bonds; but, you have tied yourself up to this rock I How can you swim across the Sea of Samsara with this Rock round your neck? You are leading a life of hypocrisy." That opened the monk's eyes to the error.

—Baba ("Chinnakatha")

VIDYARTHI VANI:

Testifying to the Lord's Love

To be students in Swami's colleges and schools means having innumerable and unique opportunities to be close to the Divine and to experience His Divinity in all facets of one's daily life. Among the many `golden chances' that Bhagavan in His boundless love offers to us, one unforgettable experience is speaking in His immediate Divine Presence. It is, by and large, a spiritual experience in itself, for, at the end of a talk given by a student, not only is the audience spellbound and thrilled by listening to Sai's glory, but the boy himself feels elated and blessed by the performance.

As during last year, Bhagavan arranged for students of the Sai Institute and the Secondary School to address the vast audience in the Poornachandra Auditorium before His own discourses during the seven-day Veda Purusha Juana Yajna in October (3 to 10). Swami had His own

unique way of selecting the speakers. He would walk around the boys assembled in the Mandir for morning darshan and pick up one or two to get ready for speaking the next day. No elaborate prior preparations or rehearsals. The speakers were to be as natural and spontaneous as possible.

This year as many as 15 students were blessed with the opportunity to speak on six afternoons. As was to be expected in an institution having students from all parts of India (and some from overseas), the speakers were representative of different Indian states with their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The Secondary School students belonged to the VIII - XII standards and ranged in age from 12 to 17 years. The senior students of the Institute were in the age group 18-30, including a few who had done their doctorates. But regardless of, their differences in age and academic achievements, they had one common topic to speak about: the impact of Sai education on their lives and What Bhagavan meant for them as well as for their families.

The youngest of the Secondary School students, who had just stepped into the VIII standard, dwelt in their speeches on the different human values that they had imbibed in the Primary School. Each one of them spoke on one value each day, covering the five values of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence.

The other school students (IX to XII) spoke on Sai as the Mother, Sai as the Divine Power and Sai as the embodiment of Love and Truth. What was remarkable in all their speeches was the calm assurance with which they addressed a vast gathering in the presence of Bhagavan. Some of them quoted freely from the Upanishads, the Gita and the discourses of Bhagavan. They did not falter or lose their poise at any stage. They felt truly inspired by Bhagavan.

The Institute boys were more general in most of their talks, though the main focus was on Swami and His message and mission. While one of them spoke about his own transformation that Sai love had affected, another dealt with the relation between science and spirituality. Yet another student spoke elaborately about the Institute and the philosophy of Sai education, while his colleague enthralled the audience by recounting the glorious Leelas of Bhagavan.

Sanjay Sahani, a lecturer in Swami's Institute, spoke on the unique relationship between Swami and His students. Drawing upon memories of his ten-year stay at the Lotus Feet, he narrated incidents and experiences which revealed the limitless love that the boys enjoyed in the company of Bhagavan. Vijay Sai, a Brindavan campus student, related a number of Leelas of Swami and added a musical flavour to his talk by singing songs and slokas in his appealing voice. Hari Prasanna, a 11-year M. Sc. student in Bio-Sciences (and recipient of the gold medal for all round excellence) spoke about the unique qualities of Sai education and the impact of Swami's love on His students.

All in all the juvenile performances in the Poornachandra Auditorium were a convincing demonstration of the devotion which the students had for Bhagavan and their determination to make their educational experience in the Sai institutions a preparation for living up to the ideals held forth by Bhagavan and leading purposeful lives dedicated to the service of the nation.

How well Swami was pleased with the students could be seen in the glitter in His eyes as He listened to the speeches and the pat on the back which every boy got at the end of his speech.

For the large audience present in the auditorium, it must have been a revealing and exhilarating experience to know how well the boys in the Sai institutions were being moulded under the continuous and benign guidance of Bhagavan.

We are all familiar with Swami's oft-repeated saying: "My life is My message." After listening to the students' speeches during the Dasara, anyone in the audience might well say: "His students are His voice." May we always be worthy of His grace and blessing!

—S.

VEDA PURUSHA VANI:

Message of the Vedas

Embodiments of Divine Love!

The Vedas are the recordings of sages to whom the mantras were revealed. They are the breath of the Supreme Lord. They proclaim the transcendental Truth which is not changed by time or place. They indicate the means to prosperity and security for the denizens of the three worlds.

Veda is derived from the root "Vid", which means "to know". The Veda teaches how to achieve purity of heart, getting rid of impurities.

The Vedas have been declared to be infinite and hence beyond the comprehension of common people. In the beginning there was only one Veda. To study it considerable time and effort were needed. Vyasa divided it into different parts to enable people to study as well as practise the teachings of the Veda. Out of the countless number of hymns, Vyasa gathered some Rks and compiled them in the Rg Veda, collected some yajus to form the Yajur Veda and some Samans to make up the Sama Veda.

The Rg Veda is mainly devoted to hymns in praise of various deities. The Yajur Veda consists of mantras for worshipping the deities. The mantras of the Yajur Veda are used in the performance of Yagas and Yajnas and in doing acts of charity. Each Veda has three sections: Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads.

The Vedic mantras were utilised in Yagas and Yajnas (ritual sacrifices) for promoting the well-being of society and the world. They were intended to secure timely rains so that the crops may be good and there may be prosperity all round. The mantras which form part of the Karma

Kanda (the path of rituals), were regarded as conducive to the promotion of general well-being and happiness.

The Yajur Veda is devoted entirely to the worship of the deities. It consists of two divisions—Krishna Yajurveda and Shukla Yajurveda—which are based on two traditional distinctions. Shukla Yajurveda belongs to the Brahma sampradasya (Brahmic tradition) and the Krishna Yajurveda to the Aditya sampradaya. Adherents of the Shukla Yajurveda are largely confined to North India, while Krishna Yajurveda has its adherents mainly in South India.

Learning the Vedas

The Vedas developed under nine heads: (1) Shruti; (2) Anuswara; (3) Trayee; (4) Aamnyam; (5) Samamnyam; (6) Chhandas; (7) Swadhyayam; (8) Gama; and (9) Aagama.

"Shruti" refers to the process of learning the-Vedas from a preceptor by practising the precise manner of chanting the mantras and thereby acquiring proficiency in the recitation of the Vedas. The sounds have to be reproduced exactly as taught by the preceptor by listening to him with intense earnestness. The Vedic mantras are thus learnt entirely by listening.

"Anuswara" refers to the practice of repeating the mantras learnt from the preceptor, contemplating on them and preserving them in their purity by constant recitation.

"Trayee": Originally only three Vedas—Rg, Yajur and Sama Veda—were considered "Apourusheya", without a human origin (that is, emanating from the Divine). The Atharvana Veda comprises hymns taken from the Yajur Veda. Because of their Divine origin, the first three Vedas were called "Trayee" (the Triad).

"Aamnaya" refers to constant contemplation of the root syllable "na". Acquiring knowledge of the Vedas by this practice has been described as "Aamnaya" and "Samamnaya".

One meaning of "Chhandas" is that it is knowledge which should be guarded in secret and propagated with care. The Vedas are also described as Chhandas. The entire Sama Veda consists of Chhandas.

"Swadhyayam" refers to the process by which the Vedas have come down from generation to generation, through father to son, in genealogical succession. Acquisition of Vedic knowledge was not through books. It was transmitted from preceptor to disciple over the years. It is because this knowledge was handed down directly from preceptor to pupil, it has been described as "Swadhyaya".

"Gama" and "Aagama" are the names given to the inhaling and exhaling of the Lord's breath which were the origin of the Vedas. All in all, the Vedas represent the emanations from the breath of the Lord.

The great sages who listened to these mantras as revelations from the Divine found the key to them in eight basis letters. All the Vedic mantras with their musical rendering were remembered by reflecting on the eight letters: "A, Ka, Cha, Ta, Tha, Pa, Ya. Sa. " The great seers fostered the Vedas by the use of these letters.

Loss by neglect

Each of the Vedas had several branches (shakhas) and sub-branches (upashakhas). Out of the 20 branches and 21 sub-branches of the Rg Veda, only 3 have survived today. Likewise out of 96 branches of Yajurveda only 2 have survived the ravages of time. Same Veda, which had 1000 branches, retains today only 3 branches. If so much of spiritual treasure is contained in the few branches of the Vedas that have survived, how much-greater would have been the spiritual heritage of the Bharatiyas if the Vedas had survived in their entirety! It is because of the neglect of the Vedas that the spiritual and scientific knowledge of Bharatiyas experienced a steady decline. As a consequence they developed a narrow outlook.

Broadness of vision suffered an eclipse. Today the numbers of those who have no love or respect for the Vedas are on the increase. Even among the Brahmins interest and concern for the Vedas have declined.

Who are Brahmins? Brahma means the embodiment of mantra. Only those who constantly recited the mantras embodying the Brahman were called Brahmins. Today Brahmins have forgotten these mantras. Owing to the impact of modern education, the greed for money and the growth of narrow-minded interests, they have forgotten their inherent divinity. As a consequence, peace and security have become casualties.

What is meant by Veda? One meaning is "Awareness" (eruka). Another is intelligence (thelivi). A third meaning is discrimination (Viveka). All those who wish to develop discrimination should be deeply interested in the Vedas.

Today intelligence is being developed and used only for acquiring positions and possessions, for securing comforts and conveniences and not for developing good qualities and becoming good men engaged in Godly pursuits. All their intellectual abilities are being misused for trivial purposes.

The Vedas have emphasised that man will be truly human only when he lives upto human values and practises the good life. Many who chant the Vedas these days have difficulty in understanding their purport. When they fully understand the meaning and chant the mantras, they will derive greater joy. Only then they will experience the full sacredness and potency of the Vedas.

Universal outlook

The Vedas have a universal outlook, embracing all that is noble and sacred. They have taught the principle of Samatwa (equality) in respect of everything. They have

proclaimed the concept of oneness. They taught men to face joy and sorrow with equal serenity.

Those who utter the mantras today do not grasp their inner meaning. Even if the full meaning of a single mantra is understood, it will be sufficient. Every day, the Santhi mantra is recited: "Om Sahanavavathu; sahanau bhunaktu; saha viryam karavaavahai." What does this signify? "Let us move together; let us enjoy together; let us act together in unison. Let us live in harmony in communion with each other." What a wide vision is present in this mantra!

Even such broad-minded mantras have been interpreted in a narrow sense in later years. Hence you do not find today even a thousandth of the sense of equality and amity which prevailed in those times. It is because men's attitudes and feelings have declined below the human level that so many divisive forces have cropped up.

Significance of yajnas

Referring to the Yajna which Bhagavan inaugurated in the morning, Bhagavan said: There are 33 deities mentioned in the Rg Veda. Of them, the Sun-God is the most important deity. His power is felt all over the world. In this Yajna, the Sun is called Ritwik. His other names are: Hota and Brahma. It is the Sun-God who carries to the deities concerned the offerings made in the Yajna. Agni, the God of fire, is an image of the Sun. Agni has a form of his own. Agni has parents. This morning, before the Yajna began, two priests churned two sticks (Aranis) to produce fire for the Yajna. The Fire-God is said to have consumed his parents immediately after his birth. The lower Arani is the mother and the stick on the top is father. The fire produced by churning them burns away the sticks. The flames arising from the fire are the tongues of the Fire-God. The rays coming from the fire are so many heads of the deity. The Agni-Principle is immanent in every person. The inner significance of this is that every person is inherently divine.

When the mantras are chanted and offerings are made in the fire to the Lord, the grace of the Lord is showered on the people in the form of peace and plenty. There is a saying: As is the fire, so is the smoke. As is the smoke, so are the clouds. As are the clouds, so is the rain. As is the rain, so are the crops. As are the crops, so is the food. As is the food, so is the intellect. As the clouds these days are not formed by the smoke coming from Yajnas, the food consumed by the people is not conducive to the growth of intelligence. When the smoke going up from the Yajna-kunda enters the clouds, you have sacred rain, which helps to purify the crops and sanctify the food that is consumed. As a result, the people are sanctified. But today if people are filled with bad thoughts and evil intentions it is because these sacred Yajnas and Yagas are not performed. Many persons ask in a carping spirit: "Of what use is the expending of so much ghee and other materials as offerings in the fire of the Yajnas and Yagas?" The purpose will be clear only to those in the know of the inner truth. A farmer tills his field and scatters over it a bag of paddy seeds. To the ignorant observer this may appear a waste of precious grain. But the farmer knows that in due course he will reap a harvest of hundred bushels of paddy. Likewise the offering of ghee and other precious things in the Yajna with mantras will result in

countless benefits in good time. People may notice only what is being offered. But they have no idea of the benefits that will follow.

The bliss from sacrifice

It should be realised that only today's sacrifice (Tyaga) can lead to tomorrow's enjoyment (Bhoga). When the sacrifice is made with a full heart, the returns will also be equally abundant.

Unfortunately, man today does not even dream of making any sacrifice. When a pretence of sacrifice is made, it is only a concession to fashion. Very few have any idea of what real sacrifice is. As a consequence, the wealthy, in spite of their riches, have neither peace nor security. The affluent do not care even to give a little food to the destitute at their gate. But these misers drop bagfuls of money in the hundi in a temple. These foolish persons fail to see the divinity in fellow human beings and make offerings to an inanimate object. Does God, who is the source of all wealth, need your petty offerings? You must use your wealth for righteous purposes. Help the indigent and the needy. There is a selfish motive even in making offerings to the deity. Something small is offered in expectation of a big return from the deity. A man prays to the Lord: "Oh Lord! If I win ten lakhs of rupees in a lottery I shall offer ten thousand rupees to you." What kind of bargain is this? It is a pity that such silly ideas are rampant today.

The reason is: the people have forgotten the secret of the Vedas. They offer a molehill and crave for a mountain. This is a complete caricature of devotion. It is such pseudo-devotees who are on the increase today. They are all the time seeking to enter into petty deals with the Divine. Every prayer, every sadhana is replete with selfishness and self-interest.

Everyone seeks benefits, but is not prepared to make any sacrifice. What is the sacrifice that is to be made to God? First of all, your bad qualities. Acquire good qualities. Shed your narrow outlook. Cultivate a broad vision.

Today the foremost need is to develop the spirit of sacrifice. You are not expected to give away all your wealth and possessions. What is required is a sense of compassion at the sight of a suffering being. When the heart melts, that itself becomes sacrifice. What we witness today is not the melting of hearts but their hardening.

You will not carry your wealth with you when you leave the world. Even while life remains, render help to those who need as much as you can. The quintessence of the Vedas is the glorification of sacrifice as the supreme virtue.

Of what avail is all your study or listening if there is no change in the way you live and you have not understood your true nature? The highest knowledge is understanding the value of sacrifice. It is a source of limitless joy. It leads to immortality.

The lesson to be learnt from the performance of Yajnas is that sacrifice is the greatest means to realise the Divine. The essential meaning of the Veda is that to secure

enduring bliss, the spirit of sacrifice has to be cultivated, the significance of Yaga has to be understood and we must lead a Godly life.

Veda and Vedanta

The Vedas have been mainly concerned with the Pravritti Marga (the Path of Action). All the different branches of knowledge—physics, chemistry, botany, economics, music, etc.—are covered by the Vedas. These are concerned with the external world. Hence the Vedas have been considered dualistic. Only the Upanishads have taught the Nivritti Marga (the Path of Knowledge) by going within oneself.

This means that, of the four Purusharthas, the four main goals of man—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha—the Vedas have been concerned with only the first three. The Upanishads declared that the nature of the Supreme can be grasped only by the Path of Knowledge. Knowledge is of two kinds: Part Vidya and Apra Vidya (the Higher Knowledge and the Lower Knowledge). All that is learnt by the educational process today, falls in the category of Lower Knowledge. Knowledge relating to Dharma, Artha and Kama also comes in this category (Apar Vidya). Only knowledge relating to Moksha (Liberation) constitutes Para Vidya (the Supreme Knowledge).

We have to acquire that Para Vidya. That knowledge is found in Vedanta. The Upanishads come at the end of the Vedas. The essence of all the Vedas is to be found in them.

While Veda is dualistic, Vedanta is non-dualistic (Advaita). Non-dualism is the means to experience Bliss (Ananda). The ego ("I") principle is predominant in the Vedas. Vedanta has declared that the elimination of the ego ("I" and "Mine") alone can lead to Realisation. The "I" has to be rooted out. As long as you adhere to the "I", you are bound to the phenomenal world. You cannot attain the Higher Knowledge. You have, therefore, to understand the distinction between the Vedas and the Upanishads.

It is only when you understand the essence of the Vedas as expounded in the Upanishads and put into practice the message of the Vedanta, you will realise the true meaning of Non-dualism (Advaita).

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Bhajana binaa Sukha Santhi Nahi.*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 3-10-1989

DASARA IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM:

Memorable Veda Purusha Yajna

In Prasanthi Nilayam change, amidst the unchanging Eternal Reality, is a constant experience. Bhagavan rings the chimes in His own unique way from festival to festival, from one season to another. In this sense, this year's Dasara celebrations were a memorable experience for the many thousands of devotees who were present in the Poornachandra Auditorium for the seven days of the Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna and listened to Bhagavan's revealing discourses on the relevance of the Vedas, the Yagas and the Yajnas to the world today.

The entire premises of the Prasanthi Mandir were decorated with multi-coloured flags and festoons for the Dasara festival. The celebrations started on September 30 with Kalasa Sthapana do the Mandir.

On October 2, Narayana Seva was organised on a massive scale on the grounds of the Hill View Stadium. This year the grounds were levelled up smoothly for the Narayana Seva by a host of Seva Dal members and overseas devotees. Bhagavan made daily visits to the Stadium to see that all arrangements were perfect. Although a heavy downpour the previous night prevented the cooking of the Prasadam for the Narayana Seva near the Stadium grounds, the Ashram canteen rose to the occasion and the entire food to be distributed to over 15,000 men, women and children was got ready well before the morning of the 2nd for distribution at 9-30 a.m.

Crowds started pouring into the Stadium from early in the morning from all the surrounding villages. Students of the Institute and Seva Dal members seated them in orderly rows, with the handicapped, the old and the women at the southern end, while the men were seated at the northern end. The women and children outnumbered the men by three to one.

Bhagavan arrived precisely at 9-30 a.m. and proceeded straight to the rooms where the food was kept in giant vessels to bless it before the distribution started. Bhagavan inspected all the arrangements for the Seva before inaugurating the service by serving the food to some with His own hands. Then onwards, relays of students and Seva Dal members started serving the food with devotion and speed. Swami was all the time on His legs, going from one group to another and seeing that everybody was satisfactorily served.

Swami then distributed saris and dhotis to the handicapped and the very old, who had been seated in separate rows. Clothes were distributed to several thousands.

It was a thrilling sight to see the students carrying buckets of food from one end of the stadium to the other in relays and serving it with love and enthusiasm. Water was offered to the thirsty by another large batch of students. Hundreds of students must have taken part in the Seva. Bhagavan was evidently pleased with their service and blessed them all before He left the Stadium around 10-30 a.m. Bhajans were held near the Stadium grounds while the Narayana Seva was in progress. A large gathering of devotees was present in the Stadium to have Darshan of Swami and watch the Narayana Seva.

Initiation of the Yajna

On October 3, Bhagavan initiated the seven-day Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna in the Poornachandra Auditorium with all the solemnity attaching to a Vedic sacrifice of this nature. The Yajna this year had special significance for many reasons. It was the twenty fifth Yajna to be performed in Prasanthi Nilayam since it was first performed in 1965 with Bhagavan as the Veda Purusha. This year the Yajna platform looked almost like the Gate of Vaikunta—the celestial abode of Vishnu—because of the highly artistic floral backdrop specially got up this year, with the figures of the Divine guardians of the Gate, Jaya and Vijaya, at the two sides and the images of Hanuman and Garuda on the top. The floral arrangements, done by the staff and students of the Muddenahalli Sathya Sai School and Junior College, were so artistic that the whole stage acquired an ethereal look. A wide range of auspicious flowers were chosen for the decoration.

As in previous years, Swami came in a procession to the Auditorium from the Mandir, headed by over a score of students (in red silk dhotis) chanting Vedic hymns, and nearly 36 Ritwiks, who were participating in the Yajna in one role or another. A Nadaswaram troupe led the procession.

Bhagavan stood beside the Yajna Homa Kunda as Veda Purusha before the Yajna started with the churning of two *shamee* sticks to produce the sacred fire for the Yajna. Bhagavan poured the first oblations into the sacred fire, after which the Athi Rudra Homa was begun by three Ritwiks.

While the Homa is the principal ritual in the Yajna, various other religious functions were also conducted simultaneously during the week by other Ritwiks. These included chanting of the Vedas, Ganesha Puja, Sahasra Linga-archana (offering worship to 1000 lingas of Siva), Gouri Puja, Suryanamaskar, and ceremonial reading of the Ramayana, the Devi Mahaatmyam, and the Bhagavatam.

Bhagavan gave His benedictory Darshan every morning to thousands of devotees who filled the Auditorium, besides overseeing the Yajna ceremonies.

In the afternoon, there were Harikathas in the Auditorium on five days from 2-30 to 3-30 p.m., by the Vidwans belonging to the Sanathana Bhagavata Bhakta Samajam. The themes of the Harikathas were "Thyagaraja charitram", "Krishna Tulaabhaaram", "Sabari Moksham", "Bhakta Mira" and "Vishwamitra Yaga Samrakshanam". The Harikathas were highly edifying and entertaining and were well attended.

In the evenings, Bhagavan gave discourses on the significance of Yajnas and the message of the Vedas. Bhagavan's discourses were preceded by speeches by two or three students from the Secondary School and some from the institute.

A notable feature of this year's celebrations was the inclusion of a "Kavi Sammelan" by students of the Sathya Sai institute as part of the cultural programme. The "poets" belonged to every part of India and the poems ranged from Sanskrit to Nepali, covering all the languages of the Indian States. It was a scintillating performance which was highly

appreciated by the audience. The audience could experience the cultural background of the State from which each "poet" came from the shadow dances projected on a screen at the back of the stage.

The Bal Vikas children of Tamil Nadu presented "Bhakta Markandeya" in the form of a colourful dance drama with appropriate settings and music.

On Vijayadashami day, October 9, the Poornahuti of the Yajna climaxed the seven-day sacrifice, with Bhagavan, the Veda Purusha, offering to the Fire-God precious articles like pearls, gems, gold and silk garments and yellow rice (akshada) materialised in profusion for the occasion. (Once again, the stage was specially decorated with a floral backdrop, symbolising the gates of Vaikuntha, but with a different floral design for the gates.)

After the Poornahuti, Bhagavan went round, the Auditorium sprinkling the mantra-charged water from the sacred kalashas on all devotees, thus simultaneously purifying and blessing them.

The crowning item of the Dasara celebrations was the jhoola festival in the evening, when Swami showered bliss on the entire gathering by swaying gently on the glittering silver jhoola. The Institute students sang a few select bhajans.

Altogether, this year's Dasara will remain long in the memory of thousands of devotees to whom it was both a spiritual blessing and an enjoyable experience.

—N.

VEDA PURUSHA VANI:

Karma, Upasana and Jnana

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

Most people in the world do not understand the purpose of life. They do not even try to enquire why they are unable to understand the meaning of life. One in a million undertakes such an enquiry. This is the first step in the process of discovering the basic reality about life. The vast majority are content to regard eating, earning, acquiring property and rearing a family as the aims of life. This is not so. All this is merely the routine of ordinary living. Doubtless, this is necessary. But obsessed with the pursuit of external objects, men do not strive to explore the internal life of the Spirit (Atma).

Standing on the seashore, one can see only the waves on the surface and not the pearls lying deep below. Only the brave man who can dive deep into the ocean will be able to gather the pearls and not others. Likewise knowledge of the Atma (Atmajnana) can be got only by those who turn away from the exploration of the phenomenal world to probe internally for the truth of the Spirit. Spiritual knowledge is not easy to get.

Why is it that, inspite of the fact that over the years there were many who recited the Vedas and carried an Vedic practices, no commensurate results were achieved? It is because, though many were proficient in reciting the Vedic mantras, few of them understood their inner meaning properly, or their sacredness and potency. It may be that the sacredness of the Vedas is such that even mere uttering the mantras without understanding their full meaning or merely listening to them will have some sanctifying effect. The potency of the Divine vibrations emanating from the mantras is such that they confer unique blissful experience on the listeners. Among the eight Divine potencies attributed to Vedic mantras, Shravanam (listening) is considered the foremost.

Likewise, among the nine forms of devotion, Shravanam (listening to the glories of God) has been accorded the first place. It is unfortunate that in Bharat there are many who do not choose even to listen to the Lord's glories. There are others who, even when they have opportunities to listen, run away from them. Many others listen indifferently to the chanting of mantras and deny themselves the benefit of their sacred power.

ILLS OF THE BODY AND MIND

The human body is subject to afflictions from three sources: Vata (the wind element in the body), Pitta (bile) and Sleshma (phlegm). 102 types of ailments arise from Vata. Forty two kinds of diseases are caused by bile disorders. Phlegm disorders account for as many as 242 different kinds of ailments. Altogether the body is a sink for hundreds of ailments. In his attachment to the body and the fleeting pleasures derived from the senses, man is forgetting the lasting bliss that can be got from the Atma with in him.

Just as the body is subject to ills arising from Vata, Pitta and Sleshma, the mind (Antahkarana) also is liable to ailments from three sources: mala, Vikshepa and Aavarana. It is because of these ailments that man is unable to develop his spiritual nature and acquire knowledge of the Atma. On account of ignorance of his spiritual nature, he regards his mundane existence as the only reality.

Mala, is also known by the term Avidya, meaning ignorance, Ignorance can be removed by karmas (prescribed actions). Aavarana can be removed by Upasana (worship). Vikshepa (delusion) is removed by developing the power of discrimination. Hence, to deal with the maladies of mala, Aavarana and Vikshepa, you need karma, Upasana and Jnana (wisdom). These three paths have been laid down by the Vedas. Through Karma (prescribed duties) purity of mind is achieved. Through Upasana (devotional worship) one-pointed concentration of mind is promoted. And through Jnana liberation (Moksha) is attained.

The primary cause of sorrow for man is birth itself. Karma (past actions) is the cause of birth. Desire is the impelling cause for all actions. Desire is prompted by attachment, which proceeds from lack of understanding. Ego is the cause of this ignorance. When ignorance goes, the ego subsides. Absence of egoism leads to right understanding. The desires abate. With the decline of desires, actions get sanctified. Then life becomes

meaningful. Thus ignorance is called Aavarana (that which covers or envelopes an object).

Mala is a stage anterior to Aavarana. It is a state of the mind in which the body, made up of the five elements and the senses of perception and action, is regarded as the real self. Because of this mental condition, man has delusion regarding the body which are false and unreal. What- 'mala' means in Vedantic parlance can be understood from the use of the term in daily life. The passing of excreta and urine is described as 'mala-visarjanam' (getting rid of filthy things from the body). 'Mala' means that which is impure. As a state of mind 'mala' refers to the condition in which one regards the impermanence, the false and the unsacred as permanent, true and holy.

Satkarmas

The Vedas have shown the different means by which this mental state can be changed. They declare: "Perform good and righteous deeds (Satkarmas)." What are these righteous actions? They include Yagas and Yajnas and charitable undertakings. All actions done as an offering to God can be regarded as Satkarmas. Through such actions, the mind is purified. This means the elimination of the accumulated impurities in the mind resulting from impure thoughts and actions in the past. The purpose of the Karmakanda of the Vedas is to indicate the kind of actions and rituals that will serve to purify the mind.

Aavarana: Aavarana means enveloping or covering something. The six vices, lust, anger, greed, pride, delusion and envy, have enveloped man. Attachment and aversion have gripped him. Because of this man has forgotten his real nature and filled himself with pride of all sorts. Losing his power of discrimination (Vichakshana-jnana) he indulges in all kinds of misbehaviour towards his betters. The Vedas prescribed Upasana (devotional worship) as a means of getting rid of these bad qualities. As a lighted joss stick removes by its fragrance the bad odour in a place devotional repetition of the name of God drives away the impurities of the mind.

Devotion means friendship with God. It means establishing close relations with God through love: Service to God is the essence of devotion. Hence sage Narada declared: "Hrishikesa Sevanam Bhakthiruchyathe" ("Service to Hrishikesa is called devotion"). When devotion is developed in this manner, compassion (Karuna) arises spontaneously. When compassion grows, man experiences Divine bliss, free from ill-will or attachment towards anyone.

The company of the good is essential for developing devotion. It serves to nourish the seed of love in the heart. Bhakti reaches its consummation in one-pointed concentration on the Divine. Karma (right action) results in purity of mind and devotion promotes concentration.

Atma-jnana

The third stage is Jnana (knowledge). There are different kinds of knowledge. One is worldly knowledge. Another is general knowledge. What is implied by the Vedic term

Juana is knowledge of Atma. It is not concerned with the physical, sensory or worldly knowledge. Atmajnana (knowledge of the Atma) can be got only by enquiring into the nature of the Atma and not by any other means. It cannot be taught by preceptors or learnt by studying texts. It cannot be received from anyone or offered to any one. It has to emerge from the inner consciousness. Preceptors and texts can only help to some extent. But the aspirant who seeks Atma-Jnana has to embark on self-enquiry to experience this Self-awareness. He should explore and investigate the whole gamut of spiritual experience and arrive at the ultimate Reality. Just as a child learns to speak by watching the mother's words, the spiritual aspirant has to make the effort himself while listening to the preceptor or studying scriptural texts.

Jnana in Vedantic parlance has been defined as "Advaita Darshan" (recognising the One without a second). That is, to see the One in the many—Unity in diversity. Here in this assembly are present many thousands of persons. Their names and forms are multifarious. But you have to recognise that the Atma Principle in all of them is one and the same. It is not enough to say this in words. You must make it a living experience. Only then can one experience enduring bliss (Ananda). Such a person alone can be called a Jnani (a Knower of the Supreme).

To reach the stage of a Jnani the first steps are Karma and Upasana (righteous action and worship). Without following the paths of Karma and Upasana and succeeding in them one can never become a Jnani, just as a student cannot acquire a degree without passing the School Final and Intermediate examinations. To reach manhood one has to pass through childhood and boyhood. There can be no fruit unless there has been a bud and a green fruit. It is idle for any one to claim that he is a Jnani unless he has gone through the prior disciplines. The mark of a Jnani is perennial joy. It is for this reason that the Veda has placed the Karma Kanda, the Upasana Kanda and Jnana Kanda in that order of succession. To realise the oneness of divinity these three paths of action, worship and knowledge have been laid down.

The world today abounds in vedantins who go about claiming that they are Jnanis. Among myriad such claimants not one can be regarded as a real Jnani (a fully Self-realised person). To become a Jnani, the first step is to start with the Path of Action (Karma Marga). The sacred duties laid down in this discipline have to be practised. All actions have to be performed as dedicatory offerings to God. Without doing the prescribed rites, merely declaring the actions one does as offerings to God is futile. Set aside your likes and dislikes. Perform right actions with discrimination after due enquiry. If you are unable to ascertain what actions the Vedas prescribe, act according to the dictates of your conscience. Thereby your actions get sanctified. It is not necessary to study the scriptural texts. Any action done with a pure heart becomes holy.

"Mantra" means that which is established in the mind (manas) by a process of rumination (trana). This applies only to what is godly. Man is the embodiment of "Mantra", "Tantra" and "Yantra". Man's form is the basis for these three. The body is a Yantra (a machine or instrument.) The process of breathing in and out ("So-Ham") is the mantra. The heart, which is the powerhouse from which the body and the breathing

process receive their energies, is the Tantra. You may see from this what sacredness is embodied in man.

Unfortunately on account of mala, Aavarana and Vikshepa man is forgetting his inherent divinity. Supporting these three undesirable traits, there are three Vasanas (predisposing tendencies). One is the Vasana associated with the world (Loka Vasana). The second one is Deha Vasana (tendencies associated with the body). Third, Shastra Vasana (tendencies arising out of scriptural scholarship).

Attachment to the world (Loka Vasana) prompts one to achieve name and fame, seek power over others and aspire for honours and distinctions. As a result, one develops a narrow egoistic outlook and fails to realise the impermanence and transient nature of all worldly pleasures and possessions.

Attachment to the body (Deha Vasana) impels one to seek physical strength and health and an attractive physique. All the efforts to make up one's face will not serve to alter the natural features of persons. Only that which has been given by the Lord will be enduring. You must be content with that. While taking as much care of the body as is essential, you should not have excessive attachment to that which is inherently perishable and temporary. The body must be taken care of only for realising the Divinity within. The time spent on costumes and make-up is a sheer waste. It is no doubt necessary to maintain good health as long as one lives, but obsessive concern for the body is misconceived.

Attachment to book-lore and scriptural scholarship (Shastra Vasana) can be a source of sorrow even to a great scholar. He feels miserable when he forgets something or when he encounters someone with greater scholarship. The real meaning of "Shastra" is acting according to what has been laid down. Hence, without acting according to the injunctions of the texts, verbal knowledge of the books has no value.

By the combination of mala, Aavarana and Vikshepa with the three Vasanas (tendencies or attachments) man has degraded himself further. What is the use of attachment to worldly goods when man knows that he came with nothing into the world and will leave it empty-handed? What is the destination of man? Attachments are fetters which bind man. He must get rid of them to discover the Divine.

Veda and Vedanta

The Vedas have taught the means to make life in the world pure and meaningful. They have declared: "Na karmanaa na prajaysa dhanena, thyaagenaike amrutatwamaanasuh" ("not through rituals, progeny or wealth, but only through sacrifice can immortality be achieved.")

Apart from emphasising the importance of Tyaga (sacrifice), the Vedas have not gone further. They have indicated the means for experiencing many temporary pleasures. For instance, to appease hunger you are enjoined to take food. The satisfaction derived from

consuming food lasts for barely two hours. The Veda lays down what kind of food should be taken and in what manner.

The Vedanta has shown how by a process of elimination—"Not this" (Neti)—you arrive at what remains, namely, the Atma. When you find out that what you call the "I" is different from what you describe as your body, your mind etc., what remains is the 'I', which is the Self. You have to strive to recognise the Atma Principle in you. This is the message of Vedanta.

To begin with engage yourselves in as many good deeds (Satkarmas) as possible. Render as much service as you can to others. Involve yourselves in social service. And have God's name on your lips. Whatever you do, do it with love and not as a mechanical routine. Don't render service with a sense of compulsion from others. Service should be done with spontaneous feeling from the heart. Not force but the Source (the Divine) should inspire you.

Bhagavan concluded the discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema muditha Manase Kaho*" in which the entire gathering in the hall joined with full throated gusto.

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 4-10-1989*

He holds the Reins

Voice of the heavens poured melodiously
into the hearing casket of Sri Vedavyasa.
From him the world received
the Name aesthetically.
But time, in the raiment of oblivion
clothed memory—of man, of nations.
Forgotten treatises and volumes
offered custodianship to the spoken word.
With this massive lapse, the universe
rotated on its holy axis;
in the darkness of light.
Alas! It appeared dormant,
immortality pleaded ignorance of its creator.
Divisions between man and man
conflicts and demonry—
such was the demon valour of Kaliyug.
Aching hearts of the handful
dedicated, pleaded for the
Infinite's grace to the finite.
And the Cosmic Consciousness denied not His Grace.

In response
to save Dharma, to provide truth
to the untruthful, embodiment
of Cosmic Power, Sri Sathya Sai,
raced downwards, in His
unequalled flash of Glory.
He arrived to enliven dead
mass and restore the reign of piety and peace.

Today over this earth—The Kurukshetra—
He holds the reins.
The Sanathana Sarathi radiating
pristine glory, enthroned in
His phenomenal love for His Universe.

—S. Rashmi

TIME

Take time to pray —it helps to bring God near and washes the dust of earth from your eyes.
Take time for friends —it is the source of happiness.
Take time for work —it is the price of success.
Take time to think —it is the source of power.
Take, time to read —it is the foundation of knowledge.
Take time to laugh —it is singing that helps with life's loads.
Take time to love —it is the one sacrament of life.
Take time to dream —it hitches the soul to the stars.
Take time to play —it is the secret of youth.
Take time to worship —it is the highway to reverence.

(From "Bal Vikas" magazine)

From the Subtle to the Gross

"Everything in the universe evolves from the subtle to the gross." Thus Dr. J. Hislop had quoted Baba some two years ago during an Annual Western Canadian Conference. That thought kept reverberating in my feverish brain as I lay ill in a shed at Prasanthi Nilayam during a recent visit. From reading about the "Big Bang" theory of the origin of our physical universe I could understand how vast energies eventually condensed to form the physical world that we perceive with our senses. Similarly, the book "Science and Spirituality" explained to me how quantum physics regards matter at the subatomic level as no more than a crystallized form of energy. And

has Baba not said that "God is energy" thus explaining how God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient? Another question arose: Does the same relationship hold true for the individual human being?

Decades ago I was amazed to observe that thoughts did not appear to take their origin through a re-arranging of words in the mind. At that time I was an immigrant who thought in German and then translated those thoughts into English in order to communicate. In course of time I noticed that thoughts would arise as ideas or concepts before I made a conscious choice of expressing them in the words of either language. This observation shows that the mind progresses from the subtler plane of intuition to the concrete words of language. Did Swami not say that the mind is not just the physiological functioning of the brain? Did He not state that the mind is activated and sustained by a subtler element which is the seer, doer and witness of brain activity? He calls that subtle element the Jiva-Atma or individual soul which is part of Paramatma or Universal Spirit.

Mysterious illness

Gradually, I began to realize that there was a purpose for this illness. The drugs I had tried for the symptoms of fever and dysentery were utterly useless for they dealt only with the physical aspect of my body. I stopped all medications, taking only mineral water with some Vibhuti, and decided to leave all else in Baba's hands. Even those germs exist only by the Grace of our Lord, I knew. They were thriving in my body because the mental and physical aspects of my life are not in tune with the spiritual teachings that Baba makes available to us so tirelessly and sweetly. I resolved to owe up to the past mistakes that my feverish brain brought to consciousness. In the meantime, several attempts by concerned devotees to move me from the crowded shed to a less humid and less malodorous environment had failed. (The monsoon had overtaxed the sewage drainage outside the shed.) By evening a mosquito would continue to bother me until I sat up and said my prayers. Slowly I understood that Baba was in-charge at all three levels.

"He is all"

Within a day and a half from the onset of this mysterious illness the body felt well enough to return for Darshan. The joy of seeing the Divine form of Baba was refreshing. Thereafter, the abdominal complaints abated while the rest of the body felt energetic with a minimum of food and the mind required only little sleep. On another day; Baba was talking to students seated in the verandah. While I watched Him from afar I asked Him silently for help on the spiritual path. Within a few minutes He came to stand just in front of where I was seated and looked directly at my forehead. Involuntarily, the eyes closed and the head bowed as I became aware of a mild and warm sensation in the front of my head. Hours later I began to understand that there is absolutely nothing that exists without the Divine, that the ego cannot take credit for anything (not even a thought), and, finally, that there is absolutely no room or need for anything else but God because He is ALL and completely so.

Up until then I had been disturbed by some annoying and sometimes ugly thoughts that intrude occasionally even during Bhajans or other times of worship. Before leaving Prasanthi

Nilayam Providence took me to a teacher, a Sai devotee, who seemed immersed in constant joy. He spoke with conviction as an instrument of Sai and came to my rescue without having been told of any of my concern. "Accept EVERYTHING as a gift from God," he would repeat. He explained that one does not have to dwell on disturbing thoughts, for they, too, are a gift from God. Without the feelings of responsibility for the thoughts, the emotions of guilt or shame subside and the unwelcome thoughts fade quickly and are no longer a problem. As a farewell present, he told us how someone remarked to Baba that he was "leaving" for a certain place—after which Baba replied that *He* was "living" there!

"In tune with divinity"

Several symbolic events during that visit at the ashram pointed me to the need for greater efforts in spiritual matters. During the homeward journey I knew intellectually, that there can only be One Source, but I certainly do not yet identify with or -feel for everyone else. The path to God-realization must lie *in* unconditional loving service to His many forms. How and what was I to do? Very, soon a book "Peace Pilgrim" arrived. It describes a remarkable person who "refused to accept more than what she needed as long, as there are people who have less than what they need." She is quoted: as saying: "The purpose of problems is to push you toward obedience to God's laws, which are exact and cannot be changed. We have the free will to obey them or disobey them. Obedience will bring harmony, disobedience will bring you more problems."

May we all learn to be in tune with Divinity in this lifetime by redirecting our lives from material towards spiritual endeavours. Peace Pilgrim offers this lovely poem

The simplified life is a sanctified life,
Much more calm, much less strife.
Oh, what wondrous truths are unveiled—
Projects succeed which had previously failed.
Oh, how beautiful life can be,
Beautiful simplicity.

—*Dr. R. Ludwig, Vancouver, Canada*

VEDA PURUSHA VANI:

“Yearn for God Alone”

"Without resorting to extravagant adulation and not seeking petty favours, yearn for God a/one and you will get everything. To earn God's love the first requisite is a spirit of sacrifice based on selfless love," observed Bhagavan Baba, in His valedictory discourse to thousands of devotees assembled in the Poornachandra Auditorium for the Poorna-ahuti of the Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna. Bhagavan initiated the Yajna on October 3. The Poorna-ahuti was on Vijayadasami day, October 9.

In the course of His discourse, which summed up the message elaborated in the previous six discourses, Bhagavan said:

The man who is filled with love has great peace of mind, is pure at heart and is unruffled by any adverse circumstances, failures or losses. This fortitude is derived from love of the Lord, which endows him with Self-confidence. Self-confidence generates an immense internal power. Everyone has to develop this self-confidence so that the bliss of the Self (Atma-Ananda) may be experienced.

Love should be free from feelings of expectation of any return or reward. Love which arises out of a desire for something in return is not true love. Utterly selfless and motiveless love should be developed. This is the bounden duty of man.

You should not pray to God seeking this favour or that. The reason is: no one can know what immensely precious, Divine and magnificent treasures lie in the treasure-house of Divine Grace. No one can know what God intends or desires to give to a devotee. In such a situation, by asking for trivial and petty things, man is demeaning his Divine estate.

No one can understand what valuable, sacred and Divine favour God chooses to confer on a deserving devotee. Hence man should not seek from God, nor desire, nor pray for some petty trifles. More precious and desirable than any thing else is God's love.

If you wish to ask for anything from God pray to Him thus: "Oh Lord! Let me have you alone." Once you have secured the Lord, you can get anything you want. That was why Meera sang: "Oh heart, drink the nectar of Divine love." When you can have Divine love, to crave for anything else is like asking for coffee powder from the Wish-fulfilling Tree! (Kalpataru).

Avoid excessive praise

What you have to seek from God is God Himself and not any small and worthless benefits. Even while praying to God for His grace, you should not indulge in extravagant praise and flattery to win His approbation and seek His favours. "Oh Lord! You are the Ocean of Compassion! Your mercy is boundless! You are the refuge of the distressed and the protector of the abandoned!" Addressing the Lord in this manner palls on Him. Such praise for securing favours has a commercial tinge. Even the favours got through such praise are not proper at all. It is because the Rishis and the yogis in the past resorted to such praise that they had to perform penance for hundreds of years to get a vision of the Lord.

God as friend

God has a partiality for the human form. "Daivam manusha rupena", it is said. ("God has to be experienced in the human form.") It is only when God is regarded as a friend and a companion that He is pleased most. By addressing Him as: "Oh, my dearest friend! My beloved One! The darling of my heart," you can give Him the greatest joy. Instead of that, if He is described as one who is beyond praise by Brahma and other gods, who is not accessible to mind

and speech, whose glories are beyond description, who prevailed over the God of Death, who was born as the son of Devaki and Vasudeva, who went to the rescue of Draupadi, who protected the Pandavas, and so on, and then He is entreated to confer His grace on you, there is an element of the ludicrous in the comparisons made. Such praise even savours of envy. When you say, "Oh Lord! You have talked to them and given them so much! Why, don't you come to my help?" The comparison seems to stem from jealousy.

It is only when God is approached as a loving friend who has the power to come to our aid that our desires will be fulfilled. We use words of praise toward an unfamiliar person to show him respect and regard as a stranger. But we welcome an old friend with easy familiarity and intimacy.

Thyagaraja performed sadhana over many years to obtain a vision of the Lord. By that sadhana he established intimate relationship with Sri Rama. Because of this, he could greet Rama with friendly familiarity and welcome Him to his house as a companion in the song: "Raara maa intidaaka" ("Rama, come to our house"!) (Swami sang the song mellifluously). Because of his intimacy, Thyagaraja could address Rama in the second person singular.

Desireless love

In the context of the Navaratri celebrations, on this Poornahuti day, we must learn to recognise the Divine in this intimate manner. Reduce your desires. Don't pray for trifles. Don't go to a shrine with the intention to seek fulfillment of some petty desires. It is an unfortunate sign of the Kali age that everyone goes to a temple or pilgrim centre only to get some trivial benefits.

If you can win over the Lord Himself, what is it that is beyond your reach? Thyagaraja declared: "Rama! If only I have your grace (Anugraha) all the planets (grahas) will be in my palm."

It is essential to please God and win His grace by regarding Him as a friend and not indulging in excessive praise. For this, supreme Love is the primary means. This love should be firm and unchanging, unaffected by trials and tribulations and the vicissitudes of life. The Pandavas are the supreme examples of such unwavering love (for Krishna). When Draupadi was being humiliated in Duryodhana's assembly hall, when Abhimanyu was attacked and slain by the Kauravas, when Ashwathama massacred the Upapandavas (the infant children of the Pandavas), or when they performed the glorious Rajasuya sacrifice at the height of their power, or when they were in exile in the forest, without succumbing to the difficulties and troubles they were subjected to, they adhered firmly to the name of Krishna, with unwavering faith in Him. They relied only on Krishna's love. Difficulties and troubles are passing clouds which come and go. Do we remember all the kith and kin with whom we were related in our previous lives? While all these relationships have changed, only the relationship with God remains unchanged. We should attach ourselves to this unchanging love and not cling to other ever-changing relationships.

Significance of yajna

Yajnas are designed to lead you to the One who is unchanging and eternal. Ya + Jna is Yajna. `Ya' refers to the one who is the basis of the entire Cosmos. "Jna" refers to the quest for knowing that One. Yajna, therefore, is the quest for discovering the One who sustains the Cosmos. How is this search to be made? The Veda has declared: "Permeating everything inside and outside is the Lord Narayana." Where can you search for the Lord who is omnipresent? Why search at all?

The sages performed severe penances to get at the ultimate Reality. Finally they declared: "Vedham etham Purusham mahantham Aadityavarnam tamasahparastaat." ("We have known the Supreme Purusha, who is effulgent like the sun and is beyond the outer darkness"). They declared that the Supreme Lord is beyond Tamas. This means that the Lord is beyond the Tamo-guna and to experience the Lord we have to get rid of our Tamo-guna (the darkness of ignorance). The Lord is beyond the veil of Tamas. When the veil is removed, the Lord can be seen. When one is filled with Tamo-guna from head to foot, how can one experience God?

One is not prepared to make any sacrifice. With a mountain of desires in his heart, a devotee offers a petty coconut to the Lord! This is not the way to pray to the Lord. This is not devotion. This is not Love. To seek a favour is not prayer at all.

Love and sacrifice

Only a selfless person can engage himself in service to society. Only such a person is entitled to serve God. The first pre-requisite is the spirit of sacrifice. This can be developed only through love. The person filled with love is ready to make any sacrifice. The person without love will not be willing to make any sacrifice.

God does not dwell in any particular place. You are Clod. When you get rid of the body-consciousness, you will realise your divinity.

In the waking state, you have various kinds of experiences relating to the phenomenal world. All the experiences are through 19 agencies—the five organs of action (Karmindriyas), the five senses of perception (Jnanindriyas), the five life-breaths (Panchapranas) and the mind, the intellect (Buddhi), the Chitta (the Will) and the Ego (Ahamkara). It is only when all these 19 are present that you can enjoy the experiences of the physical world in the waking state. The Atma principle that is conscious in the waking state is called Viraataswaroopa—the Cosmic Form. The Cosmos is the form of the Viraat Purusha. In this form the Divine is called Vishwa. As the universe has emerged from Vishwa, it is called Vishwa. Another name for Vishwa is Viraja Swaroopa—one who confers joy and stands out as an ideal to the world and is the embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

When you go on to the sleeping state, you have dreams. Even in the dream state the 19 agencies are present, but in a subtle form. Wherefrom have the dreams arisen? They are created by the dreamer himself and he is also the experiencer. The Divine Principle in the dream state is called Tejas (the Effulgent). He is called Hiranyagarbha (The Golden Wombed One). This appellation means that he is the one who contains all within himself and projects them from

himself. The third state is Sushupti (deep sleep state). What is it that is experienced in deep sleep? Forgetting himself, in an unconscious condition, he experiences bliss. In that state only Prajna exists (Constant Integrated Awareness). "Prajnanam Brahma" declares the Upanishad. This state of awareness is equated with Brahman. The Divine Principle that is aware in this state is called Prajna.

The divine in everyone

The Vishwa present in the waking state, the Tejas present in the dream state, and the Prajna present in the deep sleep state, all three are one only. When the states of consciousness are dispensed with, we have only one experiencer present in all of them. That is the unity of the Divine indicated by the dictum: "Tat-Tvam-Asi" ("That thou art").

Every person has this Divine Principle in him. There is no need to search for the Divine elsewhere. He is everywhere, omnipresent. Forgetting one's inherent divinity, man is searching for the Divine in the external world. Even in this search, the primary requisite is pure, selfless love.

Chant the name of the Lord with that love. God loves the human form. That is the reason why avatars come in human form. You can experience the vision of God by following the path of Karma (prescribed actions). The Lord has declared in the Gita: "You are qualified only to perform actions." A scriptural text says: "Only through the body can you pursue Dharma (Righteousness)." All living beings are bound by karma in this world.

The Divine is being worshipped as a decorated idol or image, with an artificial form. The Lord should be experienced in His natural form, in a natural way. All the ornamentation the devotee resorts to does not please God. It may please the heart of the devotees, but God's heart is not moved thereby. Only through love can God's heart be moved and softened. The devotee has that power. Without resorting to extravagant adulation of God, not seeking petty favours from God, yearn for God alone and you will get everything.

Endeavour to make God your intimate friend.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Bhajana binaa sukha Shanti nahi.*"

In his life-long quest for happiness man forgets that he can secure enduring bliss only by pursuing the spiritual path. Towards the end of his life, when all other sources have failed, he turns towards God. Man cannot secure real happiness by relying on worldly objects. Only by turning towards the Spirit can he secure bliss.

In the quest for bliss, the Vedas have pronounced a caveat. God is incomparable. He cannot be comprehended by logical proofs. All kinds of proofs are of no avail for recognising God. He is beyond the reach of mind and speech.

There are three types of proofs for arriving at the truth. One is direct perception (Pratyaksha Pramanam). Today every man relies on this kind of proof. For everything he seeks evidence of direct perception or experience. He is not prepared to accept anything which is not amenable to the proof of direct perception. This is really a sign of ignorance. Direct perception is associated with many afflictions. For instance, when the eye is free from any disease it recognises the different colours in their true forms. This is the basis for the authority of direct perception. What happens when the eye is affected by jaundice? Everything appears yellowish. No other colour can be perceived. How, then, can one trust the evidence of his eyes? All evidence based on the perceptions of the sense organs is vitiated by this defect. When the sense organs themselves are subject to change, how can they be regarded as infallible indicators of absolute truth? Senses which are liable to change cannot be the means of arriving at the unchanging Reality.

The second type of proof is based on inference (anumanam). You infer the presence of fire on a hill when you see smoke going up from it. But you cannot be sure whether it is smoke from a fire or a cloud of water vapour. Without seeing the fire, to infer its existence from smoke is likely to be wrong. Conclusions based on inference cannot bear the stamp of certainty.

Revealed truth

The third type of proof is "Shabda Pramana", the authority of the spoken word. This type of proof relates to what a person, who has had a direct experience of something, says about it. The authority of the Veda is based on this concept. Veda is revealed Truth. It has to be accepted as such.

"Shabda Pramana " (or proof based on spoken word) is of two kinds: Vaidika Pramana and Loukika Pramana. Loukika Pramana (mundane testimony) is not concerned with spiritual truth. It cannot explain God. Only Vaidika Pramana (Vedic Testimony) seeks to describe God. The Brahma Sutra declares: "Shastra yonitvaath"—the Divine can be known only on the authority of the scriptures. What is the meaning of Shastra (scripture)? Shastra is that which conveys to the ear what is not audible otherwise It brings back to the memory what has been forgotten.

Such scriptural authority is the basis for Dharma (the principles of right conduct). Dharma is of many kinds. Jati Dharma (the code of conduct for a species or race), Desha Dharma (national code), Kula Dharma (code of conduct for one's caste), Gana Dharma (the code for a Gana or sect) and Aapad Dharma (the code of conduct during dangers). All these five kinds of codes of righteous conduct emphasise compassion towards all living beings. Kindness has been regarded as the highest virtue. To please every being is to please God. One who is lacking in love for fellow-beings will not secure God's Love Without love for God, one will not have fear of sin. In the absence of both of these, a man will have no social morality (sangha neeti). "Neeti" means right conduct. It implies right behaviour in harmony with the conditions of the particular time, place and society. You have to subordinate yourself to the mores of the community. You should not violate the norms of society. Hence the Veda enjoined observance of social disciplines.

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 5-10-1989*

JANMADINA SANDESH:

The Cosmic Indweller

Can one who has not tasted the nectar of Truth be called a man? He is only a wooden doll. If he has no knowledge of Dharma (Righteousness) how can one be called a man even if he has a human body? A person without peace is only a tiger and not a man with a mind. A person without love is a barren field and cannot be called a man.

Supreme devotion consists in acquiring the four qualities of Truth, Dharma, Peace and Love. Only thus can you become full-fledged human beings. This is the means to achieve happiness here and in the hereafter.

*In the centre of the earth is a place called Puttaparthi
The embodiment of the Atma made its advent.
While mankind was seeking knowledge of science
A University came into existence here.
People of all nations gathered here to experience peace and joy.
Millions of virtuous aspirants and adepts have filled this place.
The Sai Lord has come to teach the world love and the truth of all religions.
Sathya Sai has incarnated as embodied Love to shower joy on all.*

Embodiments of Love!

"Yatho imaani bhoothaani jaayanthe" ("That from which these beings are born.") The entire creation comes from the Paramatma (the Supreme Godhead), is sustained by Him and ultimately

desires. As is the intention, so is the conduct. As is the conduct, so is the fruit. As is the fruit, so is the goal. Life is determined by desires (Sankalpas). Hence every man should have sublime desires, experience sublime fruits and ultimately attain a sublime end.

The phenomenal world (Jagat) is visible to the eye, is audible to the ear, is experienced by the body, cognised by the mind and enjoyed by the heart. This world of perception is known as "Vishwam". "Vishwa" means that which pervades. The principle which accounts for pervasiveness is called "Vishwam". Vishnu is the One who pervades the cosmos. The cosmos is the effect, Vishnu is the cause. Cause and effect are expressions of a single divine principle.

The Cosmic principle is also known by other names such as "Viraat", "Vaishwanara" and "Vairagasuta". "Vaishwanara" is the Divine Principle that produces the consciousness of "I-ness" in every being. The cosmos is thus a manifestation of Vishnu, who pervades everything.

Six qualities are attributed to the Divine. They are: Aishwarya (Wealth), Dharma (Righteousness), Yasas (Fame), Sampada (Prosperity), Jnana (Supreme Wisdom), and Vairagya (non-attachment). Wealth has a myriad forms—material wealth, physical wealth, the wealth of knowledge, and so on. The Divine possesses every conceivable form of wealth.

SWADHARMA AND PARA DHARMA

Dharma (or Righteousness) as an attribute of the Divine comprehends every kind of Dharma—worldly dharma, vaideeka dharma, national dharma, community dharma and so on. Of these, two are important. One is Para Dharma, the other is Swadharma. "Swadharma" is often treated as Dharma relating to one's caste or creed. Thus, separate codes of Dharma are ascribed to Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and others. This is not a correct interpretation. "Swa-Dharma" really refers to Atma-Dharma (the Dharma relating to the Spirit). Man's duty is to observe this spiritual code of conduct. "Para Dharma" relates to the body. It embraces the code of conduct that is observed in daily life for earning one's livelihood and leading his life in society "Para Dharma" is fraught with fear and delusions. There is the fear of success or defeat or the fear of facing blame and censure. In observing this mundane code of conduct man is haunted by fears and doubts of various kinds. In adhering to "Swa-Dharma" (the Spiritual code) there is no room for any such fears. Therefore, man should follow Atma-Dharma.

As the Divine attributes are found in: man also, it is clear that the Divine dwells in all human beings. "Eko vasi sarvabootha-antaraatma" ("He is the One Indweller in the hearts of all beings.") God cannot be seen in any one place or at any particular time. He is present in everything but is not attached to anything.

Beyond proof

How can One who permeates everything and is present everywhere be subject to any kind of proof or test? That is the reason why God has been described as "Aprameya"—the Transcendental One. As one who is the source of all knowledge and intelligence, God has been called "Manu". As He is the supreme creator, He is also called Prajapati. He is also called Atma

and Brahman are not different. The Divine has also been termed "Aham" (the "I"). This does not refer to the individual ego. It refers to the effulgence that illumines everything and dispels all darkness totally. Another meaning of 'Aham' is 'Saakshi' (Witness). The Supreme Atma (Paramatma) Who is the witness to everything, is called 'Aham'. He is the Lord of all that has gone before, all that is and all that is yet to be born. He is the eternal, unchanging Being who is the master of the past, the present and the future. Hence he is described as "Bhootha Bhavya Bhavath Prabhuh", (The Lord of the past, the present and the future). He is also described as "Bhavah" the effulgent. He is omnipresent. Hence the appellation "Maha-anubhava" is applicable only to God, though the term is loosely applied to describe some extraordinary persons. It refers to One who is present in the subtlest atom and the vastest object in the cosmos.

Sat-chit-ananda

In every object in the universe, Sat (Being,) Chit (Awareness) and Ananda {Bliss} are present in a subtle form. There are two other characteristics of every object: name and form. Sat, Chit and Ananda are derived from the Divine. Name and form, which are subject to constant change, are related to Nature. Even name and form are comprehended by Sat, Chit and Ananda. Man is the embodiment of these three. Forgetting these basic truths about his permanent Reality, man is leading a life related to names and forms.

Every human being is a manifestation of God. Every object manifests the divine. There is nothing in the world which is not a manifestation of God. Do not have any -doubt that the cosmos is permeated by God (Hari) and everything is contained in HIM. There is not an atom in the universe which is not permeated by the Divine.

Believers and non-believers

Prasad asked for an exposition of the nature of God. Some say "It is not" and some say "It is" and some others' say, "It is and it is not." Those who say, "It is" do not know what It is. Those who deny its existence also do not know what it is that they deny. Those who affirm and deny are ignorant of both the things.

From early times those who believed in the existence of God were called Astikas (Theists), those who denied God's existence were called Nastikas (Atheists) and the third category were called Astika - Nastikas (Theist - Atheists). Theists and Atheists are really one though they have contrary names. Atheists are like buds of flowers and theists are like the flowers that have blossomed. The flower that has blossomed offers its fragrance to many. The unopened bud retains its fragrance within itself. Some day the bud may blossom or is likely to drop away before blossoming. Those who spread the bliss of divinity in the world were described as theists and those who did not do so were regarded as atheists. Those who say, "God does not exist" must have some prior idea of God before they can deny His existence. In twilight, a rope may be mistaken for a snake, but the moment light is brought the rope is recognised for what it is. Likewise the man of wisdom (Jnani) recognises God when he is free from delusion (Maya).

All the myriad differences that one sees in the world are only variations in form of the one basic entity—the Brahman. A man who seeks to enjoy the fruit of a tree cannot be content with nourishing only the flowers. He has to nourish the roots, the trunk, the branches and the leaves and the flowers. Likewise the man who seeks the highest wisdom (Jnana) has to nourish the body, the senses, the feelings appropriately. For this purpose, the nine forms of devotion have been prescribed for seekers.

The mind, it has been said, is the cause of bondage or liberation. The mind is like a lock and the heart is the key. When the key is turned towards God, there is detachment. When it is turned towards the world there is attachment. Thus the mind is the cause of either liberation or bondage. Therefore, the mind has to be directed towards what is holy and pure. Then you will lead a free, joyous, blissful life. The man who has developed such an attitude will be in a permanent state of bliss. He will be the embodiment of bliss.

"Always happy"

When I came down in the Mandir this morning, the children greeted me with the words. "Happy Birthday!" I told them. "I am always happy, it is you who are unhappy, who should get happiness."

It is only when each one realises his inherent divinity and leads a Godly life that all will be happy. Divinity is not confined to any specific place or form. Each one should realise that this all-pervading, all-powerful Divinity is within him. There must be the realisation that the Principle that is Omnipresent in the subtlest form and in the grossest form is the Atma or Brahman. God is the eternal Reality, without birth, growth or death, without beginning, middle or end, and who is immutable. It is only the bodies that are subject to change. Making use of the body that is mutable, the immutable Divine has to be experienced.

Embodiments of love! In whatever manner you seek to understand the Divine, you have to remember that the Divine is the universal, all-pervading Consciousness (Chaitanyam). Only the unchanging Divine can confer on you permanent bliss. This does not mean giving up worldly concerns. What you have to do is to make worldly life the basis for the realisation of the Divine. Every action should be regarded as an offering to the Divine. You must strive to reach the state where, recognising that God is omnipresent, you realise your own Divinity. To begin with you have to do good deeds, based on good thoughts. People today devote hardly five minutes to the thought of God. How can they hope to have joy and peace when the bulk of their time is devoted to selfish pursuits?

Dedicate yourself to the service of society. Engage yourself in sacred actions. Always remember the Divine name. Chanting the name of the Lord, performing sacred actions, experience bliss in your heart.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Bhajana Binaa Sukha Saanthi Nahi*"

As the years pass, the Akhanda Bhajan, performed by every Sai Centre during the second Saturday-Sunday in November, as a prelude to Bhagavan's birthday celebrations, is becoming more and more significant in Bhagavan's programme of unifying mankind by raising the human consciousness. For one thing, the number of Sai centres as well as the number of countries in which they are functioning are constantly on the increase. The overgrowing stream of devotees coming to Prasanthi Nilayam from all parts of the world testifies to this.

"News" from Lithuania

The Sai message is penetrating even the Communist countries, as is evidenced by the visit of some devotees to Prasanthi Nilayam from the Soviet Union. It is learnt that there are quite a few devotees of Bhagavan Baba in Moscow. Now comes a letter from a Lithuanian devotee, who has written a four-page article on Baba in a Lithuanian magazine entitled, "Science and Life." Reporting this exciting event in her country, Mrs. Lily Talmantiene writes:

"The reason I'm writing is to announce some joyous news. Perhaps you would like it for your magazine. I think it deserves mentioning. The unbelievable, the incredible has happened in the Soviet Union the first long—favourable—article on our beloved Sri Sathya Sai Baba has appeared. I am very very happy to say that it has appeared in Lithuanian. It has just come out, yesterday (October 16, '89) in the magazine. "Mokslas in Gyverimas", which means "Science and Life." (I hope you know that Lithuanian is the closest living language akin to Sanskrit. You don't have to look far to understand this. Many of our numerals sound the same, and just consider this: Moklas= Science = Moksha. Darne = harmony = Dharma. Senas = Old = Sanathana, etc. Many words sound the same, but have a shift of meaning).

"So, in this language (my native) a four-page long article has appeared. It presents ample information about Sri Sathya Sai organisation: its founder, aims, activity. It outlines Baba's main mission on earth and by what means he realises it. There is concise information on Seva Dal and Bal Vikas and I hope it can't fail to arouse interest. With trepidation I'm awaiting the feedback, for I am the author of it."

Years ago Bhagavan remarked about the prospect of materialism giving place to spirituality in the avowedly atheistic communist countries, that the communist's turn for transformation will "come next." Swami humorously observed, "Communist" means "come you next"!

THE AKHANDA JYOTI

When the Akhanda Bhajan is observed in every country in the world and the Akhanda Jyoti is lit everywhere, the light of Bhagavan's message of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love will become the beacon-light for all mankind.

This year, Bhagavan inaugurated the Akhanda Bhajan at Prasanthi Nilayam by lighting the Akhanda Jyoti in Prasanthi Mandir at 6 P.M. on November 11 (Saturday). The opening bhajan started appropriately with the stirring lines: "Akhanda Jyoti jalao Saayee, mana mandirme". The

were confined to students of the Sathya Sai Institute from the Prasanthi Nilayam (boys) and Anantapur (girls) campuses. The bhajans concluded with Arati to Bhagavan and the distribution of prasadam to all the devotees.

- *N.*

Teach Me

*Teach me to feel another's woe,
To hide the faults I see
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me*
—Anon.

The light that Beckons

I still my mind and see a light
converging into space,
I still my mind and see the light,
expanding inner-space,
I see myriad lights explode and
then merge as one.

I multiplied by I-to infinity I see,
I see a light beckoning all-but
all are me,
I reach the light and see myself
beckoning but to me
For I am the light that I must reach,
this secret I share with thee.

—*J. Jagadeesan*

"Wealth is worshipped as God. Pride has become a creed. Selfishness is entrenched in the intellect. The ego is flaunted and desires have become an adornment. Righteousness has become, a mere figurehead in the world. Compassion has dried up. Gentility has waned. Hypocrisy has become the hall-mark of life. Love and affection have become lustful afflictions. The scriptures are disregarded. Life has become a burden and man's mind has gone astray. Gratitude as a virtue has evaporated. In the Kali age these have become the qualifications of educated persons. Alas! What shall I say about the plight of man when humanness has fallen so low?"

"When women leave their homes for jobs, where are the housewives to do the household chores? When both husband and wife go to their offices, where are the mothers to look after the children? When the mothers go to school to teach other children, who will teach their own children? Even if the monetary position is eased, other difficulties arise in the home. In trying to secure comforts, the office-seeker achieves only an emptiness at home."

Dear students, teachers and lovers of education!

Bharatiyas were wedded to Truth and Righteousness. Justice was their sheet-anchor. Students should safeguard today not the nation but Truth and Righteousness. Only students who are broad-minded and have a wide outlook can uphold Truth and Righteousness.

The world is based on Truth and Right Conduct. These two sustain the world. If they are protected, the world will be happy and prosperous. Victory will come in the wake of Truth and Righteousness. No other form of strength, including armed might, will ensure victory. Hence, students should consider themselves the guardians of Truth and Righteousness and equip themselves for this role.

Education is the formal expression of Truth, which is the basis of social harmony. The divine qualities of man can be seen in education as in a mirror. Today's educational system makes the student hard-hearted. He lacks the feelings of kindness and sympathy. Tolerance and compassion are totally absent. Those who should seek to serve the poor and the needy are wrapped up in their own selfish pursuits. Selfishness and self-centredness should be rooted out. Service to society should be regarded as the primary purpose of education.

Decline of moral values

Bharatiya culture is a sublime one. It is incomparably great. But the advance of modern technology has shaken the traditional institutions like a powerful cyclone. It is true that materially, scientifically and economically, great progress has been made. But morally, spiritually and socially man has fallen a great deal. Moral values have been shattered. In trying to make life more comfortable with the help of machines, men have become slaves of the machine.

for the good of mankind. Unfortunately, even those who profess to be leaders of society and who claim to be interested in promoting the well-being of the people, are not acting along right lines to set a good example to the students.

Education, when it gets linked with egoism, loses its wider perspective. It becomes supremely purposeful only when it is related to spirituality. Hence students should rid themselves of egoism and strive to promote the welfare of society, through the knowledge acquired by them, with faith and self-confidence.

Education is not mere verbal knowledge. It should enable one to manifest his inherent divinity. It should promote the practice of Truth and Right Conduct. Unfortunately educational institutions today have become merely workshops manufacturing degree-holders. The acquisition of degrees cannot constitute education. Education must promote ethical behaviour. It must foster self-control. This is the essential function of education. PARENTS' DUTY

If students are to conduct themselves properly, the parents have to set the right example. Unfortunately, even though many of the parents might be educated, wealthy and interested in Bharatiya culture, their practical conduct is not exemplary. This is the reason why most students go astray. All parents want their children to get a good education, good jobs and earn high incomes. But few of them want that they should grow into ideal citizens. In some instances, where the students have developed some spiritual interests, the parents try to discourage them. There are parents who behave like Hiranyakasipu and take their children to task for their interest in spiritual practices at such an early age. Nor is that all. Some of them even try to cover up the bad behaviour of their children by pretending that they are well behaved. They make no effort to correct the children and turn them towards the right path. Because of this attitude of the parents, the students are taking to bad ways and are spoilt like Dhritarashtra's children (the Kauravas). The students are not to blame. It is the parents who are responsible for the students' misbehaviour, which is reflected in indiscipline in educational institutions.

Students must be made to feel proud about their country, their people and their culture. They should realise that wealth and strength are of no value without character. Of what avail was all his wealth to Dhritarashtra? Because of the wickedness of his sons, he lost everything in the end.

Education today develops knowledge and skills but not character. Right education should promote good qualities. There is no need to seek a new system of education or effect reforms in society. It is enough if we have young men and women of good character and integrity. They will make the country great and prosperous.

Students! You have to realise the importance of mental transformation. All kinds of political and economic reforms are taking place. But little is being done to promote the sacred Bharatiya culture. What we need is a spiritual transformation. It is the absence of spirituality that accounts for all the chaos, conflict and disorder in the world.

The Hindu tradition laid stress on two maxims: Speak the Truth. Follow Righteousness. These two vital principles have been obliterated today. Mammon reigns supreme. Wealth is worshipped as God. Malpractices are the offerings made to this deity. Humanness has been sacrificed. There must be a return to human values. Education must aim at promoting these values. Planting the seed of love and fostering the tree of tolerance, students should seek to offer the fruit of peace to society. This should be their primary duty.

Students! You do not become educated merely by getting degrees. You will be truly educated only when you render service to the people. Engage yourselves in service to the people. True education is that which equips one for service and not merely for earning wealth. Fill your hearts with compassion. A compassionate heart is the seat of the Divine.

Role of Sai institutions

It is asked: who is to blame for the present state of education—the students or the teachers? It must be remembered that today's teachers were themselves students once. Today's students will be tomorrow's teachers. Hence students should train themselves properly for their future roles. It was with this object in view that the Sathya Sai educational institutions were started. Today's students are the future nation-builders. Only when the students learn to conduct themselves with integrity and fairness will they be able to restore the nation's ancient values and cultural heritage. The ancients achieved name and fame by their adherence to values. Students in those days were exemplars of tolerance and compassion. They were wedded to Truth and Righteousness. Consequently they lived long lives. Unfortunately such sacred attitudes are not to be seen among students now. They have no trace of selflessness in them. They have installed conceit and ostentation at the altar of education. These traits are alien to true education and should be totally eradicated. Humility and obedience, which are the insignia of the educated man, should be promoted. Students today are failing to show reverence even to their parents, much less to elders. To flaunt one's degrees is not a sign of true education, but only an aberration. The truly educated person should cultivate the virtues of truth and righteous conduct and lead an ideal life in the service of society. Only such persons can contribute to the greatness and glory of Bharat.

Bharat's glory

Bharat stood as a beacon-light to the world in ancient times because of its spiritual ideals. This sacred land is the land of sacrifice (Tyaga), of Yoga, and of Karma (Righteous action). Today's education tends to make it a land of indulgence (bhogabhumi). With the result that all kinds of maladies (Roga) are present in educational institutions.

You must cultivate respect for Bharat's ancient culture, follow its ideals and experience the joy to be derived there from. Society today suffers from lack of peace. Evil forces are rampant owing to the unchecked growth of selfishness and self-interest. These tendencies have to be rooted out. This can be done only by taking to the spiritual path. It is the duty of parents to sow the seeds of spirituality in the children from their early years. They should not think that parental responsibilities end with sending the children to school or college. They have a duty to see that

Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi became ideal men because of the example set by their parents in their daily lives. When the parents lead upright lives, the children will follow them. Hence, parents as well as teachers should serve as ideal examples to the students.

From all the enquiries I have made, I have found it is the parents who are spoiling the children. Their affection for the children is totally misconceived. They should realise that those good qualities which are instilled in the children when they are young, alone will stand them in good stead all their lives.

Dear embodiments of Love! Together with your studies, cultivate humility and reverence, and learn to conduct yourselves in an exemplary manner. Without morality, society will be ruined. Hence, by leading moral lives, foster the well-being of the nation. This is the sacrifice you have to perform. Do not lead a life of selfishness. Money comes and goes. Morality comes and grows. The path of righteousness may be strewn with obstacles. Do not bother about them. Act according to your conscience in all circumstances.

Dharmaja and dharma

In the Mahabharata, there was an occasion during the time the Pandavas were living in exile, when Draupadi addressed Dharmaja as follows: "Dharmaja! There is no greater votary of Dharma than you. You adhered to Dharma as your life breath even in the smallest action. In spite of this, you have had to go through inconceivable ordeals. How has your Dharma protected you?" Smilingly Dharmaja replied: "Draupadi! Despite all the trials and tribulations I have gone through, I have not given up adherence to Dharma. That is my greatness. We should not succumb to difficulties and give up Dharma. Dharma should be upheld even during difficulties. That is the mark of greatness."

Students! This life is not for experiencing happiness or sorrow. Both have their good and bad results. They are transient and impermanent. You should rise above them to uphold righteousness in service to society and serve as an example to the nation.

The Convocation came to a close with the striking of the National Anthem by the Institute Band.

Listening to the Inner Voice

It is something Swami has said more than once: "I have very few real devotees." These words have challenged us to the depth of our souls, for their mere proclamation suggests that being a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is limited to a select few. Yet, with Swami constantly telling us that God loves all equally, the evidence points to areas of improvement within ourselves, some error that we must be able to correct, which would put us in the "true devotee" category.

One day, upon reflection of this thought, I asked my Inner Voice the question "What is a true devotee of God?"

Immediately, an answer returned, which said, "A true devotee is not someone who worships Me, rather, it is someone who *becomes* Me." The words hit me with an absolute knowing, in which there was no doubt that they were correct.

To become God. This is a serious area that each of us must look at, for it is the inevitable conclusion of this journey. In fact, it is the very task that Swami declares as the reason for His coming, that we become that which we've always been. Yet, although Swami has declared this, many find the idea of becoming God blasphemous. At best, many look at the idea of becoming God, and hold it as some "future event", something that will happen "some day." But few ever dare to look and accept the possibility of becoming God NOW. Perhaps this is the mark of a true devotee.

Yet, how does one go about becoming God? Swami has said over and over that to worship pictures and garland statues is a waste of time. He has even set limits to the amount of sitting meditation that should be done. However, He has told us about a very definite and practical device within each of us that will bring us quickly to our divinity: The Conscience, or "Inner Voice."

Swami has declared this inner Voice to be the Voice of God Himself. He has told us that this Voice will give us definite direction in dealing with all aspects of our worldly lives, and will transform us, *through* our lives, that we may at last become God.

Even beyond directing our daily affairs through right action, this Inner Voice speaks to us of our innate divinity. It supplies us with a deep flow of peace and contentment, and a knowing beyond words. It comforts us in our times of strife, and quickly puts us back on the proper road, whenever we deviate from the path. And when we follow Its Guidance without hesitation, not only are our lives transformed, but also the lives of those around us.

The Inner Voice is more than something to be turned to when things get rough. It should become our closest of friends, One Whom we, listen to always. This Inner Voice is the Voice of Swami within each of us, and to be in constant touch with it, is like having a continual interview with Swami. However, each of us must find this Inner Voice within ourselves, for God speaks to each of us directly. The means for us to reach God vary from person to person based upon the individual. However, the destination is the same for all. Thus, taking advice from another's Inner Guidance, can bring about the dreadful mistake of confusing their means for ours. This is why Swami has stressed the fact that He communicates with each of us directly, not through a third party.

There is an important obviousness in why we should each learn to follow our Inner Voice at this time. Swami's mission is now in full swing, and the expansion of this mission makes it

Prasanthi Nilayam. Learning to listen to this Inner Voice gives us the individual direction which is needed in our own process of becoming God. Plus, the Inner Voice is always with us, whether we are in India, or in our native land. We can rest confident and secure, knowing that Swami is prompting our every move.

Learning to hear the Inner Voice does take effort, and many wonder if they truly are hearing the Inner Voice, or just voices based on thought or emotions. When the Inner Voice directs, there is no question or uncertainty about it. The guidance is direct, and it is definite. If we are perfectly honest, each of us knows what we should do. All have had the experience of following "another" voice, having disastrous results, and saying in the end, "I really knew I was doing the wrong thing, but I didn't want to believe it."

Herein lies the main problem for hearing the Inner Voice: our own desires. In truth, the Inner Voice: is always giving us guidance, but most of the time our own desires are what keep us from listening. When we have desires, we take our life along the path that will fulfill those desires. If the Inner Voice is giving us a direction that won't fulfill our desires as we see them, then we will not choose to listen to it, and will even go as far as projecting this upon God by saying "The Inner Voice never guides me." So, the first step to hearing the Inner Voice, is removing desires. The second problem is judgement. Oftentimes, we will prejudge a situation in our lives, deciding in advance the direction the situation should go. If the Inner Voice prompts a different direction, again, we will not choose to listen to it. So, the fundamental problem is not that the Inner Voice isn't guiding us, but that we don't value the Inner Voice enough to listen to it; because we are afraid that it contradicts our own judgements and desires, we mute the Inner Voice.

This is the great secret that Jesus gave us when asked how he performed his miracles, and he said: "Of myself, I do nothing." What he meant by "I do nothing," is that he didn't superimpose his own judgements or desires over the Truth, and thus he let it be as it was. He was in touch with the Inner Voice *because* he did nothing, and by following only Its Guidance, were his miracles performed, and thus, he became God.

It is not hearing the Inner Voice, but learning to value the Inner Voice that is our greatest challenge. For when we value It, we are willing to hear It, thus we have taken another step towards God, and He in turn can take ten more towards us by letting us hear It. Unfortunately, most of us only learn to value the Inner Voice after experiencing the pain of following "other voices." The only way to save ourselves from this needless process, is to live in the full faith that God is the only One Who knows the play well enough to direct it. By knowing this, we can follow His Voice prompting our moves and our lines, leading us into Him, giving us the glorious experience of becoming God. If this is what is meant by being a real devotee, it is a goal worthy of every ounce of my being.

—*Michael J. Oliver*

Knower of the Brahman

In His series of seven discourses during the Dasara festival in October, Bhagavan Baba provided new insights into the message of the Vedas and pointed out their relevance to the world today. (Three of these discourses were published in our November issue). Of the remaining four, which were related to the same theme, Bhagavan devoted His discourse on October 7 to the sage Yagnavalkya's encounter with the sages and scholars in Emperor Janaka's court on the nature of the Supreme (Brahman) and related issues. Bhagavan concluded His discourse with a call to the devotees not to be content with listening to discourses but to practise at least a part of what they learnt.

In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

In the Treta Yuga, the Emperor Janaka performed a great sacrifice (yajna) to make known to the world the value of Yajnas and Yagas, Japa and Tapas and arouse in men the consciousness of their divinity. He invited many sages, seers, yogis and scholars to attend the yajna. The yajna was performed successfully.

On the last day, Janaka organised a grand assemblage of sages and savants. He invited whoever was a Knower of Brahman (Brahmavetha) to come forward. Among the sages and scholars present several doubts cropped up. Yagnavalkya alone came forward without any doubt or hesitation.

Janaka had arranged for a thousand richly caparisoned cows to be presented to the Knower of Brahman. Yagnavalkya directed his disciples to lead all the cows to his ashram. At that stage, the high-priest of the sacrifice, Aswala, got up and said: "Yagnavalkya! It is only after demonstrating that you are Knower of the Brahman will you be entitled to take the cows to your ashram."

Responding to this challenge, Yagnavalkya started putting a volley of questions to the assembled sages and scholars. None of them could give proper answers to his questions.

Conquest of death

When the assembly was plunged in silence, Aswala got up and asked Yagnavalkya: "What is the way to conquer death?" Yagnavalkya replied: "Vaak" (Speech). "Vaak" is Agni (the fire-God). With the help of this fire, death can be conquered. He also said that this is liberation (Mukti), supreme liberation (Athimukti). Aswala asked him to explain his answer. Yagnavalkya said that when a person is born, his mother's womb is a fire-place (Agni-Kunda). All his limbs are formed within the womb. This is the Womb of Fire (Garbha-Agni). When he dies, his body is cremated in the funeral pyre (chitagni) and is reduced to ashes. Fire is the cause of the body and fire is the destroyer of the body. Yagnavalkya declared that there is no greater power in the world than Agni.

Many others present in the assembly put questions to Yagnavalkya to justify his claim to be a Knower of Brahman. Uddalaka got up and asked him whether he could give the number of the planets. Today we call the planets by the names Rahu, Ketu, etc. In those days these names did not exist. Yagnavalkya said there were the following eight planets Prana (life-breath), Vaak (speech), Jihva (the tongue), the eye, the ear, the hands, the mind, the skin. Uddalaka resumed his seat.

How many deities?

Another sage got up and put a series of questions: "Yagnavalkya! Can you say how many deities there are?" Unhesitatingly, the sage answered: 3306. The next question was: "Can you reduce the number to 33?" Yagnavalkya said there were 8 Vasus, 11 Rudras, 12 Adityas, Indra and Prajapati, making up in all 33. Yagnavalkya was asked further whether he could bring down the number to six. The sage said: Agni (the fire-God), Vayu (the wind-God), Aditya (the Sun-God), Adityamandala (the solar system) and the three worlds (trilokas). Not content with this answer, the questioner asked the sage further, "Can you reduce this number further to three?" Yagnavalkya replied: "The three worlds are embodiments of the Trinity." The three worlds are: Devaloka (the realm of the gods), Manavaloka (the world of human beings) and Daityaloka (the world of Asuras, Demons). For Devaloka the deity is Dama (self-control). For the world of men, it is Dharma (Righteousness) and for the world of demons, it is Daya (compassion). These are the respective deities for the three worlds, he said.

The sage went on- to ask whether the number could be reduced to two. Yagnavalkya replied: Prana (the Life-Principle) and Annam (food). He then put an intriguing question. "Can you reduce this to one and a half?" All the scholars and sages present wondered at such a question. However, Yagnavalkya replied: "It is Vayu (the wind-god)." The sage asked how Vayu, who is a single deity, can be regarded as one-and-a-half God? Yagnavalkya said: Vayu is present in all substances and has got the name 'Adhyaardham', which also means one-and-a-half. He then asked, "Can you reduce it to one?" Yagnavalkya replied: "That is Prana (the Life-Principle)."

The sage was satisfied with Yagnavalkya's answers and declared that he was a Knower of the Brahman and was entitled to be an honoured member of Emperor Janaka's assembly of sages.

Basis of love

Thereafter, Yagnavalkya addressed the assembly thus to give them an insight into spiritual truths: The mother loves the child; the child loves the mother. The wife loves the husband and the husband loves the wife. Some love wealth, others love possessions and some others love knowledge. For whose sake do they love them? Whom are they loving? The husband loves the wife not for her sake. The mother loves the child not for its sake. Each loves the other for his or her own sake and not for the sake of the other. All these expressions of love are associated with self-love (Atma-anuragam) and not associated with the body. One loves an object. Is he loving it for its sake? He is loving it for his sake. Likewise, if people love various objects in the world, it is not for the sake of the objects that they love them but for their own sake. Thus the love is primarily self-motivated.

The atma: three in one

What is this self? The self is a composite of Vaak (speech), Manas (mind) and Prana (the life-principle). Wherefrom has Prana emerged? Wherefrom has the mind come? Yagnavalkya explained that out of the food consumed by man, the gross part comes out as excreta and the subtle part becomes mind. Out of the water consumed by man, the gross element comes out as urine and the subtle part becomes Prana. "Vaak" represents the splendorous element in man (Tejas). "Vaak", mind and the Life-Force together constitute the Atma (Self).

On hearing this, Gargi, who was a profound scholar and supremely virtuous lady asked the question bow the Atma, which is one, could be made up of three constituents. Yagnavalkya replied that three colours are inherent in Agni (fire) white, red and black. They are not different. Fire appears reddish, it assumes the form of whiteness and when it subsides, it appears black. Black is the sign of night. Red is the sign of day. The sun is the one common factor in all the three. Likewise, the Atma, which is one and the same, assumes at different times different forms. Yagnavalkya affirmed that no one can determine the specific characteristics of Atma.

Four types of men

Not satisfied with this answer, Gargi asked the sage how many types of people there were in the world. Yagnavalkya replied that there were four types: One, man-Divine; two, man-human; three, man-demon; four, man-animal. The world contained these four types of human beings. The Brahmajnas, or Knowers of the Brahman, are the human-divine type. The human-man type is the one who is wedded to Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness) ("Sathya Dharma ratho marthyah"). "Suraapaano daithya samaanah" Those who are addicted to drink belong to the demonic category. The people lacking in wisdom belong to the animal-man category.

The Brahmajna is one who is ever immersed in the contemplation of the Supreme, is totally free from selfishness and is conscious of the presence of the Divine in everyone.

The human-man is one who adheres to Truth and Righteousness, respects human values, leads a sacred life, performs his duties, indulges in charitable acts and lives in harmony with his fellow beings, causing no harm to others and bearing love towards all.

Addicted to alcoholic drinks, forgetting his true nature, having no self-control, talking ill of others and causing harm to them, and always immersed in selfish pursuits—such persons belong to the human-demon category (demons in human form).

The human-animal is the type of human being who is concerned only with eating, drinking and sleeping, who takes no interest in the affairs of the world, lacks the power of discrimination and is immersed in sensuous pleasures.

In this manner, Yagnavalkya expounded to that assemblage the inner truths about the human birth and its divine potential.

In essence, the Yagas and Yajnas of ancient times were performed to lead man to divinity and not for any inferior purposes. Unfortunately, by the efflux of time, these sacrifices lost their sacredness. Self-interest became the dominant motive in every action. The spirit of sacrifice is not to be seen. Those who perform Yajnas today are making them a sort of business. This practice should go. Any sacred act should be performed in a selfless spirit. The man who has no spirit of sacrifice can have no peace. Do not give room for any kind of ostentation or show. Render service in a spirit of sacrifice. That itself is a great yajna. It is Karma Yajna. What is done internally is Brahma Yajna. Karma Yajna is a reflection of Brahma Yajna.

The Vedas, which are the embodiment of Brahman, have become unfortunately mere verbal expressions (Vaangmayam) today. People are not practising the Vedic life. There should be complete accord between thought, word and deed. That is the mark of a truly great soul. Divergence between thought, speech and action signifies that one is worse than a demon.

True yajna

Consider every action as a divine injunction. The Divine is totally free from self-interest. Every action of the Divine is for promoting the welfare of the world. When you conduct yourself on the basis of this truth, your life will be sanctified. Even a small act done with a pure and unselfish heart will develop into a great yajna.

Whatever the number of discourses you may listen to, you should not be content with mere listening and forget their import after going away. You must make an enquiry as to how far you have been transformed by attending these discourses. You must try to put into practice at least one or two of the teachings, get rid of worldly attachments gradually and make your journey towards the Divine. In due course divinity will blossom in your hearts. If, on the contrary, you go on expanding your worldly concerns and multiplying your desires, you will go down to the animal level.

You must be content with what you have. Even a loss of something must be considered a form of sacrifice. Rejoice in what you have, make good use of that and develop faith in God.

The Yajnas performed by rulers like Janaka were intended to promote general welfare and direct the people's minds towards God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "Chitta Chora Yasodake Baal".

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 7-10-1989

Janmadinotsava at Prasanthi Nilayam

reaches its crescendo in the last week of November for rejoicing in the birthday celebrations of Bhagavan on November 23. This year the numbers were quite large and hundreds of devotees, who could not find accommodation in the apartments or in the thirty odd sheds, had to make do with whatever space was available. Many made themselves comfortable under trees or other places, despite the cold weather. To get a glimpse of the Lord, to listen to his discourses and get His blessings and Prasad on the Janmadina were sufficient soul-satisfying recompense for whatever trouble or expense they had to go through.

This year, apart from the usual Ratha festival, and the annual Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute, there were no other public functions presided over by Bhagavan. The Rathotsava was celebrated on November 18th, when the idols of Venugopalaswamy and Sri Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Anjaneya, which are worshipped in the Prasanthi Mandir, were taken out and carried in the Chariot from the Gopuram outside to the Venugopalaswami temple in Puttaparthi. After the idols were carried by Seva Dal members and installed on the Ratha, Bhagavan broke coconuts and inaugurated the car festival. Bhagavan was greeted with devout "Jais" by thousands of devotees who lined either side of the road and filled all available space around the Chariot.

The Sai Advent

From the 18th, the entire premises of the Mandir were tastefully decorated with flags and festoons. The electrical displays this year were on a more modest scale than last year. Besides special multi-coloured illuminations for the Mandir, three sets of animated electrical panels had been installed on the terrace of the Mandir to depict the advent of Shirdi Sai and Sathya Sai. Two of these panels were on the front side of the Mandir (one on either side of the Central spire) while the third was on the back of the Mandir. Each panel consisted of three pictures. The first one showed Shirdi Sai coming out of Dwarkamayi (mosque). Shirdi Baba's oft-repeated sayings "Allah Malik", "Faith and Patience", were seen above the mosque. The second picture showed Bhagavan Sathya Sai in his orange robe and Abhayastha posture. Flashes of light radiated from his raised palm. The third picture depicted a lighted Jyoti with Sathya Sai in white robe standing within it. As the Jyoti moved, the words Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Premaswarupa appeared. The entire panel was designed to signify the advent of Shirdi Sai and Parthi Sai and highlight their message in a simple and striking manner.

On the morning of the 23rd, Bhagavan visited at 8 a. m., the Samadhi of His parents in the present Avatar, and later came in procession from the Mandir to the Poornachandra Auditorium. The procession was headed by Sai Geeta, followed by the Sai Institute's band, a group of Vedic chanters, and students performing the Bhangra dance. Bhagavan gave blissful darshan to the thousands of devotees in and outside the Auditorium. The Auditorium dais, where a revolving stage has been installed, was beautifully decorated with floral drapings and figures of Krishna in the backdrop.

"Lead kindly light"

Sri K. R. Prasad, member of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, expressing the prayerful greetings of all the assembled devotees to Bhagavan on His sixty-fourth birthday, recalled what

cords of love," he said. Praying to Bhagavan to expound for the gathering the true nature of God, he concluded with the words: "Lead kindly light."

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse (published separately).

After the discourse, prasadam (laddus) was distributed to all the devotees.

In the evening, there was the jhoola festival in the Auditorium, when Bhagavan conferred His benediction on the devotees, swinging on the Jhoola. A group of about thirty Bal Vikas children from Delhi presented a delightful Qawwali musical programme, singing a number of birthday songs in front of Bhagavan with appropriate gestures. The children in their attractive costumes looked like fairies. Bhagavan presented shawls and sweets to all of them, covering each girl with the shawl Himself.

The festival ended with the offering of Arati to Bhagavan, with the entire gathering joining in the Arati song.

Gymnasium Inaugurated

On November 25th. Bhagavan inaugurated the newly constructed indoor gymnasium at the northeastern end of the Hill View stadium.

The gymnasium, a two storied building, has an attractive facade, displaying Olympic circles (inset with figures of different games) on either side and the Olympic, torch in the middle.

There is provision in the gymnasium for a variety of indoor games, including volley ball, table tennis, shuttlecock and carroms and facilities for athletic exercises like horizontal bars, parallelbars, weight lifting, swinging and Roman Ring.

A large number of Italian devotees were present at the function. An Italian devotee offered Arati to Bhagavan.

EIGHTH CONVOCATION:

"A Model for Tomorrow"

"The Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is successfully spiritualising the modern teaching of sciences and the humanities with a view to forging a synthesis of Western Civilisation and Indian culture from which both stand to benefit. This Institute is well on the way

Maharaj Krishna Rasgotra, India's High Commissioner to the U.K., in his address to the eighth Convocation of the Institute in the Poornachandra Auditorium on November 22.

Besides the candidates from the three campuses who were to receive their degrees at the Convocation, thousands of devotees from all over India and overseas were present in the auditorium. The stage had been artistically decorated for the occasion.

The academic procession started from the Prasanthi Mandir at 5-30 P.M., with the Registrar carrying the glittering silver mace, flanked by two students carrying the emblem of the Institute with the motto: "Sathyam Vada: Dharmam Chara."

The Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, the Chief Guest, Mr. Rasgotra, and the Vice Chancellor, Mr. Saraf, were at the head of the procession followed by members of the Institute Trust, the Governing Body, the Academic Council and the Deans of Faculties in their shining academic robes. In front of the academic procession the Institute's band troupe, in brilliant white uniforms, marched smartly, playing special tunes, while a lively group of students in Punjabi costumes executed Bhangra dances with vigour and verve. A group of students chanting Vedic hymns lent a spiritual touch to the procession.

After the Chancellor, the Chief Guest and others had taken their seats on the dais, the proceedings began with the chanting of hymns from the Taittiriya Upanishad.

The Vice-Chancellor, Mr. S. N. Saraf, welcoming the Chief Guest and the large gathering, recalled Mr. Rasgotra's long career as a diplomat, an educationist and administrator who had filled many high positions in the Government and represented India in the United Nations and the UNESCO.

Describing the unique features of the Sathya Sai Institute as a centre of higher learning, Mr. Saraf said the Institute owed its achievements and sublime stature to the inspiration and continuous guidance of the Chancellor. During the past year, eight students had completed their doctoral researches.

"Besides improving our science, education and professional courses, we are now moving towards the reorientation of the Departments of Arts and Commerce. In our three Campuses, with the setting up of English Language Cells, which will try to upgrade the general standard of language and communication skills, a new dimension to Language teaching on modern lines has begun." The Sri Sathya Sai Centre for Computer Sciences, established during 1987-88 in the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, is now located in a spacious but beautiful setting, fully equipped with various levels of computer systems with scope for further expansion. Computer laboratories have been set up in the Anantapur and Brindavan Campuses.

After detailing the sports and cultural programmes held during the past year, Mr. Saraf concluded:

"Our Revered Chancellor, the main inspiration, is our Akhanda Jyoti, Antar Jyoti, Prema Jyoti, Jivan Jyoti, and Jnana Jyoti, all Jyotis combined together, guiding us at every step."

The Chancellor then declared the Convocation open.

The candidates for degrees belonging to all the Faculties other than Business Management were presented to the Chancellor by the Dean of the Science Faculty. The candidates for the M.B.A. degree were presented by the Dean of the Faculty of Business Management. All the candidates stood up and bowed to the Chancellor when He conferred His benediction on them. The Vice-Chancellor then administered the institute's pledge to the new graduates.

The Registrar then read out the names of candidates who had been awarded gold medals for all-round excellence and for their performance in their respective courses.

The medals for all-round excellence were awarded to G. R. Praveena, R. J Ratnakar and Kumari Ankhi Mukherjee. In addition to gold medals, each of them received a cash award of Rs. 500.

For academic excellence, the following candidates who came out first in their respective final year examinations received gold medals:

Arun Kumar Jain, (B.Com); S. Sri Ram, (B.Sc., MPC); Kum. Swati Saha, (B Sc., Bio-Sciences); Kum. P. S. D Shyamala, (M.A., Telugu); Kum. Suparna, (M.A., Philosophy); P D. N. Srinivasan, (M.Sc., Mathematics); Vinay Sikka, (M Sc., Physics); K. Syam Prasad, (M. Sc., Chemistry); Kum. B. Rajanee, (B.Ed); A.M.S.S. Sai Ram, (M.Sc., BioSciences); M. Ravi Chandru, (M.Sc., BioSciences); Ananta Rao, (M.Com.) and N. Shiva Kumar, (M.B.A.).

The following candidates were awarded Ph.D. degrees

Siva Sankar Sai, (Physics); A. Viswanath, (Physics); K. S. Umesh, (Physics); K.S.V.V.U.L.K. Kanta Rao, (History); R. Giridhar, (History); R. Sridhar, (History); Narayan R. Sharma, (Bio-Sciences) and K. Manoharan, (Chemistry).

Each of them went up to the dais to receive his or her degree and a gold medal from the Chancellor.

All the recipients of gold medals went up to the stage to receive the medals from the Chancellor and get His blessings.

Mr. Rasgotra's Address:

The Chief Guest, Mr. Rasgotra, then delivered his Convocation address.

which is charting a new course. And yet in this short period, the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning has taken great strides forward. It has conducted new experiments in education; it has successfully promoted the cultivation of human values as a central purpose of education; it has kept politics away from its campuses; it views education as a means not of material acquisitions but of putting a ceiling on vain and insatiable human desires. Above all, the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is successfully spiritualising the modern teaching of sciences and the humanities with a view to forging a synthesis of Western civilisation and Indian culture from which both stand to benefit. This Institute is well on the way to becoming the model for tomorrow's Universities in India and elsewhere.

The Institute's authorities, along with the student body, are privileged to be the instruments of the Avatar's work for India's regeneration. What we are witnessing here is a new process, a new beginning of an unusual significance for the spiritualisation of human society. In the tasks that lie ahead of them, may the Lord's blessings be upon their endeavours

The world crisis

The last half century, the period which witnessed dramatic advances in science and technology and in the acquisition of material wealth in western societies, has also been a period of the most intense ideological conflict, of political and economic polarisation, of the cold war and the fear of nuclear conflagration, of an endless arms race locking up trillions of dollars worth of resources which could have been more profitably mobilised for the elimination of poverty, sickness and ignorance from the afflicted parts of the world and for the general well-being and uplift of the human race as a whole. Is there hope for such a world? It will be quite impossible in the unfolding environment of the new millennium to operate the old rules of power politics without pushing human civilisation headlong into new crises. Can the world manage the change from the old to a new order in constructive and peaceful ways? I think it can, provided three conditions are fulfilled. First, the nexus between science and warfare must be broken. Second, the world's statesmen and economy managers should stop measuring human happiness in terms of GNP growth rates. And third, religion everywhere should be studied and practised in its true spiritual meaning of the supremacy of God and the brotherhood of man.

Role of the avatar

Is there a role for India in the remaking of this battered world? My answer to this question is a clear, categorical 'yes'. And the reason for my confidence lies in the presence in our midst of the phenomenon of the Avatar, which appears from time to time to inaugurate a new world by raising man, by his example and through his teachings, from the earthly plane to a higher status. The phenomenon of the Avatar as Radhakrishnan points out, is not so much the contraction of divine majesty into the limits of the human frame as the exaltation of human nature to the level of Godhead by its union with the divine. The one who came to us as the noble and righteous King Rama, later as the philosopher Krishna, later still as the compassionate Buddha, is now among us as Sathya Sai Baba, the embodiment of love and of the sacred knowledge bequeathed to India by the intuitive vision of her ancient seers. That knowledge is not meant only for India but for mankind as a whole. But for a thousand years it had seemed that India herself had lost

India may fulfill her mission of revealing to the world the path to the Divine. That sacred knowledge pertains to the mystery of the universe and its Creator, to Man's nature and place in the universe, to his relationship with his Maker and with his fellow humans, and to Man's spiritual destiny.

East and West

Some of the more sensitive western intellectuals too think that in the fulfillment of human destiny India's crucial role has yet to unfold. An eminent English poetess, Kathleen Raine, wrote to me as follows in 1984: "It is with regret, with sorrow, that we see the worst Western culture has to offer being exported worldwide; and so willingly accepted even in India where traditional culture has survived in a purer form and to a greater degree than elsewhere. The time has come to challenge and to reject values that threaten East and West alike. We suggest that a centre should be established—and this surely should be in India—devoted to the study of the true alternative to the cultural and spiritual malady of our time."

Kathleen Raine's suggestion has merit and I thought I should put it forward for the consideration of our revered Chancellor. For if there is a place in this country which can project to the world India's "spiritual knowledge" of which Kathleen Raine speaks, that place is here. For this Institute of Higher Learning was established by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba precisely for the purpose so perceptively defined by Kathleen Raine.

At convocations it is customary for the Chief Guest to offer some advice or instruction to the year's Graduating class. To them I should like to say the following: If the aim of education is, as I believe, to prepare students not merely for earning a living but also, and more importantly, for a useful role in Society and for leading ideal lives, the education you have received here could hardly be improved upon. You have been prepared well for life's tasks. What is more, the Divine Master who has watched over you these years, has, through his teachings and by his personal example, opened before you the vision of a divine life. Go forth, then, into the world and be his instruments in the remaking of it into a place of truth and righteousness, of peace, love and non-violence.

Graduates! The world awaits you. Tomorrow is yours to remould according to the knowledge and wisdom with which the Sathya Sai University has endowed you. May success and fulfillment attend your endeavours! I pray that the Lord's blessings and grace be upon you always."

Bhagavan Baba then delivered His valedictory address (published separately).

The Convocation ended with the playing of the National Anthem by the Institute band.

"Baba is there"

I went to church today, for the first time in years.
I didn't know what to expect, I had a few fears.

When the priest stepped forward, I saw a robe of red;
And black curly hair encircling His head.

The priest started his message to preach,
But it was Baba's voice that seemed to teach.

The priest spoke of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.
I had visions of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as host.

The organ began to play deep and clear
Yet it was Krishna's flute I heard in my ear.

The congregation joined together to sing.
I heard bhajans with their familiar ring.

The name, the place, the time may vary
But Swami is there as Jesus or Hari.

The prophecy has been fulfilled well,
The Lord hath come, and in each heart doth dwell.

No matter what race, religion or creed
Baba is there whenever we need.

—Joy Ziegler, Arizona

Be simple and sincere. It is sheer waste of money to burden the pictures and idols in the shrines and altars oh your homes with the weight of Garlands and to parade costly utensils and vessels and offerings to show off your devotion. This is deception; it demeans Divinity, imputing to it the desire for pomp and publicity. I ask only for purity of heart to shower Grace.

—Baba

What is the reason for the prevalence of animal qualities in man even after reaching the human level? It should be noted that it is after passing through many lives in other species of beings that one gets a human birth. Because of this fact, animal qualities appear in human beings. One person may be found leading an unsteady life, with his mind wavering all the time. He may make many efforts to achieve steadiness. But his fickleness and unsteadiness continue to grow. When you enquire into the reason for this, the answer is provided by the Veda. The man concerned had been a monkey in a previous birth and has inherited some of the simian qualities of fickleness and hopping from one thing to another from his past life. Similarly, when you find in some persons qualities such as lying, stealing, cowardice, or stupidity, they should be considered as hangovers from their previous animal lives. The means to get rid of such tendencies is to offer all one's actions to the Divine. The tendency to steal is present in many persons. Stealing is a natural quality of the cat. Mental instability is a characteristic trait of the monkey. Stupidity is a trait of sheep. Obstinacy is a quality of the buffalo. These traits of the different animals are reflected in the actions of humans who have emerged from the respective animal state.

Purpose of yajnas

(Referring to Yajnas and Yagas, Bhagavan said:) There are two kinds of Yajnas (ritual sacrifices): One relates to external observances; the other is internal. For the external Yajnas you need a sacrificial site, purohitas, materials for making offerings and the like. Offerings are made to the sacrificial fire to the accompaniment of mantras ("swaaha"). This form of yajna is an image of the internal yajna. Few people care to enquire into the nature of the inner yajna. The inner meaning of yajna is to recognise one's inherent divinity and offer all one's bad qualities as a sacrificial offering at the sacred site of one's mind. Yajnas have been prescribed for the purpose of enabling people to make a sacrifice of all their bad thoughts and actions.

Fickleness, hatred, stealing, or foolish stubbornness are not natural traits for man. The presence of these traits in man must be attributed to the legacy from previous births. The sacrifice which everyone has to make is the giving up of all bad qualities in him.

The Veda laid the greatest emphasis on action. Hence the Karma Kanda (the section of Veda devoted to the performance of prescribed rites) of the Veda is its most important part.

"Embodiments of Rama"

(Explaining the allegorical meaning of the Ramayana story, Bhagavan said:) Dasaratha should not be regarded as merely the emperor of Ayodhya. Allegorically, the name symbolises the human body, endowed with the five sense organs and the five organs of action. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna represent the four Vedas. Rama, who is the embodiment of Dharma, represents Yajur Veda. Lakshmana, who revels in reciting the name of Rama, represents the Rig Veda. Bharata, who rejoices in singing the name of Rama at all times, represents Sama Veda. Subduing the internal and external enemies and carrying out the commands of his three elder brothers, Shatrughna symbolises Atharvana Veda.

Rama and his brothers are said to belong to the solar race (Surya Vamsa). The sun exists as an objective physical phenomenon. The moon and the earth are there. The earth has come from the sun. The moon has come from the earth. Both the earth and the moon have come from the sun. They are fragments of the sun. When you enquire deeply, you will realise that without the sun the world cannot exist; there can be no birth or death. Nothing can exist without the sun. This was the reason why the ancients worshipped the sun as Divine. Elements of the sun are present in every human being. Everyone has originated from the rays of the sun. The light within each one is derived from the sun. As his light is present within us, we are a fragment of the sun. Each human being, because he is a product of the sun, can claim to belong to the solar race. When Rama is said to belong to the solar race, it should be realised that the Principle of Atma-Rama (the Indwelling Rama in each one) present in every human being entitles him to claim lineage from the sun. Therefore, all of you are embodiments of Rama. Each one of you carries the imprint of the sun within you. Realising this truth and bearing in mind the fact that each of you belongs to the solar race like Rama, you should try to destroy your bad qualities and develop your virtues even as Rama destroyed the wicked and protected the good.

This is the yajna (sacrifice) which every man has to do every moment of his life. Yajna does not mean merely performing a ritual sacrifice with priests and offering oblations in the fire. The evil tendencies in man are the result of differences based on physical distinctions. Once these differences are ignored, the divinity that is present in everyone will be recognised. It is not realised that the eternal, unchanging Spirit dwells in the transient, perishable human body. The Knower of the Field (Kshetrajna) dwells in the Field (the Kshetra or body). Without the Knower, the Field has no value. Today people attach value to the body and not to the Spirit within. It is like placing the cart before the horse. Likewise, man is carrying on life's journey placing the body in the forefront and giving a backseat to the Spirit. The result is he is missing his destination.

Hence, through the Vedas men have to understand the sacredness of the human birth. Veda is the embodiment of knowledge. It is the essence of all that has to be known. The Veda enjoins harmony in thought, word and deed. It is this triune unity that has to be offered to God. When the Gita mentions that God is satisfied even with the offering of a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, what do these four signify? Leaf symbolises the body. The flower represents the heart. The fruit refers to the mind. And the water represents the tears of joy. Man is enjoined to offer these four to the Divine. You have today in the world men of wealth, of strength, of scholarship and virtue. But there are few who have realised the Self. Ignoring the Self, of what avail are all other possessions, which are temporary and passing?

Self-enquiry and faith

Embodiments of Divine Love! What you consider as real is unreal. What you think is unreal is the only Reality. God alone is the one eternal Reality. Do not forget this wholesome truth. What you regard as real in the waking state does not exist in the dream state. What you experience in the dream state has no reality in the waking state. If there can be such differences in two states of consciousness in a single day, it ill-befits man to hug the ever-changing

even in respect of small matters in the field of science. What is the gain from these experiments in the physical sciences? You may get some degrees or jobs. You may earn money and enjoy some comforts. But should you be content with these as the *summum bonum* of life? What is the inner purpose of life? Each one should put this question to himself. This sort of enquiry is not made. One is interested in gathering news about every country in the world, but is not anxious to find out what is happening within himself. Of what use is knowledge about the world, when you are not aware of yourself? That is why Vedanta called upon each one to discover the truth about himself. Self-knowledge is the key to all knowledge. For this, you must approach the proper person to teach you the means to discover your true Self. If you are not prepared to undertake this self-enquiry, cultivate faith, if not in God, at least in your own Self. The man who has no faith in himself can have no faith in anybody. He cannot have faith in God. Make faith (Vishvaasa) your life-breath. The man without faith is a living corpse. Therefore, worship Govinda ("Bhaja Govindam"). Nothing else will save you when the last moment comes. Remember always the Divine name. It is your saviour; all else binds you.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "Bhavabhayaharana vanditha charana, Jaya Radha! Jaya Madhava!")

—*From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 6-10-1989*