

"Earn a Good Name"

"What I desire from you is your love. What you must offer to Me is the good name you are able to earn wherever you may be. That is the best gratitude you can show to the Institute where you have studied", observed Bhagavan Baba, in the course of His discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on December 25th, while referring to the large contributions offered to Swami by the former students of the Sri Sathya Sai College for Women at Anantapur.

These old students, who had been carrying on social service activities through their organisation called "The Messengers of Sathya Sai", offered to Swami cheques for lakhs of rupees representing their first month's earnings after taking up jobs. The Secretary of the organisation described the various service activities of "The Messengers " and observed that the contributions they were offering were a token of their gratitude to Bhagavan for all that He and His educational Institute had done for them.

The offering was made at the meeting held in the Poornachandra Auditorium on Christmas day. Besides an unprecedented gathering of devotees from India and abroad, a large number of former students of Sri Sathya Sai Women's College at Anantapur were present.

Bhagavan, in His discourse, spoke on the need for respect for all religions as their essential message was the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man. In the latter part of His discourse, Bhagavan referred to the activities of "The Messengers of Sathya Sai." Bhagavan said.

Dear students!

Today you have listened to reports about the service activities carried on by "The Messengers of Sathya Sai". As pointed out by their office-bearers (in their speeches earlier at the meeting), women all through their lives labour under many constraints. During their tenure as students they are in the custody of their parents. Then they come under the regime of their husbands and parents-in-law. As they grow older, they get involved in the responsibilities to their children.

In spite of these constraints and obligations, they have been able to adhere to the disciplines acquired in their college and engage themselves in service activities and develop their organisation ("The Messengers of Sathya Sai") continually.

Whether one is a student or any other person, one should always remain grateful for the benefits one has received from others. The foremost quality every human being should have is gratitude. Without it, man ceases to be human. It is because today men have ceased to cherish gratitude that they have become a prey to many ills.

In the worship of the Sun-God, certain mantras are used (invoking the different attributes of the deity). Among the names recited in praise of the Sun God are "Himaghnaaya namah" (prostrations to the dispeller of snow); "Tamaghnaaya namah" (prostrations to the destroyer of darkness); "Kritaghnaghnaaya namah" (prostrations to the destroyer of the ungrateful). The Sun is hailed as the melter of snow and the dispeller of darkness in the first two names. The third name describes the Sun-God as one who gives up those who forget the good done to them. How does the Sun-God give up the ungrateful? The Vedas have declared that the Sun emerged from the eyes of the Cosmic Person (the Viraat Purusha). The Sun's radiance illumines the eyes of a human being. When the mantra declares that the Sun-God goes away from the one who is ungrateful, its inner meaning is that the Sun-God makes the ungrateful person blind and withdraws from him the power of sight. Today persons guilty of ingratitude go about as blind persons or as ignorant beings devoid of the real power of sight. Every person should therefore cherish the sense of gratitude.

These former students (of the Anantapur College), after the completion of their studies when they took up some jobs, resolved to offer to Swami their first month's salary as a token of gratitude. There are several thousands of such old students. Many of them, even after marriage, have been coming to Bhagavan regularly and often bringing their husbands and children with them. This kind of devotion stems from their deep sense of gratitude.

During the past year, they engaged themselves in a variety of service activities out of their devotion to Swami. On the occasion of Bhagavan's sixtieth birthday, sixty cottages were built for the poor. The enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice of these old students were responsible for the construction of these cottages. (Cheers).

"Offer not money but love"

Last year, with a view to offering to Bhagavan their first month's earnings, the old students brought two lakhs of rupees to be given to Swami. Their love is priceless. Wealth has value, but love is invaluable. Your gratitude is the most precious thing. It is enough if you cherish this feeling. There is no need for you to make this kind of offering of money.

Even now, they have brought cheques for lakhs of rupees (as offering to Swami). But what I desire from you is your love. (Cheers). It is enough for Me if you adhere to the disciplines of the Sathya Sai Institute wherever you may be. If after you get married, your parents-in-law hold you in high esteem as girls who were educated in the Sathya Sai Institute and if your husbands feel that they have been specially fortunate in marrying girls educated in the Institute, that will be sufficient reward for Me. What you must offer to Me is the good name that you are able to earn. You have to set an example of ideal womanhood. You have to impart right ideals to the children. Only then will Bharat achieve road prosperity. There is nothing greater than being exemplary mothers and women of good repute.

Dear girl students! I desire that you should devote yourselves to social service in the villages, run educational classes for the children and render whatever service the elderly people may

bless you all (Swami returned the cheques to the President of the Organisation) (Prolonged applause).

Cherish gratefulness

Do not seek to offer such monetary contributions to Me in the future. Engage yourselves in pure activities with pure hearts and earn a good name. What you have to offer to Me is the good name earned by you. This is the highest expression of your gratitude. You should earn the approbation of the public as students of the Institute. Do not bring a bad name to the Institute by your conduct in the outside world. It does not matter much if you fail to bring a good name to the Institute, but in no circumstance should you bring it a bad name. Even if you fail to be helpful to others, do not cause harm to others. Students should bear this in mind. Not students alone, but all spiritual aspirants should cherish in their hearts with gratitude the good done to them by others and always remember whatever form in which help was rendered to them. Only those who lead such grateful lives will be able to find peace and happiness in their lives.

I desire that all of you ("the Messengers of Sathya Sai") should constantly think of God, continue to render social service, lead ideal family lives and enjoy peace and happiness. This is My benediction for all of you.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Hari Bhajana bina sukha santhi nahi*"

SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

P For Purity

Pure as the soft pearl hidden in the sand,
Pure as the pink rose carried in your hand,
Pure as the diamond scattering the light,
Pure as the camphor flame around you bright,

Pure as the selfless save done for You,
Pure as the lotus drenched with morning dew
Pure as my heart, purified by You
Is my love for Thee, is my love for Thee.

- A devotee

Man's primary duty is to discover his inherent divinity. For embarking on this task, man need not wait for the arrival of a New Year. Every moment is new and is filled with divinity, declared Bhagavan Baba, in His message on January 1st to a vast gathering of devotees from all parts of the world, who filled the Mandir premises and overflowed to all the surrounding space.

Bhagavan's discourse was preceded by a speech by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Sampath, on the significance of the New Year celebrations, and a talk by Vijaya Sai on Bhagavan's message to humanity in the present crisis. Vijaya Sai punctuated his speech with songs from Purandara Das, Ramadas and other saints.

Bhagavan began His discourse with an exposition of the role of the Divine in the cosmos. Towards the latter part of His discourse, Bhagavan referred to the New Year Day Celebrations and said:

If you wish to embark on a new life, you need not wait for the arrival of a new year. To wait for a whole year means waiting for twelve months and so many days, hours, minutes and seconds. Treat every second as new. Sanctify every moment of your life. This has to be done by realising the unity of the Divine ("Sat") and the individual ("Chit"). When this union is achieved, Ananda (Bliss) is experienced. This is the primary task before every one. Every second should be regarded as an expression of the Divine. This New Year Day relates to the Christian era. December and January may come and go (every year) but God neither comes nor goes.

In this context, you have to bear in mind three things. One is that which, after it goes, will not come back. The second one is that which, after it comes, will not leave. The third is the one that neither comes nor goes.

That which, when it comes, will not go is "Jnana" (the Highest Knowledge). When this sublime knowledge comes to one, it should not leave him. The knowledge which comes and goes relates to the waking and sleeping states. True knowledge (Jnana), when once it is acquired, will never go away. The knowledge that is lost is not true knowledge.

Ignorance is the thing which, once it is gone, will not return. If it returns, it is "Ignorance piled on ignorance". This has been described in Vedantic parlance as "Mithya" in "Mithya"—delusion within a delusion.

That which does not come and does not leave is the Atmic Principle (Atma tattwa). That which is omnipresent, where can it go? Where is the place for it to go? You set up a door to separate one place from a place outside it. If there is no place outside, there will be no need for a door. There is no place where the Divine is not present. Where, then, can the Divine come or go?

confused person is described in a song by a Gopika. The doubting mind calls for closing the door of the mind (to truth). The person with faith asks for the opening of the door. Seeing the plight of the Gopika, who is racked by both doubt and faith, Radha was amused. Radha observed: "When the whole Universe is the mansion of the Lord, where is the need for a street or a door? When the cosmic Lord is shining within where is the need for a door?" (Poem) When one offers one's entire life to the Lord and sheds tears of bliss, that is all that is needed. As long as there is no such complete surrender, there will be need for doors and the like. Why are doors erected? To regulate the entry and exit of persons. But, it is the irony of the Kali Age that the door is kept open for the entry of all kinds of undesirable creatures. Man's mind is kept open for the entry of evil thoughts. The door should be barred against the inroads of egoism and acquisitive impulses. The door (of the mind) should be kept sacred.

Regard the entire cosmos as the great mansion of the Supreme Lord. It has no streets or doors. Total surrender is the way to enter the mansion.

The advent of a New Year is greeted by welcoming the New Year and bidding farewell to the old one. This is the practice in the ordinary world. But it is not entirely a worldly affair. The observance of the beginning of a New Year is based on the statements of the producer of the almanac ("Siddhanti"). The almanac is an artificial man-made work and is not related to anything permanent or unchanging. The sun and the moon remain unchanged. The calendar is a man-made device. For the Divine, there is no coming or going. God transcends such conceptions. He is the Lord of what is called the Kingdom of God. Each one has to acquire the qualification to enter that Kingdom. All are not entitled to enter it. But every human being should aspire to achieve that right. That is the essential purpose of human birth. Man is bound by his actions in this world. The actions should be good. Be pure in your speech. Develop a sacred vision. Purify your hearts.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajans: "*Bhajana bina sukha santhi nahi*", "*Prema muditha manase kaho*" and "*Subrahmanyam! Subrahmanyam!*" (The earlier part of Bhagavan's discourse will appear in the February issue).

CHRISTMAS SANDESH:

AVATAR VANI

Develop Spiritual Oneness

*Religion teaches self-discipline and promotes one's well being;
It enhances one's spiritual power and makes one effulgent;
If people live without knowing its inner secret
The community and its culture decline and suffer.*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

another. But these multifarious waves are not different from the ocean. In all the waves, the nature and qualities of the ocean are immanent. Likewise, the innumerable beings which you see in this boundless cosmos appear to be different from one another, but all of them emerged from the same Cosmic source whose form is Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness- Bliss).

When rain pours down from the sky, its pure water falls on the earth, mountains, rivers, and the sea. But the pure rainwater acquires the colour and taste of the region or spot where it falls. Likewise, prophets and messiahs, coming down in different parts of the world at different times, imparted their message in terms appropriate to the time, the place and the conditions of the people concerned. Religions cannot be considered different from each other for this reason. "All religions have taught only what is good for humanity. Religion should be practised with this awareness. If the minds are pure, how can religion be bad?" (Poem)

It is a mark of ignorance to consider one religion as superior and another as inferior and develop religious differences on this basis. The teachings of all religions are sacred. The basic doctrines are founded on truth. The truth of the Spirit (Atma-tattwa) is the essence of religions, the message of all the scriptures and the basis of all metaphysics. The primary duty of human beings is to recognise that the paths (indicated by different religions) may vary but the goal is one.

Love, sacrifice, compassion, morality, integrity and similar qualities are common to all religions. In different ways, all religions have sought to promote unity in diversity.

Bharatiya philosophy, culture, and sacred way of life permeate and shine like an undercurrent in all religions. Bharatiya culture has affirmed the profound Vedic truth that it is the One Spirit that dwells in all-living beings ("Eko vasi sarvabhootha-antaratma"). This unity of the Spirit is proclaimed in various contexts in the teachings of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

Although in terms of physical form, human beings appear different, in terms of the Spirit they are all one- this is the truth propagated by Christianity. It has declared that all are the children of one Lord and, believing in the Fatherhood of God, all should live in harmony.

The message of unity

This basic truth of the spiritual oneness of all creation is emphasised at every stage in Bharatiya culture. "Ekam Sat-vipraah bahudhaa vadanthi" ("The Reality is One; the wise call it by different names.") The Ultimate Reality is One only. Your mental reactions give rise to multiplicity. What you have to offer the Lord is the sense of spiritual oneness (Ekatmabhava). Bharatiyas are wont to fold the two palms together and offer "Namaskar" (salutation).

What is the inner significance of this form of greeting? It is an expression of the unity of the many in the One.

the combined expression of "Saalokyam, saarupyam, Saameepyam, Saayujyam" ("Seeing the Divine, having a vision of the form of the Divine, nearing the Divine and merging in the Divine"). When these four experiences are combined and merged into one, ("La" signifying merger), you have "Salaam" (the merging of the many in. the One).

In Christianity, the term "Esu" (Jesus) is used to describe Christ. This term also signifies the oneness of Divinity. The inner significance of the term "Esu" is the recognition of the One Divine in all beings.

In Jainism also, the same truth was taught by Mahavira. When the senses are allowed to have their way, all kinds of reactions occur. It is only when the senses are brought under unified control that the nature of Divinity can be comprehended. The eyes have the power of sight. The ears can hear. The powers of all the sense organs—seeing, hearing, speaking, etc.—are derived from the Divine. It is the Divine that enables the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the mind to think and to have various experiences. It is when all these sensory processes are brought under unified control (by the conquest of the senses) that man becomes a conqueror a "Jina", as termed by the Jains. Because he had conquered his senses, the title of victor was conferred on Mahavira.

Even as ornaments are varied but gold is one, religions are various but their basic spiritual truth is the same. Buddhism also enunciates the same oneness. It declares that in every human being what should emanate is love. Life can go on without all other things, but it cannot survive without love. For every being love is the life-breath. When such love animates a person, he will not resort to violence; he will practise Ahimsa (non-violence). Buddha urged that if human life is to be redeemed, men should cultivate love.

Thus, if we try to understand the basic truth of every religion, it will be seen that it teaches only Unity. Religious differences poison the mind. No one should give room for religious differences. All are spiritually one.

The Advent of Jesus

In this context, it should be realised that from time to time, prophets, messiahs and avatars manifest themselves on earth to proclaim the glory of the human estate and make humanness blossom among mankind.

Two thousand years ago, in Palestine, a province of the Roman Empire, there were Jews professing Judaism. The Jews believed in one God called Yehovah. They believed that God would send a messiah for the people of Israel. Jerusalem was the sacred city of the Jews and continued to be so even under the Romans.

This was the time when Jesus was born. From his childhood, Jesus displayed such sacred qualities as compassion, love and sacrifice. Realising from his early years that the discharge of one's duties was the primary obligation of a human being, Jesus used to help his father in his work as a carpenter. The father passed away in Jesus' twelfth year. For a while he carried on his

fragrance in the bud of a flower, Jesus' divinity was evident from his boyhood. Three kings from the East came to see him at the time of his birth. One of them, on seeing the child, felt that he would be a lover of God. Another felt that he would be loved by God. The third king felt that he would one day declare his oneness with God. The first one's thought indicated Jesus' role as a "Messenger of God". The second one's thought indicated that he would be "the Son of God". The third person's thought indicated that the child would declare one day: "I and my Father are one."

Who is a 'Messenger of God'? He is the one who comprehends the purpose of his life. The "Son of God" is one who appears as divine to others. "I and my Father are one" signifies the true nature of the individual, his identity with divinity. It is in this manner that Christ progressed in his ministry. He conveyed His message in simple and convincing terms.

Changes in time, place and circumstances bring about changes in religious ideas and institutions. This is evident in the history of all religions and creeds. Such changes can be seen in the history of Christianity and the career of the Catholic Church. One of the notable changes was effected by the Reformation brought about by Martin Luther.

Christ's basic teachings were related to the promotion of compassion, sympathy, love, sacrifice and fellowship among all human beings. Jesus was named the Christ as he was regarded as the "chosen- messenger of God."

The growth of Christianity in the Middle Ages culminated as it were in its acquiring the status of a State religion under Emperor Constantine. With the growth of Christianity, schisms also developed in the religion.

The growth of schisms often results in a decline in spirituality. As men develop worldly desires, religious faith declines. Men do not realise that the pursuit of physical pleasures is like the pursuit of a mirage to quench one's thirst.

Source of real bliss

Embodiments of Divine Love I Realise that human happiness is not to be found in sensory objects or experiences. Whatever pleasure is derived from these is transient and momentary. Real and enduring bliss is to be derived from within one's self. The body is a thing of matter ('Annamaya'). Life is based on "Prana" (the vital breath "Pranamaya"). The mind is subtle ("Manomaya"). In all man is enveloped in five sheaths (Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya kosas). The first two are gross and the last three are subtle.

Man is a product of his mind. The mind consists of a bundle of thoughts. Thoughts lead to actions. Actions are the source of joys and sorrows experienced in daily life. It follows from this that if the world today is in bad shape, it is because men's actions are misdirected. All the good and evil in the world are based on the actions of men. When men's actions are sublime, the world will be great and noble.

When we speak of man, we should consider him as the combination of body, mind and the Spirit (Atma). The body is an instrument for performing actions. Mind is the faculty that determines what is right or wrong. The Atma (Spirit) is that which is ever pure, unchanging and permanent.

"Man" implies three things: doing, knowing, being. It is when the body, the mind and the Atma are present in union that a human being can be said to exist. When the body alone acts, without regard to the mind and Atma, that person is said to be in the animal state ("Pashutwam"). When the mind alone acts in association with the body, without regard to the Atma, that condition is described as "demonic" ("Danavatwam"). When the Atma functions according to its true nature, without concern for the body and the mind, that state is described as "Daivatwam" (oneness with the Divine).

Hence, man has in him these four possibilities: animality, humanness, demonic nature and divinity.

"Brahmanishtaratho devah", says a Vedic aphorism. This means that one who is ever immersed in the contemplation of the Supreme (Brahmam) is divine. Such a person is ever dedicated to righteousness and integrity and leads a life of purity. Ever seeking to be helpful to others, he showers love on all and does no harm to anyone.

"Sathya nithyaratho marthyah" "One who is always wedded to Truth is a true man." This means that one who adheres to truth and righteous conduct in daily life is alone entitled to be called a man.

The third category is described as "Madhya paanorathah danavah". One who is addicted to intoxicating drinks and meat eating and leads a sensuous life is a demonic being. Such a person is intensely selfish and has no feeling or consideration for others. A wicked person, swayed by evil motives and evil actions, is described as a demon.

The fourth category consists of beings who only lead a life devoted to eating, sleeping and sexual indulgence with no awareness of the real meaning of human existence. Such ignorant beings have been described as equal to animals. ("Pasubhis-samaanah") Such persons are immersed in sensual pleasures. The senses should be regarded as instruments for rendering service to others. The foolish idea that all pleasures consist in indulgence of sensual appetites should be given up. Only animals are content to derive all satisfaction from the senses alone. Hence every man should firmly declare. "I am a man and not an animal". Only when he has this double conviction will man cease to be an animal and assert his humanness. Unfortunately today men claim to be human, but are engaged in animal activities.

All religions have emphasised the same truths in their basic teachings, but few people try to understand the inner import of religions. Out of a narrow feeling that one's own religion is superior and other faiths are inferior, members of different religions are developing hatred

totally. All should develop the awareness that though names and forms may be different, the essential truth is one in all religions.

"Love is God: God is Love"

Today all over the world, because of these narrow-minded attitudes, conflict, disorder and violence are rampant. To overcome these troubles, there is one simple method. Men must firmly adhere to the idea that "Love is God and God is Love." Live in Love. This is the task before every one. Where love prevails, peace will grow.

To promote love, the first requisite is faith. It is only when you believe that one is your mother that you develop love towards her. If you do not regard her as your mother, you will not have that love for her. Therefore, faith is the starting point.

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.

There is constant quest for peace. Everyone is seeking it. But peace is not to be had from the external world. Peace is within you. Only the divinity within you is the basis of peace within. When you turn your vision outward, what you have are only pieces. Try to comprehend your own true nature. When you go on affirming, "I am God, I am God", you realise your divinity, as declared in the Upanishadic saying: "Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi" (The Knower of the Brahman becomes Brahman Itself).

Pray for God's love

First of all, strengthen your faith. Without faith all kinds of worship and all spiritual disciplines are of no use; they are a waste of time. To begin with cultivate love. Everything grows out of love. That love will reveal to you your true self. That love will confer bliss on you. Therefore, eschew hatred; develop love. What matters in the world is not what you eat. How important, for instance, is bread? Is it bread that sustains your life? Not at all. It is God alone who sustains and protects you. How many millionaires are there in the world living in the lap of luxury? But only God's grace can protect them. Without it, all their wealth will be of no avail.

What you should pray for is God's love. With all your scholarship, all your power and pelf, and all your scientific achievements, how far have you succeeded in raising your status as a human being? How far have you preserved your humanness? Without ensuring humanness, man cannot ensure peace or security.

(Bhagavan then referred to the activities of the old students of the Sathya Sai College for Women who are members of the organisation called Messengers of Sathya Sai. This part of Bhagavan's discourse is published separately).

Discovering the Divine

"He played Knick Knack on his drum."

This is an old nursery song which is very popular with preschoolers and it explains how I felt as I entered the kindergarten of the spiritual Kingdom of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. Before that, the concept of God was just an abstract idea in my mind. But Swami, my beloved Guru, changed this complicated, abstract idea to a simple, concrete one as "He played knick knack on His drum."

Through the prevailing circumstances Swamiji beckoned me to come to Him. I had read many tales of His miracles in every book about Him that I could lay my hands on. I was up to my neck reading about His miracles when I mentally asked Swamiji to show me some concrete proof of His omnipresence or omniscience. One or two times He did show signs like some strange perfume around my house which I did not find very satisfactory proof, as I thought it could be my imagination after reading all that spiritual stuff. Twice I have travelled to Prasanthi Nilayam by His grace and each time I was granted an interview.

In the latter interview, He spelt D - O - G, making it simple for me to comprehend that He was referring to the duality of this world. Reverse of D-O-G becomes G-O-D. The parting message for me in that interview was to live in love as He asked Priya's name, my four-year old daughter who presented Swamiji her gifts for His birthday.

Then came further demonstration of this sublime message during my stay at Prasanthi Nilayam for His sixty-fifth Birthday. As the ashram was gearing for the final count down on Swamiji's Birthday, the temple looked a fantasy monument as if from a dream world wearing all around its arches intricate lace designed out of young bamboos, a speciality of Kerala state; and coloured festoons and lights to enhance the beauty of the temple further for the devotees and onlookers to behold. Freshness and variety were the order of feasts and festivities in all aspects in spite of ever expanding enormousness of the crowd.

A quawali song

Variety was also provided at each Bhajan session. My soul was imbibing that nectar of bliss oozing out everywhere in the ashram's life. I heard many times names like Meera, Surdas, Ramdas and other devout devotees; these names were sung every day. Each devotee added a different flavour to words and notes of songs to the bouquet presented to Bhagavan during the Bhajans. One day during Bhajans I heard a song sung at a strange tempo which was different from usual temple Bhajans. Probably it shows myself being very new in that environment. It was a Quawali (has its background in Muslim culture in India) with its usual gusto of the heart-felt

teachings. That is, one must have a peep in one's heart to feel His presence there first, as God is the true foundation of other worldly love. Of course when I first heard this song I did not catch the wordings and asked a West Indian Sathya Sai Centre's president's wife, who was recording the song on her little tape recorder, sitting next to me. She kindly invited me to her new Round House flat to record it.

I did see my friend occasionally sitting on a chair in the temple but I could not visit her because I was busy in doing one or two volunteer jobs for Swami's Birthday. Moreover I kept on hoping that they might sing that song again. It was not until a day before her departure date that I could tell her that I would like to come and tape that song. She replied that her husband had lent that tape to somebody who had left the ashram without ever returning it and added: "You know how men are" I realised that my hopes of recording the song had vanished.

Swami's Birthday celebrations were over and devotees who had their heart filled share of divine nectar started returning to their worldly homes. My family arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam for the Xmas holidays. We got accommodation at West Prasanthi. Our neighbours on both sides happened to be singers. Was it a coincidence that I happened to be staying next door to them? I got acquainted with the one on our left, who used to sing Bhajans with harmonium in the evening every day. I asked them about that particular song, but in reply they asked me to provide them with the first few lines of that song which I could not. In the latter part of our stay I met our other neighbour who is a lead singer in Nagarsankirtan. Actually she became our family doctor too as my daughters needed personal care when they became sick with diarrhea and fever. Swamiji came as a timely help through this doctor.

Just two or three days before our departure date, my 14-year old daughter and I met this doctor after the morning Bhajans. Was it another coincidence since I needed her help to administer the dose of antibiotics to my 4-year old sick daughter? So we asked her where she was going. She told us that she was going to the Bhajans practice. Then out came my usual query about the song. She told me that she knew which one I meant but she did not know the song.

That evening, I came late for Bhajans and sat outside near the arches of the temple. I wasn't happy at all, leaving my 4-year old sick child in bed and my husband to look after her. I was aware of the fact that we all enjoy Bhajans and having Swami's Darshan. Yet, we have to miss all that, especially when very few days were left before we bade our final farewell to Swami. Absorbing each drop of bliss through my awareness, I sat there when suddenly the Bhajan in progress was cut short. Can you guess what happened next? Well, if you can't, I hope you can match your answer with the one that is given here. That wasn't the end of the Bhajans that day. They sang the next Bhajan and it was the Bhajan that I was waiting for all these days. My 14-year-old daughter, who had never heard that song and knows very little about Indian music, had heard me inquiring about the song that morning, asked: "Isn't that the song that you asked the lady doctor about?" I nodded in affirmation as the answer was probably written in bliss all over me.

Swami sits in His crimson velvet chair during Bhajans. She told me that she saw Swami directing His singers to sing that particular song before they ran out of time. That's why the last Bhajan sounded hurried. "You heard the song of your choice," she said. "Only this morning, you were inquiring about it!" I agreed with her. The sole Player of this drama, having His subtle style, had finally tuned me to realise His Omnipresence and Omniscience when He played knick knack on His drum just at the nick of time. The spiritual message of the beautiful song really touched my sad heart and set it at the beats of gratitude and reverence.

—*Nirmala Dalal, Queensland, Australia*

The truth proclaimed by all religions is one and the same. All religions have a common ultimate goal. All religions aim at promoting righteous conduct by transforming the mental attitude of man, thereby bringing about harmony of body, mind and intellect. The foundation of all religions is morality. Morality is equated with selfless love. Religions were thus instituted to foster the well being of society through the promotion of love for all beings. All religions advocate their votaries to seek eternal peace or santhi within oneself. No religion approves the use of violence. Every religion recommends the cultivation of tolerance and respect for other religions, thus paving the way for Ahimsa.

—**Baba**

A Glorious and Holy Christmas

The Christmas Celebrations of 1991 at Prasanthi Nilayam will be a most cherished memory for the several thousands of fortunate devotees who witnessed and participated in this holy event. An unprecedented number from all over the world joined together and created an exceptional and spiritually elevating programme to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ.

Over two thousand overseas devotees began to flow into the Ashram around mid-December. The majority were from Australia, Italy, Argentina and Germany. The harmony and effort of these devotees allowed the celebrations to be a joy for all. All could feel Swami's Grace removing obstacles while infusing cheer in every participant.

Arrangements for the Celebrations began several days prior to December 25, when Swami accepted the letter requesting for permission to hold the Celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam. A burst of creative activity immediately followed. Rehearsals for the play began in the Poornachandra hall and the main choir began practising in Hall 25. Swami made surprise visits to each group during their preparations, imparting encouragement and inspiration to all the workers, actors, and singers.

the Mandir compound for Bhagavan's darshan and to hear the carolling of the choir. The overseas devotees were graciously given preferential seating while the choir was positioned to the left and to the right of the Ganesha circle in front of the Mandir. A festive air pervaded the grounds as Swami appeared resplendent in His orange robe. His grace was in abundance with an unusually long darshan. Baba's outstretched hand collected armfuls of letters. His generous smiles created waves of bliss in the hearts of the devotees.

Baba had a chair placed far out on the Mandir steps so that all could enjoy His darshan during the programme. The Choir's first offering was the bhajan, Ganesha Sharanam, which was followed by "Today is a Happy Christmas Day ", "White Christmas", "Jingle Bells", "Gloria", "Joy to the World", "I Am One", "O Holy Night", "Love is My Form", and "Hallelujah". The singing was so inspired that one could see even the Indians who had travelled far from their rural villages caught up in the Christmas mood. A pervasive sense of kinship knit the hearts of everyone. The programme's last segment was three rousing bhajans. "Hey Nanda Gopala", "Shivaya Namaha", and "Durge Jai Ma". What was most unusual about the performance of the bhajans, according to the comments of several old Indian devotees was they were sung with such perfect pitch and enunciation that no one felt the Choir was non-Indian. The Christmas Eve celebrations concluded with another surprise from Baba. Delicious sweet Prasadam blessed by Swami was distributed to everyone.

On Christmas morning at 4-30 a.m. all the Overseas devotees silently gathered at the southern section immediately outside of the Compound near the Ganesha Temple to participate in a unique Nagarsankirtan of Christmas Carols in a candle light procession. As several hundred participants lit their candles, a quote from Baba came to mind, "Light spreads; it mingles with the light from other sources of light; it has no boundaries, no prejudices, no favourites." The ladies, with young children in the lead, began the procession followed by the gents. Devotees from over 90 countries, representing all races, creeds, and religions, walked in unison creating a river of scintillating light. Although each shining face was unique in the long procession, the radiance from the flood of candle lights blended all the diversity into a brilliant dynamic unity.

By 5.40 a.m., the entire singing procession had filed into the Mandir compound. As the chorus continued, all eyes were focused on the Mandir balcony's glistening silver doors eagerly awaiting Baba's appearance. Within a few minutes, all were rewarded with Swami appearing in a luminous white robe and the most loving smile. He looked down upon the adoring assembly and raised both His Hands in blessing. Love merged in Love. Bhagavan then walked to both balconies at the opposite ends of the Mandir so that all may be generously afforded the longed for Christmas Darshan from the One whom Christ called "my Father".

After several minutes of devotional singing in Bhagavan's all—embracing Presence, He signalled for the Arati. At its conclusion, Baba left the balcony, after again bestowing His Blessings on all. Silently, slowly, the procession of Light filed out.

darshan. A beautiful orchestral recording of traditional Christmas music; merry, majestic and serene, was played, while Swami, resplendent in a golden robe, made His rounds blessing the devotees.

After darshan, the musically gifted students of the Sathya Sai Institute staged a surprise presentation on the Life and Teachings of Jesus. The narration was philosophically correct and the enthusiastic performance of the students was both stirring and heartwarming. Keyboard instruments and a western drum ensemble lent an original snappy rhythm to classical carols. It was amazing to hear less known African-American spirituals sung by the Indian students featuring "Go Tell It on the Mountain", and "Precious Lord Take My Hand" and even the West Indian "Mary's Boy child Jesus Christ was Born on Christmas Day."

In the afternoon, an unprecedented assembly of Overseas and Indian devotees gathered in the Poornachandra Auditorium to listen to Swami's Discourse.

Immediately after Bhagavan's enlightening discourse, there was a grand and innovative children's play. "The Eternal Stream," enacted by the children of the Overseas devotees. The drama portrayed how throughout the ages, from Biblical times to the present, the Lord has kept alive the remembrance, that within each human being shines the eternal flame, the Atma. Another unusual aspect of this drama was that all the children who wanted to be in the play were given a role. Ninety children, in ages ranging from less than two years to fourteen, participated! In spite of the sheer numbers, wide age differences, and language barriers to contend with during rehearsals, the play seemed flawless and magnificent.

The first act opened with a contemporary Christian boy, named Sam. who has a dream or vision of being inside the great Jewish Temple which stood in ancient Jerusalem. He hears his name being called repeatedly, "Samuel", by an angel of the Lord. However, another boy asleep in the Temple awakens to the call and responds to his name which is also Samuel. The Jewish boy, Samuel, is an assistant to the caretaker of the Temple, old Elias. Samuel notices that the Eternal Flame above the Altar is flickering for lack of oil. In near panic, he runs to Elias and urgently awakens him. Elias then rushes oil to the fluttering flame. The flame then burns boldly and steadily. The modern Sam awakens in his own room and finds alight burning. To his astonishment, no one is present in the room who could have placed the light

The story proceeds to depict Sam as a member of a Sai Christian family and how the parents teach Sai morality in lighthearted but realistic family situations of the last scene. Bhagavan made His way through the audience to the stage to share His pleasure by congratulating all the actors. Bhagavan then went behind the stage and gave Padanamaskar to everyone associated with the Christmas production.

—Andrew Rymar

Godfather Einstein and Baba the Avatar

"Together with knowledge of the natural sciences, one has to acquire humility, discipline and a good character."

—Sathya Sai Baba

If you want your life's work to be useful to mankind, it is not enough that you understand applied science as such. Concern for man himself must always constitute the chief objective of all technological effort, to assure that the results of our scientific thinking may be a blessing to mankind, and not a curse.

—Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein was my Godfather and a family friend. Over the years I have sought to increase my understanding of this great man, and the spiritual implications of his work. Einstein was a scientific giant who, perceiving the unified nature of reality, was able to express some of it mathematically. Beyond the role of scientist, he can best be thought of as a spiritual giant whose life, in terms of humility, compassion for humanity, and one-pointed focus on God, stands as an example of how Sathya Sai Baba teaches us to live most happily.

Albert Einstein stands as a precursor and example of the unique type of scientist so sorely needed in the world today the type that Bhagavan is currently graduating from His Institute of Higher Learning. Under Swami's loving hand, these are "whole" scientists. Their aim is to benefit society and not merely accomplish selfish ends without thought to their work's impact upon humanity and the environment. These are scientists who combine spiritual awareness with state-of-the-art training. Swami's graduates are at the leading edge of discovery in various fields. Three recent Ph.D.'s in physics had the unheard-of experience of having their papers published in American physics journals within a year of receiving their degrees! Grounded in the truth that God is the source of all phenomena and knowledge, they maintain the perspective that the best path to understanding creation is to study the Creator.

Einstein also was this type of scientist, and his life was guided by this principle. His overriding goal was to "Understand how the 'Old One' thinks." And he devoted his life to the effort to gain "knowledge of the ultimate immutable essence that under girds the mutable, illusory world."

In the first part of this article I will mention some personal stories about my family, Baba and Einstein. The second part will include some of Einstein's thoughts on science, spirituality, education and character, as well as what Swami had to say about him during a recent interview.

development of nuclear weapons, we might also consider that work also holds within it scientific illustration of spiritual truth. This article will conclude with some musings on how some of Einstein's work may be useful as one more 'tool' to help free us from Maya and accept the unseen Atma as the fundamental truth of life.

My father, Dr. Henry Abrams, opened his general medical practice in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1938. A year later, the physician who had been caring for Prof. Einstein, his daughter Margot and secretary Miss Helen Dukas, was leaving for further training. He approached my father and asked if he would care to take over, and he readily agreed. He cared for Einstein and the others until the outbreak of World War II.

Godfather Einstein

During the war my father was stationed on the cold and desolate island of Greenland. He and Einstein corresponded. While in Greenland my father received a letter from Einstein remarking that this should be a "contemplative period" for him, and urging him to consider getting further medical training in some speciality. Subsequently, my father did that, and returned to Princeton as the town's sole ophthalmologist. When I was born in 1949, he asked the professor, as Einstein preferred to be called, if he would be my Godfather, and Einstein consented. Thus, following Jewish tradition, Einstein was the one who held me for the *eris Milah*, the ritual circumcision ceremony. He was to have minor contact, but major impact over my life in the years to come. Further, because in the West the Godfather is considered a child's spiritual teacher I have come to consider Professor Einstein to be the first of several spiritual teachers in this life. They ultimately led me to Bhagavan.

Einstein died when I was six, and my recollections of him are few. I do remember that he had a very nice laugh, which he used often. For my fourth birthday, my parents and I were invited for a small celebration. My uncle took the opportunity to photograph the Professor and me dealing with the gifts that his secretary had obtained: a toy log cabin and a bag of foil-covered chocolates in the form of "gold coins." It was this latter which occupied most of my attention. Professor Einstein worked on the log cabin, trying to fit the simple pieces *of* wood together. Interestingly, when I grew up and printed all the negatives, there was a picture of my mother leaning over Professor Einstein and the logs, showing him how the ends joined.

Of course at that young age I had no idea of what was so special about being around this nice old man. It wasn't until I was at college that I really began to appreciate the honour of being his Godson and to consider what his scientific work meant.

I discovered meditation at the age of twenty. As my spiritual journey proceeded I became intensely curious as to what my link was with such a luminous soul.

Einstein and the Gita

Baba found me at twenty-three. As you can imagine, I regarded my first trip to the Avatar as a possible opportunity, among other things, to learn more about my relationship with Einstein.

of the day.

Baba, the consummate "tour guide", treated my wife Marsha and me to a host of travel experiences over the course of my first visit to India. We had no desire to be anywhere but where He was, and since He went to Delhi, Madras and Hyderabad we were overjoyed to be allowed to follow Him.

In Hyderabad a most interesting incident occurred during a discourse Swami was giving in a large auditorium. It was very hot and I had just eaten lunch. As time went on, I realized to my horror that I was being overtaken by a powerful drowsiness. As I was sinking into *tamas* I projected a thought to the Lord: *"Baba, the only thing that could keep me from falling asleep right now is if You were to mention Einstein..."* I knew He could do it but didn't really expect it at all and continued my descent. Within sixty seconds, my head thrust backward as Swami's lilting pronunciation of the name *"Einstein"* entered my consciousness from His ongoing flow of Telugu.

I was awake then, and became riveted to the story He recounted of how a young Indian physicist during an appointment with Einstein eagerly probed for the ultimate in Western scientific wisdom. What he received from Einstein however, was, to roughly quote Swami, "Every major conclusion I've arrived at is contained in your Bhagavad Gita. Look there!"

My curiosity about the connection was inflamed anew! I was dying to get some insight into "why me?" As Swami's translator for the discourse was himself a nuclear physicist I approached him afterwards hoping for some kernel of insight. He had nothing personally to share, and as far as learning more from Sai he said, "I counsel patience..." I was disappointed but left knowing I had received sound advice.

At Prasanthi Nilayam

Approximately one month later we found ourselves in the interview room at Prasanthi Nilayam. I was sitting on the floor just to Swami's right as He was talking to various people in the group. Seeing His footstool off to the side and recalling how frequently He is seen using one, I took the opportunity to perform the logical but minor *seva* of placing it in position. He accepted and I felt happy. After some time there was a lull in the give and take of conversation. No one was asking questions and Swami was silent, save for the quiet phrase "And you sir?" drawing the words out slowly. The thought came that He seemed to be addressing me though He kept saying it. I was at a complete loss for words. I was embarrassed to be addressed personally in front of the group. I definitely had something I wanted to ask and whether I was being addressed or not, it was an absolutely clear, appropriate chance to approach Baba about it. Perhaps as many as two or even three solid minutes passed. An ego-based lack of confidence prevented me from simply asking, "What is my connection to Einstein, Baba?" I feel Baba gave me many chances there, but finally new dialogue began with someone also. The moment was lost and I clearly could not cut in. I was to wonder many times after that if the opportunity might not have been lost forever

more important matters were raised than about my Godfather. It was okay; I had become patient and accepted that He would reveal whatever I needed to know in its own best time.

After Professor Einstein's death in 1955, Miss Einstein and Miss Dukes remained patients of my father and friends of the family, remembering birthdays and attending my Bar Mitzvah at 13. My mother sometimes gave them rides around town as they did not drive.

For sometime I had had a yearning to visit Einstein's home to see his study. In 1983 my sister planned to get married in Princeton and this looked like a good opportunity. My father called Miss Einstein to arrange a visit and on a cold December day he, my stepmother and I spent about two hours chatting with this completely unassuming artist in the parlour of the house where she had lived for close to fifty years. She told us of her time spent studying art at a convent in Italy and showed us a beautiful little wax sculpture of Saint Francis, for whom she had a special affection.

Einstein's study

Somewhat paralleling that 1978 interview with Swami, I had been feeling some reserve during this conversation about requesting to see the Professor's study. This woman was elderly and appeared frail and I didn't want to trouble her by an extra trip upstairs. Clearly it was getting time to go. I had to act quickly or the chance would be lost. Thinking of Swami I made my request and she responded with an enthusiastic "Sure!!" and charged up the stairs to the room in question. On the way we passed her father's bedroom which was very plainly furnished, like a monastic cell. Then we were in the study. Bookshelves lined the walls, and a wide window faced a deep garden in the back of the house. To the left of this picture-window were two portraits, one of a bearded Jewish sage, the other of Mahatma Gandhi. One shelf contained all of the original issues of "*Der Annalen der Physik*" (Annual of Physics), the journal in which both Theories of Relativity were first published. Then, just as I noticed a large easy chair and footstool, Miss Einstein "commanded" me to sit in it. How could I refuse? I smiled broadly to myself, remembering Swami's footstool and feeling His subtle presence in what for me was a meaningful coincidence. We took pictures, looked around a bit more and left. Later, I remembered Swami had said Einstein had a copy of the Bhagavad Gita and wished I'd looked for it.

As we left, my father recalled the time, years before, when he'd brought his brother-in-law Elliott Montroll over for what Einstein's formidable secretary had said would only be a three-minute appointment. My uncle, who was to be later named to the Einstein Chair of Physics at the university of Rochester, would have been overjoyed just to have shaken hands, but Einstein offered them lunch. They declined. My uncle ended up spending half an hour at Einstein's dining room table, talking and laughing with him about physics, while my father beamed with joy, understanding not one word.

Service to humanity

My father, only on being asked recently, recounted to me how every three or four months for some years he would receive a call from Einstein's secretary asking him if he might be able to

his practice, he always found time to go over, for discussions involving the non-scientific topics his host was interested in, such as philosophy, and world and national events.

Always straightforward and humble in human dealings, Einstein came to accept and use the bewildering fame that was thrust upon him in the only way that made sense to him—service to humanity. He worked tirelessly throughout his life promoting peace, freedom, and respect for all people.

Dad recalled how Einstein's efforts during the 1930's and World War Two enabled a certain number of Jews to escape Nazi persecution. The Professor also spent many years working for the United Jewish Appeal in establishing the state of Israel and accepted my father's invitation to co-chair the local fundraising campaign with him in Princeton for several years.

My father considers himself a rational scientific and appropriately skeptical man, who, while loving his religion and believing in God, puts great stock in what can be touched, seen, and measured.

A Sivaratri visit

My wife Marsha returned from her first trip to Swami in 1977. She had been present at the last public Mahasivaratri, during which our beloved Swami manifested Vibhuti, showered the audience with Ram Tirth, and produced what Professor Kasturi was later to describe as a "self-illuminating *crystal* lingam" (emphasis mine).

Soon after her return, Marsha and I were on a visit to my father and stepmother. When they asked her, "Tell us about your trip in India," she proceeded to do just that, with all the enthusiasm of one who had just returned from her first three months with the Avatar.

Producing photographs of Swami holding up the glowing lingam, Marsha excitedly explained to this senior medical man how Sai Baba produced this unidentifiable object in His body, and then brought it forth from His mouth every year to the delight of His devotees. This was, to say the least, very difficult for my father to grasp or accept.

We did not know it at the time, but this conversation was a turning point in our relationship with our folks. Being so unfamiliar with anyone even remotely like Sai Baba they felt sure that we were being taken in by a master magician, and "feared for our sanity". As the years passed however, their fears abated when they perceived we had not given up personal control over our lives, and continued to develop as human beings.

"Subtle is the Lord"

Three years after this visit we were back again, talking in that room where the fateful exchange had taken place. I was browsing in the kitchen cabinets when I spied a set of goblets I had never seen before—of clear heavy crystal. "Hey Nona!" I called to my stepmother with mild

Sivalingam." "Oh." I replied.

So, the sceptical doctor who so profoundly doubted Lord Siva's ability to produce a lingam of crystal, had himself received crystal from a doctor named Sivalingam! And unknowingly participated in an exquisite first-hand experience of what Einstein might have meant when he proclaimed, in referring to how "nature conceals her sublimity": "SUBTLE IS THE LORD, (but not malicious)..."

At the time I could not even comment, finally bringing it to their attention two or three years later.

-Mark R. Abrams, Vermont, USA.
(To be concluded)

If I Wait

If I wait till I am perfect to do what feels right...
Will I still be here
In a thousand years
Will I ever get round to saying aloud...
I can help too...

I know, I'm not perfect
I'm not as green as I would like to be
I'm not as quiet, not as tidy and
I'm not as neat as I'd like to be...
My disciplines are shot
A saint I'm not
But the rest of me can still be
the best it knows how to be...

If I'm a mile from the shore and the tide will turn
and my dinghy has a hole in it... what do I learn
If I stay where I am and just bale out the water
Just sitting there dutifully doing what I ought to.
Will the sea carry me in or will the sea carry me out
The weather looks unsettled... no time to muck about

It makes more sense to me to paddle like hell...
and bale out the water at the same time as well...

Even though I'm not yet developed in it and not yet fully grown
Is it patience to sit back and wait 'till I'm an example
Or is it sharing to map the journey
hoping it's understood adjust a sample
I don't want my lone way to lead me to Mergence
I have a dream of sharing the climbing
in One-der-full convergence...

If I wait until I'm perfect to be fit to love the Lord...
to be fit to tell others of experienced love and act and word...
If I wait and watch the world turn
knowing I'm keeping this to myself
Where is the ego?
Where is the self?

-Sarah Edwards, U.K.

The Lord's "Prayer" to Man

*I came yearning to you seeking your company,
But you had no time for Me.
Yet I did not leave you,
You had set your hopes on ephemeral things
On money, friends, kith and kin.
They deserted you at the end,
When you were toothless and broken.
No one seemed to care for you then.*

*You wept in despair and agony for someone to hold your hand.
Anal there I was before you with outstretched hands
To hold you in my firm grip,
I saw you smile at last and I told
you: I will never forsake you.
All that I ask of you is to think of
Me for a few moments every day
And then you will feel my presence all the way.*

—G. K. Damodar Row

*The hour before dawn
The air resonant with
The chant of the mystic Word
And hymns that lift the soul.
The song of birds in flight
The rush for the line
The serene splendour of the emerging sun.*

*The hush...
The peace and joy vibrant
In many a heart
As the Lord of the sun
Glides by Greeting with grace
The silent line.
In that silence
Is the eloquence of devotion.*

—Prof. S. Jagadisan

This year's Sports and Cultural Festival was inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba, Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute, on January 11 in the Vidyagiri Stadium.

It was a pleasantly cold morning when Bhagavan arrived precisely at 7 a. m., in His golden chariot. He was escorted to the Stadium by a squad of motorcycle outriders representing the various institutions participating in the Festival. Folk dancers from the Secondary School and the Institute danced in front of Bhagavan's chariot, lending an atmosphere of festivity and gaiety to the Festival. As Bhagavan alighted from the chariot, a special contingent of students carrying banners and playing the Institute Band escorted Bhagavan to the Shanti Vedika.

An elaborate and colourful Parade followed. Bhagavan lit the "Olympic" torch of the Sports Festival, thus officially inaugurating it. The torch was carried in relays by students of the Institute to the hilltop through an improvised ropeway, much to the delight of the spectators. At the top the "Olympic" flame was lit by the torch-bearers.

What followed was a wonderful exhibition of cultural events that depicted the rich cultural heritage of our land and the spirit of adventure inherent in every man.

Students of the Whitefield Campus of the Institute put up an air-show wherein radio-guided model airplanes flew across the sky in varied formations. This was followed by a display of power gliding. One of the power-gliders actually landed on the ground and the pilots paid their obeisance to Bhagavan. The Whitefield students also put up an impressive cultural item bringing out the unity of all religions.

The girl students of the Anantapur Campus presented a variety of items highlighting the spirit of adventure and folk culture of Bharat. The spectators were on tiptoe watching young women giving dare-devil displays of motorcycle and jeep driving. A colourful pageant of folk performances, propitiating local deities, especially Yellamma Devi, was a star attraction of the programme.

In the evening, students from the primary section of the Higher Secondary School put up a colourful programme which was appreciated by one and all. Unaided by any teacher, the little children transported the audience to a world of fantasy. Colourful costume dances and attractive drill formations highlighted the programme.

The final programme of the evening was a thematic presentation by the Prasanthi Nilayam students. Entitled "Manava Samskruti—the Evolution of the Human Soul" the programme had for its participants all the 650 students and 150 teachers of the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute and the Higher Secondary School. Through a breathtaking and moving performance of song, dance, dance-drama, acrobatics, gymnastics, drills, and real-life depictions, the presentation traced the apparent fall of man and the recurring divine intervention through

torch-lit ground to take photographs with all the participants standing in formation.

The Annual Meet this year saw a marked departure from mere adventurous displays to thematic and cultural exhibitions highlighting all the feats that Swami's students are capable of. In fact it opened a new chapter in the saga of Sathya Sai Education. For the vast gathering of men, women and children who witnessed the displays from every vantage point in the Stadium, it was a memorable and enjoyable experience, with quite a few thrilling moments.

- S C.

NEW YEAR MESSAGE:

AVATAR VANI:

"Manifest Your Divinity"

*The Lord of the cosmos permeates the entire universe.
Remaining invisible in the visible universe
The cosmic consciousness illumines everything
Like the thread that runs through a necklace of gems
All things happen, good and bad, according to the dictates of Time.
Time is the cause of joy and sorrow, gain and loss
Realise that Time is the cause of all happenings in the world.
There is none who is not subject to the sway of Time.*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Time moves fast like a whirlwind. Each one's life -span is getting reduced every moment, like a melting block of ice. Time passes even before man realises his duties in life. The human body is not easily acquired. The end of man's life should not be to waste his precious human birth without realising its primary purpose.

It is the duty of every man to realise the purpose of life and utilise his time in the performance of his duties to sanctify his existence. Given the will, there is nothing that man cannot achieve in this world. But before embarking on any enterprise, man should recognise his abilities and endowments.

Today's man, who claims to know everything and engages in exploring space, is unable to experience bliss. If one acquires the ability to explore the stars or walk on the moon, but is unable to understand his own true nature, he misses his integral consciousness. This consciousness is not related to knowledge of the external world. It can be experienced only by

have the right perception of a sage. Only such integral vision can confer bliss.

Bondage and liberation

When people speak about man's bondage, what is it that binds man? Man can liberate himself only when he knows what it is that binds him. Are wife and children the bonds? No. Is it property? No. Are they sensual desires? No. The greatest cause of bondage is the failure to know himself. An individual who is not aware of his true self cannot escape from sorrow. As long as sorrow is there, bliss cannot be experienced.

What is the sorrow that envelops man? Sorrow envelops man in three ways and afflicts him in many ways. One source of sorrow is "Asat" (the unreal). The second cause is "Tamas" (the darkness of ignorance). The third cause is death. In this context the Vedanta mentions three categories: Prakriti (Nature), Jivatma (the individual soul) and Paramatma (the Over Self).

As long as man does not give up what he ought to renounce, he will not experience bliss. As long as he is not aware of what he ought to know he cannot get bliss. Bliss will elude man until he reaches the goal he should aim at.

What is it that man should give up? What is it that he ought to know? What is his goal? What has to be given up is the fascination for the world (Jagat-twam). The reason is the world is not different from God. "Isavasyam idam jagat" (God dwells in the Universe). "Vishvam Vishnuswaroopam" (The entire cosmos is the embodiment of the Supreme). Disregarding this profound and sacred truth, man is becoming a prey to grief by his worldly attachments. The world should not be treated as merely physical but should be looked upon as a Divine manifestation. It is only when man is filled with godly thoughts that he will be rid of sorrow. Hence, what should be given up is worldliness. Then alone the Bliss of the Spirit (Atma-ananda) can be got.

God and the cosmos

The second thing that has to be given up is "Jiva-Bhava" (the feeling of individuality). Who is a "Jiva"? "Jiva" is God. "The Jiva (the individual self) resides in the body. God dwells in the heart." (Poem) They come together and engage in mutual sport. There is a Director who directs the play of the puppets. Both good and bad are present in the puppets. The Jiva-Atma (the individual self) and the Divine principle are not two distinct and separate entities. Out of ignorance, man forgets the basic reality and cherishes delusions which cause sorrow. It is like a man who is seized with fear when he mistakes a rope for a snake. When the truth is known the fear goes. Likewise man, looking at the world, considers it a separate phenomenal entity (Jiva-Tattwa). But in reality it is Divine. When the Divine nature of the cosmos is understood, man is free from the delusion of separateness. "The Divine Master illumines the entire cosmos and the cosmos shines in the Divine. God and the cosmos are inseparable friends. This is the prime dictum of Sai" (Poem).

What is the destination that man should attain? It is the original home from where he came ("Swasthaanam"). What is this original home? It is the awareness of one's own true self. It is for the realisation of this truth that the body has been given to man by the Divine. Where can one search for one's self? Can the search be made outside of you? No. Similarly, the search for God in the external is futile. "His hands and feet are everywhere, His eyes, head and mouth are everywhere. He stands forth encompassing everything in the cosmos" (Stanza from the Gita). When the Divine is omnipresent, it is foolish for man to search for God in some place. Hence the destination for man is the realisation of his divinity (the original source). This realisation must come through the Vedantic process of exclusion ("Neti, neti" "not this, not this") "I am not the body, I am not the intellect. I am not the Will. I am not the Antahkarana, the inner instrument". All these are only instruments. Man should realise: "I am the Master of all of them." When by this process of elimination man realises his true Self he is freed from sorrow.

Know thyself

Man's most precious and sacred gift from God is intelligence (Buddhi). The intelligence that should be used for seeking the Spirit (Atma) is being used by man today to seek food (Annam). When you are given a mirror to recognise your face, if you turn it in the reverse direction, how can you see your face? Use the mirror of Buddhi to recognise your true self. That is known as "Sakshatkaram"—direct vision of one's true Self.

Unfortunately man today seeks to know everything except his own true nature. He asks every one: "Who are you?" but does not put the question, "Who am I?" One who does not know himself, what right has he to seek about others? Such an enquiry proceeds from ignorance. Without the awareness of his own true self, man can never attain bliss.

It is to set melt on the path of such self-enquiry that the celebration of the New Year is intended. God as the embodiment of Time, is worshipped by the name "Samvatsara" (Year). This name also means that God contains within Himself everything. God is also known by the name "Kaalaatmaka", the Time Spirit. God incarnates on earth for revealing to man his divine essence. Man has been endowed with intelligence (as "Dheemantha") so that he may use it for discovering the Divine within him.

Four potencies

The name "Samvatsara" represents the cosmic manifestation of the Divine. The Divine displays four kinds of glorious potencies (vibhutis) as the Supreme Omni-Self. As such, He is called "Chathuraatma". This means He is the Self that embodies three potencies. The three are: "Vasudeva", "Sankarshana" and "Aniruddha". When these three "Vibhutis" are understood the fourth one, "Pradyumna" becomes intelligible.

"Vasudeva" indicates that the entire cosmos is the Lord's dwelling place. It also means that he is the Supreme Master of the Universe. This means that the Divine resides in all beings as the Indwelling Spirit. Moreover, He pervades the entire Universe. The Upanishad describes Him as "Narayana who is inside and outside and pervades everything."

"Sankarshana" refers to the Divine's capacity to attract all beings. All beings, moreover, have emerged from Him. The name is also associated with His power to transfer any object from one place to another. The child that was in the womb of Devaki was transferred to the womb of Rohini (another wife of Vasudeva) and for this reason the child got the name Sankarshana (another name for Balaram, the elder brother of Sri Krishna). The name Sankarshana also means one who attracts what is pure: "Sam" (Pure) "Karshana" (attracts).

"Aniruddha" is one who is beyond the control of anyone. He can be swayed only by His grace and not by any other means. This term applies to one who is all-pervading, all-powerful and all knowing.

"Pradyumna" refers to one who possesses infinite wealth ("Aishwarya"). He confers by His grace all prosperity and happiness on those who adore, worship and love the Lord. "Aishwarya" includes not only material wealth, but every kind of wealth such as health, knowledge, intelligence and virtue.

Another name of the Divine is "Bhagavan." The term "Bhaga" represents six attributes: Divine wealth, righteousness, eminence, fame, detachment and knowledge. The Lord is called "Bhagavan" because He has these six attributes.

Thus every name of the Lord is related to specific attributes and not an expression of the devotee's feelings or fancies.

Because of the Divine's myriad attributes, the sages hailed Him as "Om Samvatsaraaya Namah."

As the creator of the Universe and as the One from whom everything emerged, God is also called "Yugadi" (The initiator of every Yuga or Aeon). He is the One who willed to become the Many.

Unity in diversity

What is the unity that prevails in the multiplicity? This is illustrated by the example of a huge mansion within which there are rooms and halls for different purposes. When all the dividing walls are removed, only the main mansion remains. All beings in the world have different names and forms as embodied beings. When the embodiment is taken away only the one Atma in all of them remains. The sense of separateness is a creation of the mind. When this feeling, born of ignorance, goes, the Godliness in man will shine.

Every man has within him a wish-fulfilling tree (Kalpataru). But around it there is a wild growth of bushes. When you clear away the bushes, the Tree can be seen. That tree is the Self within each one. This Self is covered by man's sensory desires. When the desires are removed, the Self is recognised. Although the Self is in man, no attempt is made to realise it. How can a man who is involved in external pursuits realise his inner Reality? The right method has to be

an unshakable faith in God. Man's beliefs today are liable to be blown away like dried leaves. Man should strive to experience the Divine with firm faith, through weal and woe.

The divinity in man

Embodiments of Divine Love I Man who is the embodiment of the immortal Spirit, identifies himself with his body and falls a prey to worldly desires. How can such a person be a true devotee of God, even if he calls himself a Bhakta (devotee)? Such a man is only a devotee of Prakriti (the phenomenal world of Nature). If you regard even Prakriti as Divine, it will be a good thing. But even here, men separate the Divine (Paramatma) from Nature (Prakriti). As long as this sense of separation exists, all forms of japa and worship, performed even over many lives, are of no avail.

What is creation (Srishti)? Creation is an expression of the will of God. This is called Prakriti. Everyone who emanates from Prakriti should have divine qualities. That which has emerged from the Divine should have divine qualities and not the traits of an animal or a demon. A human being without the feeling of compassion or love is not human at all. Every human being should manifest his inherent divinity. He should make himself a "messenger" of God. Instead, he behaves like a "miss-finger of God" as one who has "missed" what he should know about himself.

When man realises his true nature and his role in life, he becomes one with God. This is described in Vedanta as the "Turiya-avastha"—the fourth state of consciousness in which the individual Spirit is one with the Universal. It is a transcendental state which is beyond the body and the mind—beyond the waking, dream and deep sleep states.

What do we understand by the term individual ("Vyakti")? This term is applied to one who manifests the unmanifested Divine Power hidden within him. It is meaningless to apply it to anyone who does not manifest the Divine within him.

The cosmic form

Manifesting one's inner divinity does not mean producing something new. Divinity is inherent in man. It is called "Swa-bhava" (one's true nature)—the Atmic nature. It is the Atma that confers all powers on man. Those who bemoan their weakness are not aware of their inherent potential and are not putting it to right use. The first feeling which one has to get rid of is the identification of his physical form with his real self. Those who ask, "Where is God?" do not realise that all that they see in the cosmos is a manifestation of the Divine. That is why the scripture declares "Pasyannapi cha na pasyathi mudho." ("Even while seeing, the foolish one does not see"). Man is all the time seeing the universe around him and yet declares he has not seen God. What is the form of the Cosmos? Is it not Divine? You are seeing the Divine in the form of the physical universe. In the Bhagavad Gita this cosmic form of the Lord is described as "Vishwa Viraat Rupa". What is "Vishwa"? It is the whole cosmos. The Vishwa Viraat Rupa is the collective form of everything in the universe.

Rupa). The intellect is used to misinterpret words and create confusion. What is needed is an understanding through the heart. Even a highly evolved person like Arjuna confessed to Krishna that the mind is ever wavering and fickle. Are the intellectuals of today, with all their degrees, greater than Arjuna? Not at all. Above all degrees and intellectual attainments, one needs the grace of God. Krishna recognised Arjuna as His devotee. That is the supreme accomplishment.

When you earn from the Lord the epithet of "Bhakta" (God's devotee) you will be equal with Arjuna. God is not calling you as His devotees. It is not enough if you style yourself a devotee of God. God should hail you as His devotee. It is only when your devotion is acknowledged by the Lord that you can call yourself a devotee. If you have not received the acknowledgement, it may mean that you have given the wrong address in your devotion. The correct address of the Lord is "Hridayavasi" the Indweller in the Heart. This means that you must continue with your devotion to God till your own conscience is satisfied. To achieve this satisfaction you have to purify yourself constantly. This means that you have to get rid of your bad qualities, bad thoughts and bad actions.

Realise that the body has been given to you for the service of others. How is this service to be rendered? Through righteous and pure means. The body is an instrument for the realisation of Dharma (Righteousness). This truth is allegorically conveyed by the example of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata. The Pandava brothers (Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva) and Draupadi (representing Prakriti or Nature) followed Truth and Righteousness as represented by Dharmaja (the eldest of the Pandavas) and sanctified their lives. This applies to every human being. It is only when he adheres to Truth and Righteousness that he can realise the Atma. Worship of the Divine must stem from the heart. When devotion flows from the heart the voice of the Divine can be experienced in the silence of the Spirit (Shabda Brahman). This was the experience of Ramakrishna Paramahansa He observed perfect silence awaiting the voice of God at any moment.

Can the Divine voice be heard in the cacophony of daily sounds? No. Devotees must practise reticence. When speech is restrained, the voice of the Spirit within makes itself heard. That is subtler than the human breath.

It is only through "Prapati", or total surrender, that the Divine can be experienced. It is an experience that can be had every moment of your life

(Bhagavan then spoke on how every moment in one's life should be regarded as new and how it should be divinised. This part of Bhagavan's discourse appeared in our January issue).

From Bhagavan's discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam on 1-1-1992

*Of what avail is it to be a scholar or clever intellectual
If one does not practise even a fraction of what one knows?
Not all the luxuries and pleasures of the world will give a man contentment and peace
Only when he realises the Truth of the Spirit will he experience true peace and contentment.*

*Dear Students!
Embodiments of Divine Love!*

Whatever a man sees in the world rouses fear in him. Detachment alone can free him from fear. Failing to grasp this profound truth, man is allowing his desires to multiply.

As long as man is attached to the body, he cannot get over the desire to possess the objects that attract him. A man afflicted with the acquisitive impulse (mamatwa) can never get rid of worries. To overcome this attachment and possessiveness, the ancient sages, from Vedic times, pursued their studies. The sages believed that self-control promoted humility and that humility was the true index of right education.

Control of the senses is essential for realising humility. Education should be pursued for achieving control of the senses. The ancients esteemed only that system of education which promoted control of the senses (Indriyanigraha).

Control of the senses is called "Dama" (in metaphysical parlance). The vicissitudes of time, place and circumstances have resulted in the term "Dama" getting reversed in today's student community into the term "Mada" (conceit). The reason is the disappearance of humility and reverence from the students. Indulgence in sensory pleasures has become their primary concern.

Students should regard control of the senses as their foremost guiding principle. In the old days, students who achieved self-control received a diploma called "Sakshara". The inner significance of this title is that the recipient is one who has mastered his senses and recognised his inherent Divinity. When "Dama" (self-control) turns into "Mada" (conceit), "Sakshara" gets reversed and we have "Rakshasa" in its place. Consequently, the student who practised "Dama" and displayed humility and reverence was regarded as "Sakshara" and the student who was filled with arrogance and egoism was characterised as a "Rakshasa" (a demon).

Humility and reverence

It is not enough if one becomes a mere scholar. Even if one has mastered all the scriptures, if he lacks humility and reverence and has no self-control, the ancients regarded such learning as demonic knowledge (Rakshasa Vidya). During Vedic times, the people believed in human values, had faith in God and led pure and sacred lives. The advance of science and technology has enabled man to produce weapons of mass annihilation. Scientists who can manufacture such destructive weapons are unable to secure peace of mind. A scientist who has acquired mastery

sense of peace and security experienced by common people and are wasting their lives.

The educational process is more concerned with imparting bookish knowledge, while education itself is sought only as a means for earning a living. This link between education and employment should be severed. Education should be the means for acquiring wisdom (Vijnana).

The world today consists of two types of persons: those who are consumed by excessive desires and those who have no desires. The desireless person treats with indifference all worldly things. The desire-filled man will not be satisfied even if he is offered a mountain of gold (the Meru Mountain). (In this context Swami related the story of a demonic character in the Ramayana named Kabandha, who had his head in his stomach and who used his long arms to catch whatever object he could to fill his stomach. Swami said, most students seemed like Kabandha to be concerned only about earning a living).

The primary object of education is not to ensure how one can fill his stomach. The Lord, who gave a stomach, will not fail to provide the necessary sustenance. Man, who should seek the Atma, is searching for food (Annam). In the world today, three-fourths of the people appear to be Kabandhas and not truly educated persons. In all their actions—whether in sports or other fields—they are concerned with only selfish interests.

Rights and responsibilities

There are today two aspects relating to man which have to be considered. One relates to a person's rights. The other relates to one's duties. Most people are concerned only about their rights and engage themselves in struggles to secure them. But they do not recognise their responsibilities. In all the different fields—social, political, economic and even spiritual—men do not recognise their responsibilities and duties. They want high positions and emoluments. The entire life is wasted in the pursuit of such desires. No one considers whether he is performing the quantum of work for the salary he receives, whether he is discharging his duties properly and fulfilling his responsibilities. Such an attitude is prevalent not only in mundane affairs, but also in the spiritual field. Everyone says, "I want God. I want Liberation (Moksha). I want to ensure my well-being here and hereafter (Yogakshemam)." But he does not make the necessary effort to achieve these desires. "I have no time for bhajans. I can't do any sadhana. I have no time to think of God"—this is his attitude. But still he wants God. With such a narrow outlook, how can a man know what his rights are? To get anything you want from a shop, you have to pay the price. But man today wants God to ensure his well-being, but is he prepared to pay the price for getting it? Is he prepared to offer to God the sacrifice he has to make to secure his "Yogakshema"? Does he offer the love that has to be given to secure peace, prosperity and security? Man today seeks to get something without paying the price for it. But the Lord cannot be deceived. He offers the appropriate reward for each action according to its nature—whether it be gain or loss, good or bad. We will be entitled to expect what we desire from God only if we make the appropriate offering to God. No one is prepared to offer anything to God, but every one is eager to get something from God.

People go about preaching to others. How far are they practising what they preach? Many call upon others to make sacrifices. What sacrifice are they making? People expect others to be grateful to them for what they have received. How far are they themselves grateful to those from whom they have received benefits?

There is no point in investigating all kinds of things in the world. The first thing one should do is to enquire into the truth about himself. Only then he will be competent to enquire into the conduct of others.

The devotion and faith of devotees today can be compared to a dried leaf which can be blown away by a slight breeze. A true devotee, on the contrary, will remain unshaken like a ball of iron whatever the trials or tribulations he may have to face. Many devotees, who are voluble in their speech, ostentatious in their display of devotion, are swept off their feet when they encounter any adversity. When their expectations are not realised, they develop all kinds of aversions. They make no efforts to recognise their own faults.

Students, for instance, nourish a grievance that Swami is not smiling at them, that Swami does not talk to them, but they do not enquire within themselves why Swami is acting in this manner and in what way they have violated Bhagavan's injunctions. If they examined their own conduct in this manner, there would be no room for them to entertain such thoughts about Swami.

Not human to err

Many feel that it is human to err and that Bhagavan should forgive their lapses. In fact, if they are truly human, they should not commit mistakes at all. Even if sometimes a mistake is committed, wittingly or unwittingly, it should not be repeated again. It is a grievous error to think that it is natural for a human being to err. Such feeling should not be entertained at all by anyone. Every man should realise, "I am not weak. I am not an animal. I am not a demon. I am a man." When a man has this conviction he will not commit mistakes. When a man is described as "Nara" it means that he is the very embodiment of the Spirit (Atma). The Atma cannot be affected by any taint. It is the attachment to the body which is the cause of bad thoughts, bad desires and bad actions. It is the one who is a slave to his senses who is a prey to such impulses. To follow the directives of the senses is a mark of the animal. To be guided by the Atma is the sign of the human. No one should attempt to justify his weaknesses and lapses as natural to a human being. They should be regarded as signs of mental debility. You should continually strive to master your senses. When you have truly acquired sense control, you will experience the power of the Divine within you.

Captor and captive

There is a story which illustrates what happens when the agency intended for control of the senses becomes itself a victim of the senses. Once upon a time the government of a country set up a border force to prevent the entry of hostile foreign elements. A camp was set up on the border. A soldier who was keeping vigil caught an enemy intruder entering the country. After

from his tent, asked the soldier to bring the captive to his tent. The soldier said that the man was refusing to come. Then the captain asked the soldier himself to come. The soldier said that the intruder would not let him go! This illustrates the plight of educated students today. Education, which should enable them to acquire mastery over the senses, has made them captives of the senses.

Students should not give way to such weakness. They must develop spiritual strength. They must keep out the bad qualities which afflict them. Those who cannot do this can never become good students.

Men should regard the senses as potential enemies. They should not be allowed to have their own way. They should be subject to one's control and direction. What is the easiest way to achieve this mastery? Only the spiritual path.

Let conscience prevail

If there is real faith and devotion in a man, the senses will be powerless against him. It is the decline in faith and devotion which has led to man becoming a slave of the senses. Students should, therefore, examine before they do anything whether it is good or bad, right or wrong, and act according to the dictates of their conscience. Even in respect of the conscience, certain facts should be borne in mind. The promptings of intellectual reasoning should not be identified with the dictates of the conscience. The directives should come from the heart. When you dive deep into a problem and enquire whether what you should do is in the interests of your friends and society in general, your conscience will give you the right answer. You should not be guided by intellectual reasoning which has a selfish element in it. You should be guided by a concern for the collective interests of society at large. That alone is the true voice of conscience. This kind of broad social conscience should be developed through education.

Life is a game: play it!

Students! You have performed a variety of gymnastic feats. You have distinguished yourselves in a variety of games and sports. Although these games have a value of their own in the physical field, there is something greater than all of them. Life is a game, play it! Treat life itself as a big game. To achieve a good name and success in this game, you have to cultivate good habits. Good thoughts, good speech and good actions are the disciplines required in this game. When so much practice and effort are required to achieve success in games like tennis, how much more effort is needed to succeed in the game of life! In this game, if you wish to achieve a good name, uphold your ideals, and realise the Divine You have to observe in your daily life right thinking, right conduct and right attitudes.

Longevity and the good life

Students! You have to take a resolve today to restore the ancient culture and tradition of Bharat. Life is wasting away every moment. People are growing older every minute, forgetting their duties. In this situation, what is it that you have to achieve? All that you wish to accomplish, you must set out to achieve now itself when you are in the vigour of youth. Man's

a man's life is determined by his own actions. A man's bad thoughts, his hatreds, his jealousy and bitterness are shearing his life into bits every moment Anger shortens a man's life. This can be seen from everyday experience. When a man gets angry, his temperature rises. The blood gets heated up. In the process the nerves get weaker and as a consequence all organs in the body also get weaker. This weakness may last for six months. One moment of anger will deprive a man of the energy got from six months of food. Every fit of anger shortens a man's lifespan. Whatever temporary satisfaction a man may derive by the display of anger, it causes greater damage to the individual concerned than to others. Likewise, hatred and envy are equally debilitating in their effects. Egoism and attachment also have similar deleterious effects on man's life.

Body, mind and atma

Man is made up of three constituents—the body, the mind and the Atma. Man needs the body for performing actions. But if the actions are done without using the discriminating power of the mind, man will be behaving like an animal, which acts on impulse. Moreover, if the mind, without relying on the eternal and ever pure Atma, follows the demands of the body and the senses, the actions will be demonic. The combination of mind and body leads to demonic qualities. When one is installed in the Atmic principle, transcending the body and the mind, he attains the Divine.

The ancient sages divinised their lives by control of the senses, by observing spiritual discipline and by successfully carrying on their daily avocations. These are the means by which men can transform themselves into sages. For effecting this transformation, students will have to cultivate faith and devotion.

Spiritual education is greater than all other types of education. This was declared by Krishna in the Gita. Rivers are distinct in their names and forms, but when they merge in the ocean, they become one. Likewise, all kinds of studies and practices, when they are merged in the ocean of spiritual knowledge, become one.

The Lord's offer to man

Make your heart pure so that it becomes a worthy abode of the Divine. What should be an ocean of milk (Kshirasagara) has been turned by man's misdeeds into an ocean of brine. Sanctify all your thoughts, words and deeds. Only then you will deserve the title "Sakshara".

The Lord made three declarations: "Son! I shall give you what you ask. If you search for Me, you shall find Me. When you knock at My door, I shall open it." But man today asks for favours not from God but from Nature. He searches not for God but for worldly pleasures. He knocks not at the doors of Liberation but at the gates of Hell.

What you should ask for is the grace of the Divine. What you should search for is God. And you should knock at the doors of the gate to Liberation. Man is acting contrary to God's injunctions. If only man followed God's commands he would be divinising his life.

Man's frailties have made him distant from God. A student (in his speech earlier) said that to be away from God was a "living death." Man should strive to be "near and dear" to God. Many who are "near" to God are not "dear" to God. For instance, here in Prasanthi Nilayam you see devotees who have come from distant countries like Argentina, Australia and America out of their love for God. Many who are near Swami may meditate on God but they do not dedicate their lives to God. Only by dedication they can become "dear" to God. Students should strive to be both near and dear to God.

Outsiders coming to Prasanthi Nilayam, on seeing the students, feel: "How lucky are these students! Swami is always talking to them and moving with them." But they are not aware who are really "near" to Swami. The saint Thyagaraja's experiences provide an illustration of the dilemma confronting devotees. Once while experiencing troubles and undergoing indignities from others, Thyagaraja wondered whether the troubles he had to go through were due to deficiencies in his devotion or whether Sri Rama was not potent enough to help him. Convinced about his own devotion, he attributed his troubles to Rama's inability to relieve him. Such doubts often arise in the minds of devotees. After meditating over this matter, he realised that Rama's power was limitless and that the defect lay in his own devotion. He composed a song which described how devotion to Rama had enabled Hanuman to leap over the ocean and how it had enabled Lakshmana and Bharata to perform heroic deeds. (Swami sang the song mellifluously). Thyagaraja confessed that in doubting Rama's powers he had been guilty of weakness in his devotion.

No place for doubt

If Swami did not possess such power, is it conceivable that people would come seeking Swami's grace from distant countries like Argentina and Australia? No one issued any invitations to them. Are they less intelligent than any of you? The fact that they have come here at great expense, prepared to put up with many inconveniences, shows the depth of their devotion.

Therefore, you should not entertain complaints against God or blame Him for your difficulties. If Swami did not have the power, would people of different faiths and from different countries come to Him and experience their oneness? What is the Will that is able to accomplish this? If you enquire along these lines, you will discover the jejuneness of your attitudes. It is your small-mindedness, which accounts for such reactions. Therefore, develop a broad outlook and a wide vision.

All the students of our Institute of Higher Learning should prove themselves to be ideal men wherever they go. You should earn a good name from everyone.

Students who have won prizes in sports should realise that by their conduct they should earn the esteem and love of Swami. All kinds of titles are conferred on people today. But the title which all of you should aim at is that you are 'Children of Immortality' (Amrutasya Putraah).

will become sacred. Bring a good name to your parents, to your society and to the land of your birth.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Hari bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi.*"

From Bhagavan's discourse at the Institute Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam, on 14-1-1992

SANKRANTI SANDESH:

AVATAR VANI

The Sacred Message of a Holy Festival

*The Sun appeared serenely peaceful.
The day started to get shorter.
And the chill wind blew fiercely.
The fields were ripe with the golden crop.
The farmers rejoiced in singing.
The buds of flowers blossomed.
On the banks of rivers like garlands.
Farmers were bringing home the newly harvested grain.
And hailed the arrival of the sweet Festival of Sankranti.*

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Many persons in the world have expounded in different ways the nature of divinity. Even in Bharat, although from ancient times profound spiritual truths have been proclaimed and propagated, the minds of men have not turned towards the sublime. It is the minds of men that need to be changed, not their external appearances. Men are judged by their qualities, not their garments.

"Yad Drisyam Tannasyam" (That which is perceived is perishable). Everything associated with the phenomenal world is continually changing. That which is subject to change is impermanent. What is unchanging is the eternal. By attaching excessive value to the changing things of the world, man is making himself remote from the changeless and eternal Reality. Men should endeavour to realise the eternal and unchanging Atma (Omni-Self).

In a year, the Sun passes through the 12 houses of the Zodiac in 12 months. The Sun's entry into each house of the Zodiac is described as a Sankramana. 'Kranti' means change. 'Sankranti' means a sacred change. The Sun's entry into every house in the Zodiac is not considered as equally holy. What, then, is the reason for giving special importance and sacredness to 'Makara Sankramana', the entry of the Sun into (Makara) Capricorn? Besides the physical qualities

significance relating to the 'Makara Sankramana'. The Sun's entry into Capricorn takes place in mid- passage between the months of Margasirsha and Pushyam. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna has declared: "Among the months I am the month of Margasirsha." The Margasirsha month is the crown among the 12 months. What is the reason? Among the planets of the solar system, the Sun is the presiding deity. Without the Sun the life process in the world will cease. During the month of Margasirsha, the world experiences the abundance of the harvested food grains, which sustain and confer joy on the people. Every farmer's granary is filled with grain. The weather during the season is cool and pleasant. It is an appropriate time for enjoying peaceful rest. It is the time when man is free from the burdens of daily toil and can devote his time to enjoyment with his children and his cattle.

However, what is the connection between these physical comforts and the spiritual significance of this season? Man is a lover of the beautiful. He rejoices at the sight of good food. It may be asked whether this joy, which he experiences, is related solely to physical things or has it an inner spiritual basis? It is not the body that experiences joy. It is the Atma (the Indwelling Spirit). The joy that one derives from looking at others is not related to the body but the Atma. What the eye sees, the ear hears, the mind thinks, or the heart feels, all of them are experiences of the Atma. The senses are only instruments. Every experience is a reflection of the Inner Being. Only when this truth is recognised will it be possible to comprehend to some extent the nature of the Divine.

Example of the Sun-God

For all actions, the inspirer, the performer and the experiencer is the Sun God. For man, caught up in a meaningless existence and going through an endless round of futile activities, the Sun-God stands out as the exemplar of tireless and selfless service. He enjoys no respite from work. He is above praise and censure. He carries on his duties with absolute equanimity. Everything he does is only for the well-being of the world and not for causing any harm. It is only man's senses which prove helpful or harmful to him. When man submits to his senses, they become his enemies. When man masters the senses they become his friends. Friends and enemies result from the strength or weakness of men.

Earlier, a student in his speech mentioned that to Vibhishana, who believed in God, Rama was a friend. To the unbelieving Ravana, Rama became an enemy. Hence, man's happiness or sorrow stems from his belief or disbelief.

Faith leads to God

The primary motto for man should be Faith (Trust). The ancients declared: "Believe and Live." Without Faith you cannot live happily. Only when you have the belief that one is your mother you develop love for her. Likewise, a woman loves a baby only when she feels he is her child. In the same manner, the recognition of the Divine arises from Faith. 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. Thus it is Faith that reminds us of God.

All that is taught or learnt today appears to consist of pompous verbiage concerning the external world. Doubtless, there is a great deal of talk about Divinity and Spirituality. But one cannot notice in these preachers any sacred mark of Truth, Love or Peace associated with Godly men. Are men to be esteemed for the clothes they wear, the speeches they make, or the 'panditry' they display? No. The only person worthy of esteem as a wise man is the one whose actions correspond to his thoughts and words. The Divine judges men by their thoughts and motives. God sees only the inner purity of man's motives and not his external appearance or the power and pelf he possesses. Valmiki, Nanda, Kuchela, Gajendra (the Lord of the Elephants), the child Dhruva, the illiterate Sabari, Vidura and Hanuman are all examples of beings who enjoyed God's grace only through their devotion and not because of birth, wealth, scholarship, or any other accomplishment (Swami recited a poem bearing on this theme).

What is Bhakti (Devotion)? Devotion is directing one's sacred love towards God. Man gets bound by his attachment through egoism to the transient things of the world.

Your primary task is to discharge your duty. This does not mean renouncing worldly life or your obligations to your family. Keep your mind serene and unruffled. All the changes affect the external. They do not affect the internal experience. Entertain always good thoughts and good feelings.

In this connection, an incident from Jesus' life may serve as a good example. Jesus saw in the market place a woman who was being stoned by people around her as one who had gone astray. Jesus approached them and said: "Oh People! You are all persecuting this woman for some physical misconduct. Think how many such sins you are committing mentally. Whoever has not committed such a sin even mentally, let him cast the first stone. All others have no right to throw stones at her!"

People go on judging who is a sinner and who is a pure person, but they should enquire within themselves how far they are sinners or meritorious. Everyone must try to keep his mind free from bad thoughts. The Sankranti Festival is intended to make people embark on this exercise in transformation.

Symbolism of Sankranti Celebration

In the Dwapara Yuga the cowherds and cowherdesses used to experience boundless joy in the presence of Krishna, forgetting themselves in their devotion to the Lord. On Sankranti Day they used to employ cow-dung as a sacred means for cleansing purposes. They demonstrated also the inner significance of the Sankranti celebration. They placed three balls of cow-dung in front of their houses, fixing three pumpkin flowers on their top and went round singing and dancing in adoration of Krishna. What is the significance of these three balls of cow-dung? People are inclined to despise cow-dung. But in the eyes of the Gopikas they were sacred. In olden days, people used to sprinkle water mixed with cow-dung in front of their houses. The cow-dung helped to destroy the bacteria in the atmosphere. The cow-dung was considered a symbol of health and happiness. The first cow-dung ball represented Krishna, who was

health. The second cow-dung ball was placed as a symbol of the Govardhana Hill which Krishna lifted and thereby demonstrated His divinity. The third cow-dung ball symbolised the cow, which is the source of health and joy for the people as the giver of milk. Gopala, Govardhana and Go (the cow) were worshipped in this manner.

Among vegetables the pumpkin has a place of honour as the largest in size. The Gopikas looked upon the pumpkin as a symbol of large-hearted-ness. Hence, pumpkins were offered as fitting gifts on Sankranti Day. What is the gain from this offering? The pumpkin does not rot quickly. It can be preserved for a long period. Any number of edible preparations can be made from it. It can also be used in combination with many other vegetables. Because of its distinct qualities, the offer of a pumpkin also meant making an offering of one's virtues.

Develop harmony

Sankranti is a holy day for many reasons. It was the day on which Adi Sankara took Sanyasa (renounced all worldly ties and donned the ochre robe). On this day it is the usual custom to offer to people a mixture of jaggery and sesame (til). Jaggery is sweet and is a symbol of love. "Til" is also known as "sneha", which means friendship. Therefore, the offer of the jaggery-til mixture means offering to people love surcharged with friendliness. Develop harmony towards everyone. Much of what passes for friendship today consists in associating with persons when they are affluent and benefiting from their money. When they are in distress, the same persons will not even look at them. This is not friendship at all. True friendship must emanate from the heart and should remain unaffected by weal or woe. In fact, God alone can be an unfailing friend in all situations. He is with you, above you, below you, beside you and around you.

Today people do not rely on such Divine friendship. They place their faith in the transient things of the world. The message of Sankranti is the promotion of love among one's kith and kin and friends by all of them coming together to celebrate this festival. It is on this day that the "Ganga" bull trainers take their decorated animals from house to house, play music in front of the homes and make the bulls demonstrate their skills before the family gatherings. The bulls are also made to give demonstrations in the market place with a view to promoting fellow feeling and harmony. The girls in every home will take their younger brothers to such demonstrations. The trainer of these animals will be dressed in a special way and display large caste-marks on his forehead. He will carry a small whip which is used for training the bull. The bull will be taught to respond to instructions designed to promote love and happiness in the home by relating the story of the wedding of Rama and Sita. Rama and Site represent the Omni-Self and Nature (Prakriti) respectively. Their union is to be celebrated by the offering of one's love to the Divine couple. Thus, the performance of the sacred bull on Sankranti day conveyed a profound message to the people.

Because Sankranti was deemed the most important festival, it was the day on which the newly-wed bridegroom visited the bride's home. It was the day on which many people called on others as a mark of goodwill. There were rejoicings in every home because of the get-together of

occasion by cutting jokes and playing tricks).

The Sankranti festival was thus designed to promote harmony and love in the family, to make people realise the unity of the Creator and creation, to teach the people their obligations, to instill heroism in them by making the Sun God their example, and, above all, to make them realise their inherent Divinity. This is the sacred purpose of the Sankranti festival.

Sankranti: then and now

Today such a holy festival has been converted into a day for the enjoyment of jaggery and til, totally missing its inner significance. People are immersed in the darkness of self-indulgence.

Rice cooked with jaggery is a special preparation for Sankranti day. What is the reason for this? In the old days, this sweet rice was prepared to celebrate the gathering of the harvest and after the cows had been fed with the sweet rice, it was scattered over the fields. On the third day, all the cattle used to be decorated and taken round the bazaars in procession. For this reason, the festival was called in Tamil Nadu "Maattuppongali"—the Pongal festival of the cattle. The bull is much more than a mere quadruped. As the vehicle of Siva, it has an honoured place in the Siva temple as Nandi. Its eyes are always directed towards the Lord in the sanctum. The Nandi is worshipped before one enters the sanctum.

The Sankranti festival should be regarded as the day on which man turns his vision towards God. Man's life may be compared to a stalk of sugarcane. Like the cane, which is hard and has many knots, life is full of difficulties. But these difficulties have to be overcome to enjoy the bliss of the Divine, just as the sugarcane has to be crushed and its juice converted into jaggery to enjoy the permanent sweetness of jaggery. Enduring bliss can be got only by overcoming trials and tribulations. Gold cannot be made into an attractive jewel without its being subjected to the process of melting in a crucible and being beaten into the required shape. When I address devotees as "Bangaru" (Golden one), I am considering you as a precious being. But only by going through the vicissitudes of life with forbearance can you become an attractive jewel. You should not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by difficulties. Develop self-confidence and have firm faith in God. With unshakable faith, dedicate yourselves to the service of your fellowmen and lead exemplary lives.

Today the Sun-God begins his northward journey. It is the beginning of Uttarayana—the northward journey. The noble and heroic warrior Bhishma waited for 56 days so that he could give up his life in Uttarayana.

DO YOUR DUTY LIKE THE SUN

The Sun, in entering on his northward journey, hailed the Himalayas in the north as the beauteous abode of Lord Siva. The heart should be regarded as the abode of the Lord and the vision should be turned to experience the Divine. The human heart itself symbolises the Himalayas as the abode of purity and peace. The Sun's northward journey is a pointer to the path man should take to realise God. The Sun is the supreme example of selfless and tireless service.

Sun teaches man the lesson of humble devotion to duty, without any conceit. The Sun is the supreme example for everyone that he should do his duty with devotion and dedication. Doing one's duty is the greatest Yoga, as pointed out by Krishna in the Gita. Let your actions and thoughts be good. You will then experience the Bliss Divine.

Sankranti is intended to bring about various changes in man's attitude so that he may sanctify his life. It is a festival not intended for Bharatiyas alone. Its message has a meaning for everyone in the world. It has a message for people of all climes, creeds and countries. "Kranti" (change) and Santhi (peace) both reside in the heart. You need not search for them in the outside world. Discover them within you. This is your duty. Serve your parents and society. Lead a Godly life, dedicating all your actions to God. Live in Love!

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Prema muditha manase kaho, Rama, Rama, Ram!*")

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, in January 15, 1992

“Unity in Diversity”

At the end of our (American) Founding Fathers' famous *Declaration of Independence* (issued on July 4, 1776, with Thomas Jefferson known to be the principal author) the U.S. Representatives, in Congress assembled, began "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world" about the rectitude of their intentions. In his ringing conclusion, Thomas Jefferson also told the world that the American rebels had "a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence."

The "One" symbolized by this Supreme Judge, this Divine Providence, is quite simply God; also known as the Supreme Being, the Oversoul, or He. Thus, Jefferson's "Judge" is the *wu-wei* of the Taoists (the Way), the Jesus of Christianity, the Divine Ground (perennial philosophy; *advaita*) of the Vedanta, Allah of the Moslems, the *Torah* of the Jews, Guru Nanak of the Sikhs, or Gautama Siddhartha of the Buddhists. There should never be quarrelling about 'Name' or 'Form' or philosophical systems. These are individual choices: today the one-celled planet Earth, lovely *Gaia*, needs a religious Bill of Rights to protect citizens of the world in their choices to believe spiritually as they wish, without harming others.

The West has suffered from too many *isms*; and so-called "religious wars" have actually had to do with the petty jealousies and politics of wrongheaded men. Democracy was originally invented by the ancient Greeks to work on a micro-scale. We need to pull together as a world community and have faith in Divine Providence and work toward serving humanity. We need to

faith founded upon 'unity in diversity', as Sri Sathya Sai Baba unequivocally states.

"In the world today, the numbers of intellectuals who are engaged in breaking up the One into the many and fostering divisive forces are on the increase. On the other hand, the number of those who recognise unity in diversity is on the decline. In a world bristling with disunity, disorder, and chaos, it is only the sense of unity underlying the multiplicity that can bring about peace. The world sorely needs today people imbued with this feeling."

—Baba

Dan McCaslin, Ph.D., Santa Barbara, U.S.A.

The Child and You

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice.
If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith.
If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself,
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love.

—Aroha, Mogi (*From the Sathya Sai Newsletter, New Zealand*)

Pongal Festival at Prasanthi Nilayam

The 'Makara Sankranti' Festival, which is celebrated with great enthusiasm by the people of Tamil Nadu especially in the villages, as "Pongal Thirunal" and "Uzhavar Peruvizha" (the great Harvest Festival of Farmers) had special significance for Sai devotees from Tamil Nadu who gathered in large numbers at Prasanthi Nilayam, this year to receive the blessings of Bhagavan on this sacred day.

from Tamil Nadu to decorate the Mandir premises and also the pathway leading to the Poornachandra Auditorium with buntings, sarvamath symbol flags, festoons, sugarcane stalks and turmeric plants, plantain trees and coconut palms brought in two lorry loads for the occasion. Sugarcane stalks were tied around every pillar in the premises along with turmeric plants reflecting the auspiciousness of the occasion when the Sun transits into Makara Rasi (Capricorn) and begins his northward journey. In front of the Mandir, near the Ganesa Idol vegetables such as pumpkins, bananas, snake gourds, brinjals, etc., had been spread on mega-size plantain leaves in typical Tamil Nadu style as an offering to the Lord. Six sets of decorated triple mud pots mounted one over the other were kept to demonstrate the importance of "Pongal Panai" (the pot in which sweet pongal with freshly harvested rice is prepared) surrounded by fresh vegetables, sugarcane, turmeric plants, etc. There were festoons of mango leaves and coconuts in the Mandir premises. Colourful Rangoli (Kolam) adorned the floor in front of the Ganesha Idol.

The devotees from Tamil Nadu numbering about 3000, who had come in special buses and other vehicles a day earlier, were allowed to enter the premises and sit in a separate group for Bhagavan's darshan. Bhagavan was greeted with special devotional songs by the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, when He emerged from His interview room at 7 a.m. Veda chanting by the students followed. Bhagavan arranged for the distribution of sweet "Athirasam" to the devotees.

Bhagavan came near the Ganesha Idol, inspected closely the special 'Pongal' decorations done by Tamil Nadu Mahila Sevaks, and lighted the two 'Kuthuvilakku' lamps to mark the inauguration of the Pongal festival. Major General S. P. Mahadevan expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan on behalf of the Tamil Nadu devotees.

All the devotees present at the Mandir, not the least those from Tamil Nadu, were immensely pleased when it was announced that Bhagavan would be giving His Sankranti discourse in the evening in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

The large number of devotees gathered in the Nilayam (nearly 30,000) were blessed with another Divine Prasadam by Bhagavan in the form of 'Payasam' along with their lunch.

In the afternoon, the Auditorium was overflowing with devotees eager to listen to Bhagavan's Sankranti Message. (The discourse is published separately). Bhagavan's discourse was followed by a cultural programme presented by Bal Vikas students from Tamil Nadu. The programme consisted of rural folk dances and a "Villupattu" dealing with the life of Bhagavan

The 1992 Sankranti festival became a memorable and blissful event for Tamil Nadu Sai devotees.

- G.S.S.

brother, Lakshmana, to go to him and learn from him the secrets of successful statecraft! Ravana taught him that a king who is eager to win glory must suppress greed as soon as it lifts its head, and welcome the smallest chance to do good to others, without the slightest procrastination! He had learnt the lesson through bitter experience! Greed arises from attachment to the senses and catering to them. Put them in their proper place; they are windows for knowledge, not channels of contamination.

—Baba

A Fijian Villager's Trust in God

Bhagavan Baba told me on six occasions that my previous life was in Fiji. With His permission I visited Fiji a few years ago. I met a native Fijian Chief in a village along the beach. His trust in God prompted me to write the following poem

This Mighty Ocean's guest am I,
Till the very day I die;
These waters I love and adore,
Living on my native shore.

My Host is rich and He provides
My main dish brought in by the tides;
This land gives me my fruits and roots,
And some green edible shoots.

Content am I and happy too,
With life along the Fijian blue,
God I trust and on Him rely
For my daily food supply.

From worldly burdens I am free,
And I'm well-built, as you can see;
In Nature my happiness lies,
This village is my Paradise.

-Chandrabhan Singh, Prasanthi Nilayam

A Prayer

And enkindle it with the flame of Thy Love.

Let the light thus given
Radiate through my physical form,
Passing to the non-physical,
And later merge into the Cosmos.

Let Thy Grace ennoble my feelings
And make me a better man,
Eager to listen to my fellowmen's woes
And relieve them through Thy Grace.
Actually it's not I that'd do it,
But Thou who art seated in me
And guideth my Destiny.

- B. P. Misra

You do not need a lamp to see a lamp that is burning brilliantly. Likewise there is no need for any other knowledge to know the One who is the very embodiment of all knowledge.

When birds and beasts that have known no education lead regulated lives, it is a pity that an intelligent human being does not have this sense (Poem).

Students! Embodiments of Divine Love!

Life is a four-storeyed mansion. For any edifice to be strong, the foundation has to be strong. The mansion is visible to the beholders. Its architecture is attractive and pleasing. But the foundation has no such attractions. Nevertheless the safety of the mansion depends on the strength of the foundation. Every part of the mansion may have its own attractive feature. But the foundation has no feeling of pride about its being the base on which the mansion stands nor does it desire that anyone should take notice of it. The foundation is unaffected by praise or blame.

The first floor of the mansion (of life) is Brahmacharya (celibacy). The second floor is the Grihastha (householder's) stage. The third is Vanaprastha (recluse). The fourth is the stage of Sanyasa (renunciant).

Many persons pass through all the four stages. Some go through only three of them and some others only two. But irrespective of the number of stages, the foundation is the base.

The first stage (or floor) is that of Brahmacharya. You students who are in the first floor of the mansion of life have to ensure the firmness of the foundation. This foundation consists of humility and reverence, morality and integrity. The strength of the foundation depends on these four constituents.

Unfortunately, the nation today is affected by the consequences of seven grievous sins. The first is business without morality. The second is politics without principle. Third, education without character. Fourth, worship without sacrifice. Fifth, wealth without hard work. Sixth, human existence without regard for scriptures. Seventh, devotion without austerity. These are the seven deadly sins that are ravaging the nation. The country will regain prosperity and peace only when all these are banished and we have morality in business, principles in politics, educated men who have character and work is the basis of wealth. The mansion of man's life should be built on these virtues. But unfortunately today morality and integrity have declined and the spirit of sacrifice is on the wane.

Because these qualities are lacking among students, the nation is suffering from disorders and violence.

realise what the public feel about the present situation.

Anyone's thoughts and actions should be related to the role he has to play. If there is no such correspondence between one's role and one's conduct, the social fabric will be shaken.

The actor and his role

Once upon a time a strolling player (Pagati Veshagadu) presented himself before a king in the role of Adi Sankaracharya. The king, welcoming the Acharya, gave him an honoured seat and enquired about his welfare. In keeping with his role, the visiting actor recited a stanza. "Birth is sorrow, old age is a curse, and marriage brings sorrow. The end is the most sorrowful of all; therefore, beware! Beware! There is no mother or father, friend or kinsman. Neither wealth nor home abides. Therefore, beware! Beware!" He preached in this manner the truth about the ephemeral nature of human existence. At the end, before the "Sankaracharya" was leaving, the king offered him gold coins in a silver plate. He told the king: "I don't accept this". He declared that immortality can be attained only by sacrifice and not by karmas, wealth or progeny. (A stanza from the Upanishads.) He left the palace, informing the king that he would present himself the next day in a different role.

The next day he appeared as a well dressed danseuse and danced before the king in his audience chamber. The dance was so superb that the entire audience was enraptured. The king offered the dancer a plateful of gold coins. The "danseuse" said that what was offered was too meagre and asked for more. The king said: "Yesterday you refused to take the gold coins I offered. Today you say these are too meagre. What is the mystery behind these different attitudes?"

The actor replied: "The behaviour is in accord with the role. Yesterday I appeared in the role of Sankaracharya and I behaved as Sankaracharya would have done. Today I have come as a dancer and I am behaving as a dancer would."

The inner meaning of this story is that when people do not act according to their roles in the different stages in life—Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa—the nation will be morally ruined.

Students' role

It is only when students conduct themselves according to the role assigned to them that they will acquit themselves well as students. If they do not behave properly as students, the culture and traditions of the entire community are undermined. Likewise, if teachers do not act up to their roles as teachers, the good name of the teaching profession is tarnished. When householders do not discharge the duties of householders, they bring the Grihastha tradition itself into bad repute.

Whatever the role one has to play at any place or time, and in any capacity, he has to act up to that role properly. It will be seen from the Puranas that this principle applies to the Divine also (when the Divine appears in human form). This may be illustrated by a small story from Sri Krishna's life in the Dwapara Yuga. Once a Gopika went to a well to bring two pitchers of water. After placing one pitcher on her head, she wanted some one to place the other water-filled pitcher on the first one. At that time, Krishna came there and she asked him to place the other water-filled pitcher on the first one. Krishna refused to do so. Soon another Gopika came along and helped the first Gopika. The Gopika carrying the two pitchers reached her home. Krishna followed her to the house and without even waiting to be asked, he took the top pitcher from the Gopika's head and placed it down. She was surprised at Krishna's strange behaviour. She asked him: "Krishna: At the well, you refused to place the pitcher on my head when I appealed to you to help me. Now you take it down from the head without my asking. What is the inner meaning of this action?" Krishna replied: "Oh Gopika: I am wont to remove the burdens borne by people and not to add to them."

This shows that the Divine operates only to reduce the burdens of the people and not to increase them. It means that there are rules which govern the role which each one has to play in life. Men however, find it difficult to act up to this truth.

Man is a seeker of happiness. He is essentially the repository of happiness. But not realising this truth about himself, man goes after happiness all over the world. He pursues studies in the belief that scholarship will give him happiness. But happiness eludes him. He tries to find happiness in work and fails to get it. Seeking happiness in married life, he meets with disappointment. Nor does he get it through children. Then he gets absorbed in the acquisition of wealth in the belief that wealth will give him the means of securing happiness. At the end of it all, he finds himself a pitiful creature when the wealth he acquired is either stolen or misused by his profligate progeny.

He then realises that all his earlier efforts to secure happiness gave him only some temporary satisfaction but not any lasting joy. A wealthy man behaves like a dog in the manger. He will neither enjoy his wealth nor give it for good causes. A rich man should realise that sacrifice should be the hallmark of a wealthy man and that true happiness is to be got through sacrifice.

The five "kleshas"

What is it that prevents man from securing enduring happiness? There are five kinds of suffering ("Kleshas") which stand in the way. The first one is "avidya" (ignorance). "Asthitha-Klesha" (Unsteadiness) is another. "Abhinava-Klesham" (immaturity) is another. "Raga Klesha" (attachment) is the fourth. "Dwesha-Klesha" (hatred) is the fifth. These five types of suffering afflict man.

"Avidya" (ignorance) is one kind of suffering. What is this ignorance? In the scriptures, the question is asked who is a fool (murkhah)? The answer is given: One who identifies himself

realises that he is not the body but the eternal Indwelling Spirit, that day he experiences true bliss. The body, the mind and the intellect are all instruments. These are called "Karanas". It is a sign of ignorance to identify ones Self with these instruments. "Avidya-Klesha" is the suffering arising out of ignorance. As long as man has a body, he experiences various kinds of sorrow.

What is the saga of this body? "In childhood, the young lad sports with his companions. In youth he falls a prey to sensuous enjoyment. In middle age he is lost in the pursuit of wealth. Unable to give up attachments, he is caught up in the cage of karma, and at the end he returns to the dust." This is the real truth about the body. Man is thus pursued by a myriad sorrows because of his identification with the body.

The second "Klesha" is "Abhinava Klesha". For all kinds of desires and pains, the cause is the mind. All desires arise in the mind. When desires are not fulfilled, hatred arises. If the desires are realised, the man loses his mental balance. Failing to realise how the mind is the cause of sorrow and giving a free rein to desires is "Abhinava Klesha" (suffering due to mental infirmity). Only when man is able to give up desires and disregard the mind, which is the cause of desires, will he be able to experience Ananda (bliss).

The third is, "Asthitha Klesha" (suffering due to unsteadiness). This suffering arises from an insatiable appetite for all kinds of things. It is the result of one being immersed in the vagaries of the senses. To regard as enduring the sensuous pleasures which are impermanent is the cause of this type of suffering.

"Raga Klesha" refers to the suffering arising out of attachment (of all kinds). All other evil tendencies in man like hatred, envy, etc., have their root in "Raga". It is this attachment which ruins the entire life of man. There should be a limit to one's attachment (to persons and things). Excessive attachment is the cause of sorrow. Man is unable to derive happiness from excessive possessions.

"Dwesha Klesha" (the suffering caused by hatred) arises when a man fails to obtain what he seeks from some one. This is the result of selfishness and self-seeking.

Freedom and karma

Man's failure to secure happiness is due to these five factors. You are today in the stage of students, the first storey in the mansion of life. When you arm yourselves with adequate safeguards at this stage, the rest of your journey will be safe and secure. The basic qualities required for the successful completion of the other three stages ("Ashramas") in life will have to be acquired now itself. If in the stage of Brahmacharya (celibate studentship) you do not acquire these qualities, the other stages in your life will be ruined.

Students! Having in view your future, you have to make right use of the present and follow the right path. You are allowing yourselves to drift from moment to moment. You are giving way

You are laying up endless troubles for the future.

The Lord created everything in the Universe, but kept nothing for Himself. Every creature has been given complete freedom. Everyone is free to enjoy anything he likes. But there is one limitation. For every action, there is a corresponding reaction. You are free to do as you please subject to this rule. If you use the freedom given to you to indulge in wrongful acts, the consequences are bound to be bad. These results are not caused by God, but are the fruits of your own actions. The Lord inflicts no harm on anybody. Everything that happens to you is the consequence of your own thoughts and actions.

Prabhava and swabhava

Students! Lured by the external, man is forgetting his true nature. The external trappings ("Prabhava") are the products of past actions ("prarabdham"). The observance of the practices prescribed for the different stages (the "Purusharthas") determines one's "Swabhava" (one's nature). "Prabhava" is momentary and evanescent. "Swabhava" is enduring. Today, the permanent and the enduring is being ignored, while the transient and the trivial are being pursued assiduously. The consequences of this misplaced effort are inescapable.

This freedom given by the Divine to man should be exercised with a due sense of detachment. Examine for a moment how various objects in creation are conducting themselves. For instance, a tree bears sweet fruits. But it does not enjoy the fruits itself. It offers them to others for enjoyment. What a spirit of sacrifice is displayed by the tree! The Lord created the rivers. But the rivers do not use for their own benefit even a drop of their water. The water is offered to those who seek it. Likewise, the cow does not consume the milk it produces, but offers it to its calf and to others.

But man, despite all his intelligence and knowledge, does not exhibit this sense of sacrifice. He keeps all that he earns for the benefit of himself and his kith and kin and makes no sacrifice at all. Consequently, man is haunted by all kinds of troubles. He is a victim of many diseases. Neither birds nor beasts are subject to such afflictions. They are content to live on whatever they can get. But man consumes a variety of foods and invites a variety of maladies.

The three "rajas"

The worst disease to which man is subject is selfishness. Only when man is able to rid himself of selfishness will he be able to understand the meaning of life and experience real Divine bliss. Birds, beasts and trees display the spirit of sacrifice. Man alone is the exception. When man is animated by sacrifice, he will become sublime. If selfishness grows, he loses his radiance and vitality.

(Bhagavan then related episodes from the life-stories of three great devotees, Thyagaraja, Goparaju (Ramadan) and Potharaju (the author of the Telugu Bhagavatham) to show what sacrifices they were prepared to make out of their devotion to the Lord. They were totally indifferent to material gains in their love for the Lord).

These three devotees by their sacrifices made themselves "Rajus" (rulers) of the world. This means that only those who make the highest sacrifice are entitled to be called "Rajus" (monarchs). Today, only the wealthy are regarded as "Kings". But real kings are those who are prepared to make every kind of sacrifice. At Rishkesh, the sadhus are greeted by the pilgrims as "Maharaj". In the eyes of the devotees, only those who have given up everything are entitled to be called "Maharajas". "Maharaja" means King of Kings. The term is appropriate only for the person who makes the greatest sacrifice.

It is a pity that today people are wasting their lives in the pursuit of meaningless desires. The true purpose of education is to make one recognise truth. The rationale of education consists in the quest for truth. Realisation of Truth is the Goal. "Sathyasya Sathyam" (The Truth of Truths) is how God has been defined.

Students! While you are acting the role of students, you should conduct yourselves according to the role of those who have to seek knowledge ("Vidyarthi") and not behave as seekers of sensuous pleasures ("Vishayarthi"). Otherwise, you will be degrading yourselves.

Humility is the hall-mark of true education. Truth and integrity are essential qualities for students. The means to acquire these qualities is devotion to God. Without these attainments, education is a futile exercise.

Purity of body and bhakti

You all know how the village folk and the tribal population lead more virtuous lives than most "educated" persons. Immoral practices are on the increase in places where there are colleges, universities and courts. More honesty and integrity and compassion and fellow feeling seem to prevail among the people in the remote forest areas. The "educated" are doing more harm to society today than the uneducated.

This is not proper education. You must set an example to the world. You must correct your faults and avoid committing them in the future. Love God and earn His love. Redeem your lives by developing compassion and kindness. All other accomplishments and sadhanas are of no avail. (Swami recited a poem in this context). Compassion is the greatest wealth. Purity of heart comes foremost.

Students should take note of two things. One is: the health of your body depends on the purity of your blood. The other is: you can always enjoy real bliss as long as your devotion is pure and unsullied. With purity of body and mind, you are assured of the highest bliss. When you have achieved this, you can carry on your normal lives with ease.

Because of the uniqueness of our University, you have to demonstrate its exemplary character. You have to take in whatever good things you can from others, but you should lead your own ideal life. This is the lesson to be learnt from a tree, which draws its sustenance from

yourselves to God and not to anyone else.

(From Bhagavan's discourse at the Institute Auditorium on February 20, '92, after the distribution of prizes to Secondary School students who had participated in the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet in January).

BHAGAVAN IN BOMBAY:

A Memorable Visit

Sacred Vedic hymns. Poorna Kumbham. A music band. Spectacular fire works. And, above all, the love-filled hearts of a surging gathering of devotees welcomed Bhagavan Baba at Dharmakshetra in Bombay on the morning of 24th January 1992.

Bhagavan was visiting Bombay after a spell of two years. The setting in Dharmakshetra was enthralling, with joyous men and women thronging the complex.

A festive atmosphere prevailed in Dharmakshetra. From the moment of His arrival, all through the five days of His stay in Bombay, Bhagavan blessed every item in the programme with His Grace and Love.

On almost every morning He gave darshan from atop the small hill to the participants in the Nagarsankirtan, which started a kilometre away and ended at Dharmakshetra. A couple of hours later, every day, He gave darshan to the large number of devotees at the pandal of Dharmakshetra, when bhajans were going on.

In the afternoon of 24th January, He opened an exhibition on " Expansion of Love ", got up by the Bal Vikas children.

In connection with the stupendous Super-Speciality Hospital which has aroused world-wide interest, Bhagavan met a number of distinguished medical men at Dharmakshetra. Among those who came to pay homage to Him were Dr. D. N. Bhagwati, renowned Neurosurgeon, and Dr. Bhupendra Gandhi, a distinguished Nephrologist. They gave Bhagavan a brief report about the important requisites for starting the Departments of Neurology and Nephrology at the Super-Speciality Hospital.

On 25th January, Bhagavan blessed the Bal Vikas children by attending a cultural programme presented by them at the Ravindra Natya Mandir at Prabhadevi. The theme of the ballet was "Thamaso Maa Jyothirgamaya". The darkness of ignorance, which is causing endless misery to man, can be removed by lighting the lamp of spirituality in the hearts of the people, was the message of the ballet.

This being the Silver Jubilee year of Dharmakshetra and the Sai Organisation in Bombay, a public meeting was held in the evening of 26th January, to mark the event. Sri Indulal Shah spoke briefly about the genesis and growth of Dharmakshetra and also the role played by it in the spiritual life of the citizens of Bombay. He said that the spiritual light that is lit at Dharmakshetra should be taken to every home in the city of Bombay.

The occasion was availed of to felicitate, in the Divine presence of Bhagavan, Prof. V. K. Gokak, on his receiving the Jnana Peeth award for 1991. Prof. Gokak, as the first Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, was responsible, under the inspiration and guidance of Bhagavan Baba, for giving a meaning and purpose to the Deemed University at Prasanthi Nilayam in its formative years. Prof. Gokak, who was touched by the Sai Organisation's gesture of love, spoke at some length about the advent of Bhagavan and the mission that he has undertaken to help mankind to rise to a higher level of spiritual consciousness.

This public meeting was also a happy occasion for the Bal Vikas children, who received their passing out certificates from the Divine hands. Bhagavan also gave away the trophies to the winning colleges in the Inter-collegiate Essay Competition conducted by the Sai Organisation.

On 26th January, Republic Day, some 700 students attending the three Dharmakshetra schools, gathered at the Sathya Deep lawns early in the morning. Bhagavan was seated in a raised platform. The Headmaster of the school gave a brief report on the progress made by them in imparting human values. A couple of children also spoke about their life in the school, the values they are being taught in the school. Bhagavan hoisted the National Flag.

Later in the morning, Bhagavan met the members of the Sai Study Circles in Bombay and spoke to them on morality as the path to immortality.

He gave darshan to the children and inmates of the 'adopted' slums in Bombay in the afternoon.

There was a fine musical programme in the evening. A few eminent musicians of the country came to pay their homage to Bhagavan on this occasion. Among them were Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Pandit Alla Rakha, Sri Karthik Kumar, Sri Jagjit Singh and Pandit Feroz Dastur. Bhagavan sat through the entire two-hour session.

On the 27th January, Bhagavan graced a Bal Vikas Rally at Dharmakshetra in the morning. This rally of some 2000 children and 200 Bal Vikas Gurus presented the theme "Expansion is Love."

That evening, Bhagavan attended a public meeting at the Cross Maidan in South Bombay, presided over by the Governor of Maharashtra, Sri C. Subramaniam. A large representative

Sathya Sai Trust, spoke about Bhagavan's Divine love. Mr. N. A. Palkhivala paid a tribute to the great educational institutions of Baba which were preparing a new generation of young boys and girls to serve the world with duty, discipline and devotion as their guiding principles. The Governor recalled his various visits to Prasanthi Nilayam and expressed his admiration for the way Bhagavan has built the great education and medical institutions. He said that the winds of change that are presently sweeping the globe have a spiritual dimension imparted to them by the advent of Bhagavan Baba.

Bhagavan, in His inspiring address to the large gathering, many of whom were probably seeing Him for the first time, touched upon the various facets of human life. He emphasised that humanness presupposed unity of thought, word and deed. He spoke about the universality of love which is the aim and goal of all religions.

After the meeting, Bhagavan visited the Raj Bhavan at the request of the Governor and attended a dinner in the Darbar Hall. At this dinner He met a cross-section of Bombay's elite, among whom were also the heads of various religions.

Bhagavan had a very busy schedule on January 28th. He gave darshan to the devotees assembled at Dharmakshetra in the morning and thereafter proceeded to the nearby suburb of Goregaon to lay the foundation for the Dharmakshetra sports complex. At this function, He addressed the devotees gathered there and explained the need for physical and mental health to realise the divinity inherent in man.

On returning to Dharmakshetra, Bhagavan gave an inspiring discourse to the active workers of the Sai Organisation in Bombay on selfless service as the means to God-realisation.

Bhagavan proceeded, in the evening, to the distant suburb of Thane, where a large congregation of devotees from distant places like Poona, Kolhapur, Sholapur, Ahmednagar, Nasik, Satara, Kalyan and Ambernath had gathered. Bhagavan distributed several articles of daily use to those who came from the five adopted villages, including solar cookers, smokeless chulas, books for libraries, and musical instruments.

In His discourse to the gathering: Bhagavan emphasised that the human values of Truth, Righteousness, Love, Peace and Non-violence formed the basis of one's humanness

On 29th January, devotees gathered at Dharmakshetra from the early hours of the day to have darshan of Bhagavan before He left for Bangalore. Bhagavan blessed all of them with His characteristic Abhayastha.

-S. G.

The mere removal of hate from the heart will not ensure Ananda. Love too should be cultivated. That is to say, uproot hate and plant love. If the absence of hate ensures Bhakthi, hill and anthill, tree and twig, mud and mountain—what do these hate? They have no dislikes. But for that

must first be free from hate and full of Love.

Hate breeds fear, hate is the seedbed of anxiety, scandal and falsehood. It drains your mind of peace. You may have light without oil, fire without smoke, breeze without a bearer fanning you, a chillness in the air of your room in the sizzling heat of summer—but, unless you are at peace with yourselves and with those around you, your pulse will be quick and your blood will be racing in rage and rancour. Love alone can alleviate anxiety and allay fear.

- Baba

AVATAR VANI:

Purify the World with Sankirtan

*There is no age like the Kali Age, none at all,
Where by mere meditation on the name of the Lord,
The Supreme Goal is realised. Oh Blessed One!*

*Even a mufti-millionaire has to be content
With ordinary raiment and food
Ho cannot live on a diet of gold*

*When Time is unpropitious, a stick may turn into a snake
While, when it is favourable, dust may turn into gold.*

*The wheel of Time can make a scholar a dumb animal
And a dumb man can become a saint
And a wealthy man may become a plaything
of the Goddess of Poverty at one time.*

*Whatever your prayers, you cannot get
What you are not destined to get.*

*Don't cherish, Oh young man, any desires
Lead instead a noble life with intelligence,
What more can I tell you—
The good people assembled here?*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

bhajans). There is a big difference between "Kirtanam" and "Sankirtanam". "Kirtanam" is an individual affair. It is singing by an individual for the fulfillment of his prayers. "Sankirtanam" aims at the well-being of the whole universe. This is also described as community singing ("Samajika bhajans").

This method of singing bhajans was first initiated by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

"Sankirtan" aims at demonstrating unity in diversity. When all the participants combine to sing in unison with one voice, it is described as "Sankirtan".

Four kinds of sankirtan

"Sankirtan—is of four kinds One is "Guna-Sankirtan", two, "Leela-Sankirtan", three, "Bhava-Sankirtan", four, "Nama-sankirtan".

"Guna-Sankirtan" applies to the kind of bhajan in which the devotee recites the auspicious qualities of the Divine, experiences oneness with the Divine, and acquires the Godly qualities. Thyagaraja had recourse to this type of singing. In one of his kirtans, he exclaimed: "Oh Lord! You are beyond all words. Is it possible for even Brahma or other Gods to extol your glorious exploits? I am waiting for your grace. Hearken to my entreaties. You restored to the preceptor the son whom the Lord of Death had taken away. You conquered the God of Love. You liberated from prison Vasudeva and Devaki. You protected Draupadi when she appealed to you in despair. You were the guardian of the Pandavas. You relieved Kuchela of his poverty. You saved 16,000 damsels from subjection". In this manner, Thyagaraja recounted the great qualities of God in his songs.

"Leela-Sankirtan" refers to the enjoyment by the devotee of the sacred sport of the Divine in ecstatic dancing and singing and being totally absorbed in it. This is exemplified by the "Gita Govindam" of Jayadeva.

"Bhava-Sankirtan": This is illustrated by Radha alone, who expresses her different feelings towards God and identifies herself with the Divine in every mood of devotion. She expressed her devotion in the five forms of "Santha" (Serenity), Sakhya (friendliness), Vatsalya (maternal love), Anuraga (affection), Madhura (sweetness). Radha and Mira were the exponents of "Bhava-Sankirtan".

"Nama-sankirtan": Chaitanya was the exponent of this form of kirtan. "All names are yours. There is nothing in this cosmos which does not bear the imprint of your name or form". "Sarvaroopam Dharam Saantham Sarvanaamadhamam Sivam Satchidaananda roopam Advaitam Sathyam Sivam Sundaram" (Swami sang this sloka). Chaitanya revelled in singing the name of the Lord as signifying all that was beautiful and glorious in the universe.

While in each of the previous eons the devotees adopted one or other methods of singing the glories, it is the supreme good fortune of the residents of Prasanthi Nilayam to enjoy all the four forms of Sankirtan. The bhajans sung here are a combination of all the four forms of Sankirtan. There is yet another special form of glorifying the name of the Lord. This is "Nama likhitam" (Writing the Name of the Lord). Contemplating on the name of the Lord mentally, uttering the name by mouth and writing the name by hand serve to purify the mind, the speech and the action ("Trikarana Shuddhi").

The name of the Lord has been glorified in different ways all over the world. Jayadeva was one who enjoyed always the sport (leelas) of the Divine, experienced the presence of the Divine within him, devoted every one of his daily activities to enjoying the sport of the Divine, felt that he had no use for anything other than God's love, merged his love in Divine love and thereby became the very embodiment of Divine Love. As people did not comprehend the spiritual significance of his kirtans, they misunderstood and misinterpreted the meaning of Jayadeva's Ashtapadis.

Hanuman's only desire

Hanuman, after the completion of his mission in Lanka, went to Sita to receive her blessings before returning to Rama. At that time, Mother Sita blessed Hanuman in this manner: "Hanuman! You are full of prowess, intelligence and fortitude. May you never grow old." This did not give joy to Hanuman. Noticing his sense of disappointment, Sita blessed him again. "Live as an immortal" Even this did not please Hanuman. Sita then blessed him again: "Hanuman. You are full of virtues! May the dwellers in the three worlds extol your qualities" Hanuman felt embarrassed and bent his head as if he was ashamed to hear his praise. Observing Hanuman's reactions, Sita finally blessed him thus: "May Sri Rama always love you!" The moment he heard these words, Hanuman was in rapture. "This was all that I wanted" he declared. "I must be worthy of Rama's love. A life without Rama's love is an utter waste. It is a living death. The only thing I desire is Rama's love."

Hanuman was proficient in music. There was none that could excel him in singing. Even Narada and Tumbura could not prevail against him. Such a great singer continued always to chant the name of Rama.

Devotional singing

What then is the essence of Sankirtan? Its essential purpose is to earn the love of God. Combining one's voice, tune, feeling and rhythm to the appropriate beat of the song, the devotee should immerse himself in the singing. Harmonising the feeling with devotion and Love, the sacred words of the song should be an outpouring of love towards God. That alone is devotional singing. When the song is rendered without understanding the meanings of the words and without any inner feeling or genuine love for God, it is a mechanical performance. Bhava (feeling), Raga (melody) and Tala (Rhythm) are the essentials for proper singing. Even the name Bharat (for India) signifies the combination of these three elements. (Bha-Ra-Ta). In every action in daily life, the combination of these three elements should be observed. This rule can be

subject thoroughly. "Raga" implies cultivating a love for the subject and "Tala" means expressing one's knowledge coherently and clearly.

In the rendering of Thyagaraja's songs, the failure to observe the meaning of the words of the song has produced bizarre results, Thyagaraja's songs are in Telugu. Tamil musicians, who are experts in music, rendering Thyagaraja's songs have often mangled the words of the songs and made them meaningless. In one of his songs, Thyagaraja sang: "Ne pogadakunte neekemi kodavu Rama!" ("If I do not praise you, what do you lose? Oh Rama"). A Tamil musician sang the song in such a manner that it meant: "If I eat *pakodas*, what do you lose?" It is essential to ensure that the meaning of the words, the emotional feeling of the composer and the melody of the song are all brought out in rendering the songs during Nagarsankirtan and in bhajans. Where one does not understand the meanings of the words, he should get the meaning from those who know.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Regard community singing as a sacred devotional exercise. Even if you have no musical ability, utter the names of the Lord with feeling and love. There is no greater means of God-realisation in the Kali Age than chanting the names of the Lord. Dhyana (meditation) in Krita Yuga, Yajna (sacrifice) in Tretha Yuga, Archana (worship of Idols) in Dwapara Yuga and Nama-Sankirtan (Reciting the name of the Lord) in Kali Age are the methods prescribed for realising the Divine.

Namasmarana

Remembering the Name is the panacea. When the Name is chanted as a song set to music, it delights the heart immensely. Many pandits recite the names as verse (slokas). They do not experience the intense yearning expressed in the stanzas. Some actors are able to pronounce the words loud and clear, but without any depth of feeling. But when the names are sung melodiously they appeal to the hearts of the singers and the listeners. Even non-believers and agnostics nod their heads in appreciation when they listen to devotional music.

The words of a song can be expressed in a prosaic manner which has no appeal to the listener. But when they are sung melodiously (as in the song "Rama! Nannu Kaapaadu"—"Rama! Save me"), they tug at the heartstrings. (Swami sang the song to demonstrate its appeal). Such sweetness is contained in the song when it is rendered melodiously.

Everyone whether he is well versed in music or not, should listen attentively to the singer and try to repeat the words of the song with feeling.

Some persons attending bhajans do not move their lips at all. They may say that they are singing the songs mentally within themselves. This is not proper. If you have devotional feeling, it should be expressed by the tongue joining in the bhajan. Only then it can be called "Sankirtan"—singing in unison with others. You must sing the names aloud, full-throated, as far as the voice can reach. Only then the Divine will respond in full measure and shower His grace. No one will go to the rescue of a drowning man if his cries are feeble. Only when he cries aloud

singing with abandon and fervour.

Everyone should realise that every limb and organ in the body has been given to man to be used for a sacred purpose: The tongue to utter the Lord's name, the hands to offer worship, the feet to go to the temple and so on. These organs should not be used for frivolous and unholy purposes. Sanctifying every one of the sense organs, man should purify the mind and contemplate on God.

A polluted world

Embodiments of Divine Love! It is impossible to describe the sweetness and sacredness of the Name of the Lord. The intensity of the devotion with which you chant the name of the Lord will yield commensurate benefits and confer joy on you. All should strive to chant the names in unison. Today, all the five elements in the world-space, air, fire, water and the earth—are polluted. You cannot get pure water or pure air. The sounds you hear are impure. The earth is polluted. The Kali Yuga has become "Kalmasha yuga" (the age of impurity). To purify all this only means is chanting the names of the Lord. Today people spend most of their time watching the TV and Video screens. Is it any surprise if children born in these circumstances are TV products? They behave as actors from childhood. They indulge in stunts. Only the parents are to blame. In olden times, when a woman was enceinte, she used to hear stories about Prahlada, Sathyavan and other noble characters. The child in the womb was influenced by such stories.

Experiments in Russia and other countries have demonstrated the relationship between the food one consumes and one's mental attitudes. It was found, for instance, that a child which had been fed on apple juice while it was growing in the womb, exhibited a love for apples after birth.

The recitation of the names of the Lord will help to purify the atmosphere as a result of the sacred sound waves getting absorbed in the atmosphere. The power of sound waves is evident from the way radio waves are transmitted and received over long distances. The atmosphere that has been polluted by impure sound waves can be purified by the chanting of the Divine Name.

Likewise, sacred thoughts, pure speech and pure actions will purify other polluted elements. There is no better purifying agent than this.

Crores are being spent to purify the Ganges water. Of what use is this exorcise if the Ganges continues to be polluted by the discharge of drainage water into the river? First prevent the flow of filthy effluents into the Ganges.

In the same manner, the evil thoughts arising in the mind should be diverted and it should be filled with pure Godly thoughts by reciting the Divine Name.

Everyone participating in bhajans should sing the name of the Lord and thereby serve to purify the atmosphere and promote the well-being of the nation.

SIVARATRI SANDESH:

AVATAR VANI

Power of the Divine Name

*When rains fall, if seeds have not been sown,
Will there be any crop in the field?
If seeds are sown, but there is no rain,
Will any crop come up in the field?
Both rain and seeds are needed
For the harvest to be reaped.*

*Likewise, Divine Grace will bear fruit
Only when there is also human effort.
When the thoughts in the mind are good
They will be reflected in the actions;
When the thoughts are ill-disposed
The fruits thereof will be equally bad.*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

The world is based on three entities Fire, the Sun and the Moon. No one can deny the existence of these three. "Hethu Krisaanu Bhaanu Himakara the" 'Krisaanu' means the Fire principle. 'Bhaanu' refers to the Sun and 'Himakara' refers to the Moon. The combination of these three attracts and sustains all beings in the world. They give pleasure, provoke wonder and also delude men. Because they give pleasure, the three are called "Rama". In the word "Rama" there are three sounds: Ra, Aa, Ma. "Ra" refers to Fire (Agni), "Aa" refers to the Sun and "Ma" refers to the Moon. The combination of these three entities represents the "Rama Principle".

All objects in the world can be cognised by name and form and nothing else. All objects are identified by their names. The form is derived from the name. Hence, for everything in the world, the name is primary and fundamental.

The Divine Name is highly potent. Even the wish-fulfilling celestial cow, Kamadhenu, when it is tethered to the post, comes under control. Likewise, when the Supreme Lord, the Indweller in all hearts, is bound by the rope of Bhakti (devotion) and tethered to the post of the tongue, He gets bound to the devotee. There are only two means by which the Lord can be bound or

"Hara" or any other name, because the All-pervading Divine bears all names.

Rama and atma

The name "Rama" is not confined only to the son of Dasaratha. The Atma that confers bliss is known as Rama. The sage Vasishta gave the name "Rama" to Emperor Dasaratha's son. The name Rama symbolises the universal attributes of the Divine such as omniscience, omnipotence and omnifelicity.

The sage Valmiki composed the Ramayana in hundred crores (a thousand billion) of stanzas. He prayed to the Lord that the stanzas should be divided equally among the denizens of the three worlds. When the stanzas were thus divided and distributed, one stanza of 32 syllables alone remained. After 30 syllables were equally divided, only two syllables remained undistributed. These two syllables have become the names of the Divine such as Rama, Hari, Hara and Sai. These names can be recited by people of any country or faith. They are not confined exclusively to any faith or country. Any person with a pure and loving heart can recite any of these names. No blame will attach to him.

Mira's devotion to Krishna

The potency of the Divine Name is such that it can convert even poison into nectar. This is illustrated by an episode from the life of Mira. She was a queen. But she was so much absorbed in her devotion to Krishna that she would sing and dance with ecstasy unmindful of whether she was in a palace or in a crowded bazaar. Her brother-in-law, who was incensed at such conduct in public places by the queen, was not aware of what true devotion meant. Mira had no body consciousness at all. A true devotee should be totally free from the sense of "I" and "Mine". Feeling that Mira's conduct was casting a slur on the royal family's prestige and reputation, her brother-in-law decided to do away with her by giving her a cup of milk mixed with poison. Having dedicated herself heart and soul to Krishna, Mira used to take any food only after offering it to Krishna. When she offered the milk given to her to Krishna before drinking it, the Lord accepted all the poison in it and made the entire milk pure. In this way, Mira demonstrated to the world the power of the Lord's name and the greatness of devotion to the Lord.

Very few in the world try to find out how the Name emerged, how it is to be pronounced and what is its potency. The authority for and exponent of the glory of the Lord's name is the Bhagavatham.

From the navel to the tongue

Yashoda did not know where Balarama and Krishna were born. She brought them up as her own children. They were born in Mathura, but grew up in Gokulam. They grew in the womb of Devaki (the wife of Vasudeva). But they lived and played in Yashoda's house.

When we try to explore the inner meaning of these events, we realise the Divine story unfolded by them. Balarama and Krishna were born in Mathura. Mathura signifies the navel. Devaki represents the Divine Shakti. The Divine sound (Nadam) represented by the names

represented by the mouth, was playing on the tongue, represented by Yasoda. "Rama" signifies one who gives delight. "Krishna" means one who attracts.

The Divine Name thus has its origin in the navel and its sacredness should be safeguarded when it is uttered by the tongue. Thus, "Namasmarana", remembrance of the Name of the Lord, implies chanting the name from one's inmost being and preserving its sacredness.

What is the significance of the word "Nama"? "Na+Aa+Ma ", according to the science of numerology, amounts to a total of 7. Na=0, Aa=2, Ma=5. The total is 7. Seven is associated with the saptaswaras in music (Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Da, Ni). The Sun's rays are made up of seven colours. There are seven oceans in the world. The supreme sages are seven in number (Saptarishis). It is significant that certain religious observances are spread over seven days ("Saptaham"),

Potency of Rama-nama

The name "Rama" has a unique spiritual significance. "Ra" represents the Paramatma, "Ma" represents the individual soul and "Aa" brings the two together. The Divine Name thus demonstrates the unifying principle.

The Puranas relate a story regarding the potency of the Rama name. Once Easwara wanted to choose a leader for the host of Divine entities ("ganas"). "Gana" refers to the Devas. Easwara summoned all the deities and told them that whoever amongst them goes round the earth quickest will be made the leader of the deva 'ganas'. The different deities got on to their respective vehicles and set out on the round- the-world trip. Ganapati, the elder son of Easwara, was one of them. He was originally called "Lambodara" because of his big belly. His vehicle was a rat. Sitting on the rodent Lambodara entered the race to go round the world. On his way, Narada saw him and enquired about his mission. Lambodara was put out by the facts that a lone Brahmin had confronted him in his trip and put the inauspicious question as to where he was going. He feared that his trip would be a failure. Narada approached Lambodara with a smile and told him that he was well aware of Lambodara's mission. But, he declared that only if Lambodara acted up to the Vedic injunctions would he be successful in his mission. Narada explained what this Vedic injunction was. All the Vedas have extolled the potency of the Lord's name. "As a vast banyan tree is potentially immanent in a little seed, the entire universe is potentially contained in the Lord's name. The cosmos is, therefore, not different from the Name. If you go round the Name, you will have gone round the world. If the deities object to this claim, I shall bear witness on your behalf", declared Narada.

Lambodara said: "Well, if that is so, what is that Name?" Narada replied: "I shall impart that Name to you only if you are prepared to carry out my words". "Yes, I shall do so implicitly", said Lambodara. "Write the two letters "Ra" and "Ma" and go round them. Then go back to Easwara" said Narada. "This is the name which delights the universe. The entire world is contained within this name. Going round the name is equivalent to going round the world", declared Narada.

Lambodara acted according to Narada's advice and went back to Easwara. As the one who had found the truth about the potency of the Rama name, Lambodara became the chief of the "Ganas" and got the name Ganapati (the chief of the Divine entities).

Easwara blessed his son with the words: "As the chief of the ganas, you will be the first deity to be worshipped on all auspicious occasions and at all religious ceremonies before the commencement of the functions."

This is the inner meaning of the worship of Ganapati at all religious functions. Ganapati is also called "Siddhi Ganapati" and "Buddhi Ganapati". Ganapati is noted for his acute intelligence. "Siddhi" and "Buddhi" are his powers. Because he possesses these powers and is capable of ensuring that any undertaking is carried out without impediments, he is known as the remover of obstacles—Vighneswara.

Consider how Ganapati got his over lordship of the Ganas. It was solely through the name of the Lord. How potent is this name can be explored by you.

God is the basis

In the name "Rama", the three deities—Agni, Sun and Moon—are present. From where have these three deities originated? The Sun has the power to scorch the earth from millions of miles away. Who are the parents of the Sun? Should they not be even more powerful than the Sun? There is, then, the Fire principle. Fire can destroy anything. Who are the parents of Agni? The Moon is the source of coolness and light. Who are the parents of the Moon? If the enquiry is made regarding the parents of these three powerful entities, it will be found that God is the parent.

Everything has come from God. The common people do not make this basic enquiry into the root cause of all things. Nothing can exist without a basis. Even scientists are now engaged in trying to discover this basis.

In fact, the Name is the basis and the entire cosmos rests on it. The name is the easiest means to identify anything or any person. Hence, the best way to recognise God and envisage His form is through the name. The Name is always auspicious.

The night that is holy

Every human being experiences three kinds of night. One is a moon-lit night. A second is a dark night. The third is a night half-dark and half-lit by the moon. But, apart from these three, there is one night which is more sacred and unique. That is Sivarathri. This is the night devoted to the chanting of the sacred name of Siva. This means that the entire night should be devoted to recitation of the auspicious name of Siva.

Unfortunately, in this Kali age, people observe the vigil of Sivarathri by seeing three cinema shows all through the night or playing cards or seeing some dramas. This cannot be called

thoughts of God and recite His name. This alone is Sivarathri. "Siva" means "auspicious", not Easwara. God has innumerable names. There is no difference at all between Hari and Hara. The differences between the two names have been created by Vaishnavites and Saivites, but God has no such sectarian differences. God is one and one only. There may be many names and forms, but Divinity is one alone.

Many worshippers go to Tirupati. Vaishnavites repeat the name: "Venkataramana, Venkataramana!" They derive satisfaction from repeating this name. "Ramana" is favoured by Vaishnavites. They carry a mark of three vertical lines on their foreheads. Saivites go to the Tirumala temple and repeat the name "Venkateshwara! Venkateshwara". They derive some satisfaction from using the word "Easwara". The Saivites carry on their foreheads three horizontal lines (of Vibhuti). These marks are the difference between the two sects. But the Lord in the temple is one and the same, whether He is called Venkataramana or Venkateshwara.

Hari and Hara are one

Moreover, Vaishnavites consider that Vishnu carries four insignia in His four hands—Sankha (conch), Chakra (discus), Gadha (mace) and Padma (lotus). The conch is a symbol of sound. This means that the entire universe is in God's hand. The chakra (discus) symbolises the Wheel of Time. The inner significance of this is that God holds Time in His grip. The lotus is a symbol of the heart. God holds in His hand the hearts of all beings. The mace is a symbol of prowess. God is the possessor of all power and strength. This is the esoteric meaning of the weapons attributed to Vishnu.

Easwara bears in one hand a kettledrum (Damaruka). In another hand he carries a conch. The kettledrum symbolises sound. In another hand, Easwara carries a trident, which symbolises the three aspects of Time—the past, the present and the future. Thus, Easwara is also Lord of sound and Time.

When the attributes of the Divine are studied in this manner, it will be found that divinity in any name or form bears all the attributes and potencies. Among the glorious attributes of the Divine, "perpetual auspiciousness" ("Sadasivamyee") is one. Comprehending the significance of the Name, eschewing all differences, remembering the glories of the Lord, people should sanctify their lives by utilising sacred days like Sivarathri for the purpose intended by Bharatiya tradition.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Remember that the Indwelling Spirit in everyone is the same Divine. He is called "Hridayavasi", the dweller in the Heart.

Mind and heart

You must consider the distinction between mind and heart. Heart refers to the blood-pumping organ in the body. This heart produces pure blood and circulates it to every part of the body.

Universal Consciousness. There are two other agencies: the Buddhi and the Medhas. The Medhas is the agency that controls all organs (Indriyas). It is described as the 'Control-Room'. Buddhi, however, is not related to the body. The Medhas is related to the Indriyas (the instruments of perception and action). "Buddhigraahyam athindriyam", it is said. The Buddhi transcends the Indriyas. When a person says, "My Buddhi was preoccupied with something else", it shows that the Buddhi is beyond the body. Hence, both the Mind and Buddhi are related to the Atma and not the body.

Men are accustomed to treat the mind as part of the body. This relates only to the sensory activities of the mind. This mind is made up of thoughts and doubts. But the mind that is associated with the Divine Atma transcends the body. Consequently, it is only when the ordinary thought processes are extinguished that the divinity within can be experienced. The consciousness that goes beyond thought is a reflection of the Atma.

Aham and ahamkara

The Atma, the Buddhi and the Mind are three in one. This unified consciousness transcends the sense of "I" and "Mine". It may be called "Aham". "Aham" means Consciousness. In the Atma, the "Aham" abides as a subtle entity. When the "Aham" acquires a form, it becomes "Ahamkara", the Ego. The distinction between "Aham" and "Ahamkara" should be understood. To identify the "Aham" with the corporeal form is "Ahamkara"—the Ego feeling. "Aham" transcends the "Ahamkara" (the physical form). When the identification of the Self with the body is given up, the state of "Aham Brahmasmi" is realised ("I am the Brahman"). Brahman and Atma are the same Brahman refers to the Universal Consciousness that is present in all beings. The consciousness that is present in the body is called Atma. It is called Conscience. The distinction between the Conscience and the Universal Consciousness should be noted. Conscience is a reflection of the Consciousness. When the Conscience (or Atma) ultimately leaves the body, it merges in the Universal Consciousness and becomes one with it. This process may be likened to the oneness that occurs when the air within a balloon joins the atmospheric air outside. This is the process of the many merging with the One. The individual self is the Bhutatma. The Universal Self is the Paramatma. The individual self confined within a body is like the air confined within a balloon. When the individual self sheds its attachments relating to the body and develops universal love, it overcomes the confines of the body. It merges in the vast, infinite Love. This merger is described as Mukti, Moksha or Liberation. The correct name for this consummation is "Saayujyam" (oneness with the Universal). It is comparable to the merger of a river in the ocean from which it had its origin.

"Brahma-jnana"

Once this merger of Consciousness takes place, there is no reversal of the process. The individual self has become the Universal, as when a drop of water is put into the ocean and becomes one with it. As long as the individual self is attached to the body and its separateness from the Universal, it cannot escape the succession of birth and death. But once it casts off its separateness and becomes one with the Omni-Self, there is no further return to the cycle of birth and death ("Punarjanma no vidyate").

This awareness of the Divine (Brahma-Jnana) cannot be got from any external source. It exists within everyone. Once the delusion of separateness in which the individual is enveloped goes, the resplendent Awareness manifests itself. All other knowledge relates to the external world. This external knowledge is only "a reflection of the Inner Being". It is entirely wrong to imagine that one can acquire knowledge of the Inner Reality by exploring Nature (Prakriti). The Omni-Self is not to be realised through the understanding of the phenomenal world. You have come from the Paramatma (the Omni-Self). This truth has to be understood. The fountain—source of all knowledge is within you. The wise one (Jnani) is not the one who has a great deal of book knowledge or knowledge of the physical universe.

The true Jnani is one who is aware of the Self within and lives accordingly. Many who discourse elaborately on the glories of God do not lead a Godly life. Of what use is their scriptural knowledge? What right have they to exhort others, when they themselves do not practise what they preach? This was the message of Jesus when he saw a woman being stoned by a crowd for her sinful conduct. He told the crowd: "If there is anyone among you who has not sinned mentally, let him cast the stone at her."

Sivaratri and Sivaratri

Festivals like Sivaratri are intended to make people cultivate auspicious and Godly qualities. To listen to a Divine discourse on Sivaratri day and forget all about its message after leaving the hall is not the way to observe Sivaratri. It may well be called "Shavaratri" (a Night of Death).

The difference between "Siva" (what is auspicious) and "Shava" (a lifeless corpse) can be understood from the process of breathing and cessation of breathing. The process of inhaling and exhaling conveys the message of union with God ("So-Ham"—"He is I"). It is the consciousness of this oneness that is auspicious. When this consciousness is absent, inauspiciousness (or death) sets in.

There has to be a complete absence of body consciousness. It was by forgetting the body completely while chanting the Name of Rama that Ratnakara the dacoit became Valmiki the supreme poet (who gave the Ramayana to the world). He was so completely absorbed in chanting the name that he was oblivious to the anthill that had grown over him.

Sivaratri is the day that is devoted to the contemplation of God. It does not come only once a year. Every night can be a Sivarathri. Even if you are not able to contemplate on God all through the night, it is enough if you think of God before going to bed and when you wake up in the morning.

Again, whatever manner in which you may think of God, the results will be good. There is a story to illustrate this. Once a father took his son to the temple and advised him to keep vigil all night in the sanctum sanctorum. After sometime, both the priest and the father dozed off. But the young lad, who was keeping vigil observed a mouse repeatedly nibbling at the fruit and other edibles kept as offering to the deity. He felt sad that the mouse should be nibbling away at what

became sanctified. But neither the priest nor the others in the temple got the benefit of Divine grace. What is important is that devotion should be expressed in some form.

Different devotees are bound to differ in their ways of worshipping God. But whatever the method of worship, there must be one-pointed devotion. Develop the love of God. Love towards God is devotion. Love towards the world is attachment. Devote this entire night to chanting the name of God. Life can be immensely sanctified through bhajans.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajans : "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi Nahi*", "*Prema muditha manase Kaho*", "*Hey Sivasankara namaami Sankara*" and "*Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam.*")

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on 2nd March 1992

AVATAR VANI:

“Grama Seva is Rama Seva”

*Union is strength,
With unity anything can be achieved
Like ants which collectively
Can destroy even a python.*

*The honour of a community
Rests on its morality
Without morality the community
Loses its honour and name.*

*Only that can be called a community
In which morality is cherished.
Hearken! You noble son of Bharat
To this profound truth.*

Embodiments of the *Divine* Spirit!

Village Officers who have gathered here:

If an individual has to progress, or a village has to develop or a nation has to be prosperous, social consciousness and the sense of unity are essential. Unity protects man. Disunity makes man a prey to worries of all kinds. "Sanghe bali Kali Yuge." (In union lies strength in the Kali Age). This adage proclaims that there is no greater strength than that derived from unity.

Portuguese, the French and the British—overran the country and tried to change the ancient culture and institutions of the country. The nation did not lack men of valour or scholarship, or eminent political leaders or men of science. But because there was no unity amongst them, the nation was subjected to various calamities.

Unity—the supreme need

Unity should be the supreme watchword for Bharatiyas. Freedom was achieved but not unity. This is because of the steady eclipse of an all-embracing vision. Parochial fanaticism, caste and religious dissensions, and selfish and self-centred ambitions have combined to degrade human qualities to their nadir. Another potent factor responsible for the moral decline in the country is the absence of a feeling of national oneness and the regard for a common national culture.

In the Mahabharatha, Dharmaja (the eldest of the Pandavas) once made a significant declaration. He said, “When an outsider attacks our country, we will all stand as one, all the 105 of us (the hundred Kauravas and the five Pandava brothers). But when there are internal differences, only the five of us will be together.” The lesson of this statement is that when the national interests are at stake, all in the country should be united as brothers. All should work in unison, but in matters affecting individuals, differences may remain.

The situation in the country today demands that all Bharatiyas should unite as brothers to strive for the progress, the prosperity and the well-being of the nation. This means that in the interests of the nation and the society, four things are essential: Equality, Unity, Co-operation and fraternity. These are like four pillars for the national edifice. If anyone of these is absent, the edifice will collapse. Hence, the people should cherish equality and unity.

For the divinity inherent in man, man himself is the authority. The term "Man" is derived from the term “Mind”. Mind means an aggregation of thoughts. And thoughts account for the joys and sorrows experienced in daily life. Hence, it is only when the mind is filled with pure thoughts that human existence becomes meaningful.

Role of the headman

When the headman in a village deems himself a servant of the village, he will be able to render selfless service. Can a person obsessed with power have a pure heart? No. Hence, the village chief should become the servant of the village.

The village officials are like a bridge between the Government and the people. It is only when this bridge is safe and sound that there can be good relations between the Government and the people.

When we speak about village officials, we should remember that in the villages “Grama Adhikari” (village officer) means one who has no antipathy towards anyone in the village. He is one who treats all alike. It is only when such terms are understood properly and people act accordingly that a person leads a meaningful existence.

Why spirituality?

On the vast ocean, countless waves appear. Each wave appears different from another. But despite these differences the waves are not different from the ocean. The waves arise from the ocean and are of the same stuff as the ocean. Likewise, although human beings appear different from each other, it has to be realised that all of them have emerged from the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda. Forgetting this truth and identifying themselves with the impermanent body, many are falling a prey to various troubles. For people who are caught up in the coils of mundane desires and pursuits, the beacon of spirituality is showing the path to emancipation. Spirituality is fundamental for man to reveal to him the means for the blossoming of his qualities.

Spirituality, however, does not mean leading a solitary, ascetic life. Spirituality means looking upon the whole of mankind as one family and realising the unity in diversity. This is the essence of Indian Culture.

This ancient culture, rooted in the villages, spread over the years to the cities. Today the situation is reverted. The practices of the cities are spreading to the villages. Modern education and modern ways of living cannot serve to improve the quality of life. People must ponder over the values of the culture that has comedown to us from ancient times.

The village and the nation

The well-being of the village determines the well-being of the nation. By providing the essential amenities for the people in the villages, promoting mutual cooperation amongst them and developing fraternal feelings among them, the progress of the village has to be ensured. At the individual level, there may be differences. But these should be set aside and all efforts concentrated on the development of the village as a whole.

When rain falls from the sky, the rainwater is totally pure. But depending on the nature of the place where it falls, the name and form of the water become various. Likewise, there may be diversity among men on account of regional and other factors, but the historical reasons for this diversity will have to be borne in mind.

Embodiments of Divine Love! It is only when you equip yourselves well as village officials that the villagers will enjoy peace and prosperity. What is past is past. But the future is dependent on what you do in the present. Your actions in the present will determine the shape of things in the future. If you wish to secure a great future, you have to conduct yourselves in the present in an ideal and sacred manner.

Serve the nation

If today such a large number of village officers have gathered here for a training programme, it must be regarded as an exemplary occasion. There may be differences and problems of various kinds among you as individuals. But setting them aside, you should concentrate on the promotion of national well-being. Regard the nation's welfare as your welfare. Entertain the sacred feeling

The true mark of a human being is the cultivation of a broad outlook. When you have such a vision, you can transform the national scene. The nation's welfare depends on the individual. The individual's welfare depends on the family. The welfare of the family is bound up with the condition of the village and so on right up to the national level. At the base of all is the individual. And only when all the individuals in a community act in unison can the society progress.

Unity is, therefore, the essential means for accomplishing anything. Today senior officers from the district and the State capital and several Ministers have come here to launch this vital programme. I desire that all of you should extend your whole-hearted cooperation to them so that the villages in this district may serve as an ideal example to the rest of the State.

No place for factions

You must take note of one important factor. There are in the villages many factions and rival groups. Village officers should see that there is no room for these divisive forces. Today, in every village there are several factions. This is not good at all. The man who does not feel that this is his Motherland and has no love for his country or mother tongue is a soulless corpse. Every villager should feel proud of his village and feel himself one with everyone else in the village. You must strive your best to promote such a sense of unity.

No room for strikes

The Minister admitted that the remuneration that was being offered to you is meagre. But you should not be swayed by this factor. When you discharge your duties well, your remuneration also will improve. Regardless of the remuneration, you must dedicate yourselves to the development of your respective villages. Whatever amenities you may need for doing your work, you should not resort to senseless methods like strikes for securing redress. Resorting to such methods means causing harm to the villages for securing selfish gains. Bandhs and strikes have become utterly senseless actions causing a great deal of inconvenience to the public. There is nothing heroic about these forms of agitation. They are disrupting the political fabric. If the village officers act with courage and devotion today, they can do a great deal of good to the people.

Act with courage and dedication to ensure the prosperity of the villages and strive to earn a good name for yourselves. This is the foremost task before you. In olden days, the village headman was regarded with great respect and looked upon as "the Lion of the village". This does not mean that he was lording over the villagers and terrorising them. Rather, he was their protector as the chief of the village.

Sri Diwakar Reddy (the Revenue Minister) said that the village officer was to the village what the Collector was for the district and a Minister was for the State. He has to discharge his duties with regard to collection of taxes and other matters properly. Village officers should consider themselves fortunate that this position has been conferred on them. They have to live up

their responsibilities, they will be guilty of treason to the village and the nation.

Rights and duties

Men have both duties and rights, but today they are more concerned about rights than duties. Rights and duties are like the two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird. Both are essential. When duties are discharged properly, rights will be secured of their own accord. If everyone examines within himself how far he is carrying out his duties, he will realise how his rights are also protected.

In ancient times, when there were no minister or district officials, the village headman was all in all. He cared for the welfare of the villagers and the villagers lived in unity and harmony. Today, every family appears to be a house divided. There is no unity. If the five fingers in a hand do not function in unity, the hand will be useless. There are five qualities in man: Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema and Ahimsa (Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence). These human qualities have to be fostered. Today peace is absent because fear of sin and love of God have declined and man has degraded himself. If we have fear of sin, love of God and morality in society mankind will be truly human and there will be harmony in society.

When you cultivate human qualities like compassion and love and act in unison, with a sense of mutual regard and friendliness, you can render valuable service to the people. By your performance, you must make the Anantapur district an example and an ideal for the whole of India.

"Grama Seva" is "Rama Seva" (Service to the village is service to God). There is no value in worshipping Rama if you do not serve your village (Grama) well. Many want to build a temple for Rama. But if they have not installed Rama in their hearts, what use is there in building a temple for Rama? Sanctify your hearts and make the village a shrine in your hearts for the Lord. When you make service to the village your service to Sri Rama, you will be promoting your welfare in every way, economically, socially, morally and spiritually. You need not strive for salvation as a separate goal. Service to the village will itself ensure liberation (Mukti). Bear this truth in mind and act up to it in your daily life. This is my message to all of you. I wish you all happiness, peace and prosperity.

(From Bhagavan's address to Village Administrative Officers from Anantapur district in the Institute Auditorium at Prasanthi Nilayam on 16 - 2 - 1992)

Here Mind Now

*Forgive the past
Surrender the future*

Trust God:

Stanley and Caren Stahl
(Olympia, Washington)

The Gift Supreme

From far away we have arrived
To receive Your Darshan Divine
Your Mandir is a golden dream
To be with You is a gift supreme.

To see Your smile is our bliss
For Your fragrant white Vibhuti we ask You please.

Our Beloved Sai
We long to be at Your side.
Each night with japamala we pray
For Your blessings to Guatemala each day.

-Ana Maria Acevedo, Guatemala City

(The above poem was offered to Bhagavan at Darshan time on 2-3-92)

The Goal

*All roads that lead to God are good!
What matters it, your faith or mine:
Both centre at the goal Divine,
Of love's eternal brotherhood.*

*A thousand creeds have come and gone
But what is that to you and me?
Creeds are but branches of a tree,
The root of love lives on and on.*

Though branch by branch proves withered wood,

*Then keep your faith, and leave me mine;
All roads that lead to God are good,
- E. W. Wilcox*

SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

U is for Unity

*Unity is God, so let us unify
To win God's Grace
Our 'ego ' to defy I
For if in unity
We will service share
We will win God's smile
O beauty that's most rare/
If you will just be quiet*

*And hear my point of view
then, I will be quiet
And listen just to you
So, with open minds
On each we can rely
Singing happily together
United with Lord Sol.*

***- A Devotee
(From Bal Vikas magazine)***

Peter Rae, an Australian devotee of Bhagavan Baba, has been engaged for some years in erecting a Mandir near his home in New South Wales, for the use of devotees in the area. He has described an incident which happened during an interview at Prasanthi Nilayam, when he brought a pair of sandals to be blessed by Bhagavan before they were placed at the Altar in his Mandir. He writes:

"Swami took us into the private Interview Room, where the sandals belonging to the Sai Temple of Peace were placed on Baba's cushion for His Feet. When Baba came into the room and saw the sandals on His cushioned footstool, a beautiful smile came on His face and as He sat in His chair, He pulled up the lower part of His Robe and held up His Feet. Then placing both hands' as in blessings palm down, He said: Three bags full, three bags full, three bags full." One of the ladies, Valmai, asked Swami, what He meant by "Three bags full." Baba answered "the fullest of everything. The three Worlds, Bhur, Bhuvah, Suvaha, Harmony, Happiness, Health, Full of happiness, Full of Love, Full of Santhi, Everything is there."

(The significance of Bhagavan's use of the phrase "Three bags full" was apparently not clear to the Australian devotees. Bhagavan was indirectly reminding them of the words in the nursery rhyme: "Ba-ba black sheep! Have you any wool?" The devotees had come from the land of sheep to Baba and Baba was giving them "Three bags full" of blessings, unlike the sheep in the poem which gave "three bags full" of wool.)

—Editor

You say, "Seeing is believing; I will believe in God only if I see Him". But are all things seen or heard or touched or tasted, as real as they seem? Is it the eye that sees? Your eye may be open and turned in one direction, but, if your mind is wandering elsewhere, you will not notice anything at all. You see things only through the illumination of the Atma. You love only because the Atma is Love. You know because the Atma is knowledge. You have Santhi, for the Atma is the source and repository of Santhi. The subtle effect of mantras or mystic formulae mentioned in the Vedas cannot be seen or heard by the senses; they have to be experienced in and through the inner consciousness, the Antahkarana.

—Baba

Einstein and Baba: II

In August 1989 Bhagavan invited our group of twenty-one Americans for an interview. I resolved that, with His Grace, I would leave it knowing more about my connection to Einstein.

personal life, and blessed Marsha's and my entry into advanced studies in psychology. He materialized a diamond pendent for her, and a red, white and blue-on-gold pendent for my daughter Nilima. I was sitting next to Baba in the same position as in 1978 and was filled to overflowing.

Again, I had an opportunity to pose my question about the meaning of my relationship to Einstein. I took the opportunity, and Swami revealed some personal information that I will ponder for some time to come. (After the Interview, one of those present said that the thought occurred to him that the spirit of Einstein might have also been present as a participant.)

Einstein's regret

Swami then went on to say the following to the group:

"Einstein is a body. That body is dead. He was a *very* good man. Einstein was very patient. Peace, Peace, Peace. He was always thinking of Bhagavan."

Swami, in an apparent reference to Einstein's pain that his work laid the foundation for nuclear weapons, said "Einstein made '*gunpowder*' and felt bad at the end (of, his life), —he said: I have made a mistake, this was a mistake."

Swami: "What is a scientist! Science is the study of creation. Spirituality is studying the Creator."

[Swami draws a circle with His finger on the wall:] "Man as scientist works from senses down. Man as Spirit works from senses up." [Points to top of circle] "See, science is only a 'C,' (tracing one half of a circle) but Spirit is full circle. It is the difference between this and that."

Swami concluded by saying: "If science were more spiritual, it would *know more*. Science is no love. Science tries to get the exact truth but has no goal; it is random. Always in the laboratory. There is no love in science. Study Spirit! Spirit has a goal. *Know yourself and you know everything.*"

Einstein on God and man

Following are some of Albert Einstein's thoughts on what he considered to be most important in life: closeness to God and love of humanity. We can readily see howl they correspond to the modes of consciousness, and attitudes of open-heartedness, sadhana and service Swami strives to teach us.

These thoughts of Einstein's and the exploration of the spiritual implications of his work to follow, illustrate how in some ways he can be seen as having helped usher in the Golden Age of Sai I perhaps continuing to serve as an ongoing instrument in its fulfillment as well.

Einstein on God and man

revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God."

"The true value of a human being is determined by the measure and sense in which he has attained to liberation from the self."

"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the 'Universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest-a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty... the striving for such an achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."

"I am happy because I want nothing from anyone. I do not care for money. I do not crave praise."

"I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon. I want to know His thoughts, the rest are details."

"The principal art of the teacher is to awaken the joy in creation; and knowledge."

"The ideals which have lighted me on my way and time after time given me new courage to face life cheerfully have been Truth, Goodness, and Beauty."

(This corresponds to the Vedantic dictum to which Bhagavan Baba frequently refers that the characteristics of Divinity are Sathyam, Sivam, and Sundaram; i.e., Truth, Goodness and Beauty. These ancient Sanskrit words also form the title of Prof. Kasturi's biography of the Avatar.)

"The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science."

"The feeling from which true scientific research draws its spiritual sustenance"... "is a sort of intoxicating joy and amazement at the beauty and grandeur of this World... I maintain that cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest incitement to scientific research."

Limits of reason

"Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world; all knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it. Propositions arrived at by pure logical means are completely empty."

"Since, however, sense perception only gives information of this external world indirectly, we can only grasp the latter by speculative means."

This last statement is so profound in its implications that it bears comment. It clearly points to the limitations of the Western worship of the logical, rational mind as the sine qua non of existence. It points up the fact that the greatest Western scientist in four hundred years, after reaching traditional science's outer limits could gain the insight he craved only by transcending the mode of thinking that brought him to those limits. Only then, through the faculty of "*non-rational Intuition or openness*" *could* he accurately perceive some of the underlying reality of the universe.

What about the Future?

To Einstein's sadness, a major response to his discoveries about relativity has been fear about the future of the planet itself.

A question arises: *Doss a means exist to view or make use of Einstein's insights in a positive way—one that will truly be a "blessing to mankind, and not a curse?"*

I am not a physicist or mathematician; but I offer several thoughts about this question.

I believe that not only can the example of Einstein's life stand as a blessing to humankind, but that one of the most profound expressions of his work can serve as well: the formula $E = mc^2$ (energy equals mass into the velocity of light squared).

We are accustomed to think of this formula in primarily negative terms—the unleashing of the atom's destructive potential. Paradoxically, I feel that it embodies something of a most heartening spiritual nature as well.

$E = mc^2$ mathematically expresses the unity to which Swamiji frequently refers, through its having scientifically established that matter and energy—the tangible and the invisible—are *wholly equivalent and interchangeable i.e.*, that mass is simply concentrated energy; and that energy is mass minus form.

Matter, energy and spirit

Bhagavan Baba places great emphasis on teaching us that the whole of existence, matter, energy and spirit, is One, stemming from the Supreme, Indivisible, Absolute. He asserts that what we dualistically think of as 'Matter versus Spirit' are in reality "two sides of the same coin", inseparable from their source in Divine Consciousness.

In all of His communications Swami invites us to reduce our fascination for the world of matter and to get rid of the illusion that *only* what can be perceived by the senses is real and valuable. He asks us to develop awareness of, and reliance upon, the Atma—our invisible, Indwelling Divinity.

derived, could not have been originally created from matter: that matter being congealed energy, is "nothing but gravitationally trapped light" and itself derived from consciousness. This Consciousness is Spirit—*Divine Thought*—which is quite invisible in and of itself, but is in fact the bedrock of existence and the source from which the Mayic illusion of duality springs.

If we consider Spirit to be the highest manifestation of energy, I think Einstein's formula can stand as a source of confirmation of the reality of Spirit to a predominantly materialistic world which doubts the existence of a Loving Intelligence.

If all things are composed of energy, then it stands to reason that they should be subject to the effects of energy; if matter can release energy then energy should influence matter. We can see this principle in operation at all levels on the hierarchy between the grossest matter to the subtlest energy, or Divine Thought. Energy as energy cannot be seen. It can only be known through its impact upon matter. Electricity, or the energy produced in a car engine cannot be seen, yet we would be lost without their effects.

At a subtler level, the human mind is a form of energy whose work manifests in both positive and negative ways. Negatively, it is well established that the mind can contribute to such mental and psychosomatic illnesses as depression, or high blood pressure and ulcers.

Benign influence is apparent in the mind's healing response to such non-materialistic interventions as therapeutic conversation, or the presence of compassion or love. How much more so the profound, demonstrable effects of cosmic or spiritual energy upon matter, (from invisible to "visible") in terms of the transformation of human thinking and functioning? Though one cannot generally see spiritual energy (in the form of God's intentionality or Grace) many of us have seen and benefitted from its effects in our own lives and those of countless others through the boundless Grace of our beloved Sai.

To expand: Starting with denser forms of energy, we might consider Einstein's discovery $E = mc^2$ as a metaphorical "two-sided coin", with one side dark, the other light.

We are quite familiar with the "dark side"—nuclear fission. The concept of a "light" side could be considered along the following lines of thought.

On the "dark" side, it seems that by tracing *matter*, visible and tangible, to its most extreme potentiality, we observe that it transmutes into energy, having a *destructive* effect upon other matter (nuclear fission).

If we do the reverse, and trace *energy*, diffuse and invisible, back through its various forms; from radiation, combustion, electricity, and human thought, we come to its ultimate state, Divine Thought, which we know can exert a most *constructive* influence upon matter.

Baba's presence

fact "One", and that the various forms of this One can be used either for our annihilation or for our highest good, depending on the consciousness with which it is used.

Paradoxically, $E = mc^2$ provides both the means to destroy the world, and scientific validation of liberating truth that everything is interconnected and stems from one source. (The threat of the former perhaps also motivating us to seek the latter). That Source, Reality which Einstein laboured to discover, has come among us in the form of Bhagavan Baba.

While the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, granted Albert Einstein rare insight into some of the workings of His creation, and though Einstein revolutionized science and our perception of reality, like any of us, he was not fully able to grasp all aspects of his favourite subject of study.

Like Spinoza, Einstein asserted his belief in an impersonal God saying, "I can't believe in a God who gets involved in the affairs of men." Ironically, though he helped in preparing us for the Presence by demonstrating the essential unity of all creation, like Moses, Albert Einstein glimpsed but did not enter the Promised Land: he died never knowing that the Eternal Principle he sought had actually come among us.

Interestingly, and consistent with many aspects of both physics and spirituality, an element of paradox exists regarding this question. As those who have come into the orbit of Sri Sathya Sai Baba can well attest, the Creator is infinitely multi-faceted and unpredictable; at one moment seemingly detached and remote "from the affairs of men" while at another (if not simultaneously) intimately involved with them, down the minutest details of their lives...

Baba's Presence here among us perhaps the greatest expression of His love, and far transcending our limited knowledge, represents the perfect synthesis of energy and matter, time and space. To gaze upon Him is in fact to see energy and matter combined in their most mysterious and perfect form.

When we consider the fact the Baba has given us His personal assurance that the world will not end in nuclear annihilation, we can know that we are beyond the shadow of the fearful implications of $E = mc^2$ and in the light of His Divine Presence, which beckons us to realize that energy, as Light, Love—God—is our only Reality. Firmly rooted in this truth, we can confidently proceed with our individual roles in Swami's transformation of the present era into a Golden Age of Divine Consciousness, utterly permeated by His Love.

May Sai bless us with the faith and skill to traverse this world always remembering who He declares we are: true synthesis of matter and Divine Energy.

"The world was created by the word of God so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear."

—Saint Paul

The Ego and Egoism

"When we examine the basic cause for this state of affairs, we discover that it is the consequence of the Egoism that has struck deep roots in the heart of man."

—Baba

(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XI)

I would like to share with fellow devotees my thoughts and feelings about the Ego. When I reviewed in my mind and my heart what I really thought and felt about the Ego, I was surprised to find that I really didn't believe that it was a bad thing. I realized that I believed that it was a desirable thing to have a strong, healthy ego!! I also reviewed in my mind a few very painful memories of the occasions when my ego was sadly bruised and this confirmed my decision that it was very desirable to have a strong, confident Ego.

After this revelation, I became concerned that my gut feeling about the Ego was in opposition to what Baba seemed to be teaching. It occurred to me that perhaps I could clear up this problem by deciding what I believed the Ego to be. A sense of self was my answer, with self-esteem being the quality of a healthy Ego. Without it one would be insane!

It occurred to me that it would be enlightening to look up the word in the dictionary to compare my definition of the word "Ego" with its definition. I believe it is useful to remember that words are very slippery by nature: they have various connotations and denotations.

The first definition was the "self". The second definition was "self-esteem". The third definition was "The one of the three divisions of the psyche in psychoanalytic theory that serves as the organized conscious mediator between the person and reality—especially by functioning both in the perception of and the adaptation to reality".

All three definitions confirmed in me the belief that there was nothing wrong with the Ego. Indeed, it was a valuable, if not indispensable part of the person. However, if this was so, why was Baba so down on it? The next word under Ego seemed to be an answer. It was Egocentric. The first definition was "concerned with the individual rather than society". The second definition was "taking the ego as the starting point in philosophy". The third definition was "(a) an outlook limited to a concern only for one's own activities or needs and (b) self-centered or selfish".

Now, this was something to sink one's teeth into! Baba would certainly be interested in our overcoming egocentricity! Since Baba didn't actually use the word Ego, but Egoism, I looked

ego and its relations." 2. (a) "an ethical doctrine that individual self-interest is the actual motive of all conscious action." (b) "an ethical doctrine that individual self-interest is the valued end of all action."

Now I felt I had bagged the bear! It seems clear to me that Baba isn't against the Ego, but these doctrines that are so filled with sophistry and cynicism.

Egoism stems from the mistaken belief that it is only in the body that we have life.

"Ego is soul in the delusive state of being identified with the physical body", says Paramahansa Yogananda.

So, then, if a deluded soul is the "ego", what I really want is a healthy soul; which develops after the realization that I am not a body, but a soul.

Baba uses a word familiarised by Freud, but He gives it new meaning.

—*Marilyn G Brooks*

Sailence is Golden

Often I have wondered why
I seldom hear from Sathya Sai.
Whenever friends, their eyes agleam,
Recount His smile in last night's dream
And share the Blessing He imparts,
My longing for such Darshan starts.

What is that step that I must make
To launch the hundred He will take?
Is there a knack to such success,
Or can it be He loves me less

"I never differentiate
Between My bhaktas, small or great!"
Said Baba, bristling at the thought.
"You must recall what I have taught.
I offer each a common share
Of Love and Guidance, but beware",
Repeated Sai in manner fitting.

—*Jay Jarrett, U.S.A.*

The Life Force

That Force that guards us thro' the night
Is surely in the morning light.
'Tis joy in the bird's first song,
Our energy the whole day long
That Force in every living thing,
In everything we think and do.

Our guiding Light, our inner strength,
That Force in colours of the plants
That please the eye, and chance
To make us think of all that Love
That flows for all Eternity.

—*Joan Duckett*

The Triple Sutras for Students

Love of the Motherland, cultivation of the spirit of sacrifice and pursuit of the spiritual path—these are the essential features of true Bharatiya Education, observed Bhagavan Baba, Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Education, in His Valedictory Address to the Summer Course in "Indian Culture and Spirituality", held at the Brindavan Campus of the Institute, from May 21 to June 3rd.

Bhagavan Baba inaugurated the Summer Course on May 21st in the magnificent Institute Auditorium by lighting the ceremonial bronze-lamps on the stage.

The entire Campus, including the College buildings, the Hostel and "Trayee Brindavan" had been given a face-life. An added attraction this year was the display of two life-size bronze figures of lions on either wing of the stage.

Bhagavan Baba, accompanied by Mr. Justice Chandrachud, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, arrived at the Auditorium at 4-30 pm, preceded by the Institute Band-troupe and a group of students chanting Vedic hymns.

Prof. S. Sampath, Vice-Chancellor of the Institute, in welcoming the Chief Guest, Mr. Chandrachud, and the participants in the Course (nearly two thousand students, boys and girls) reviewed the achievements of the Institute since its inception a decade ago and declared that the Institute was fortunate in having as its Chancellor "the Chancellor of the Universe".

Vijaya Sai, a student of the Institute, spoke on the unique features of the educational system in the Sathya Sai Institute and the students' experiences of the boundless love of Bhagavan Baba.

Mr. Justice Chandrachud, in the course of his address, praised Bhagavan Baba's global mission and his vision of a spiritually integrated India. What Sai Baba was doing for humanity was unprecedented in the history of the world. His concept of Spirituality transcended the barriers of Religion.

Bhagavan Baba then delivered His discourse on what constitutes true education and the duties of students today. (Details of the discourse are published separately).

The fourteen-day Summer Course concluded on June 3rd.

The valedictory function, marking the successful conclusion of the Summer Course, was held, in the Divine Presence, in the Auditorium of the Brindavan Campus. Bhagavan Baba, accompanied by Sir Veeraswami Ringadoo, President of Mauritius, arrived at the Auditorium in a procession headed by the Institute Band in their shining white uniforms.

auditorium was packed with students and special invitees. The Registrar garlanded the President of Mauritius after he had taken his seat by the side of Bhagavan Baba.

Welcoming the distinguished Chief Guest, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Sampath, stated that the main purpose of the visit of the President of Mauritius to Brindavan was to have darshan of Bhagavan Baba and receive His blessings. Sir Veeraswami was pleased to abide by Swami's Will that he should also deliver the Valedictory Address at the Summer Course.

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the landmarks in the academic and political career of the Chief Guest which had taken him to the exalted position of Governor-General of Mauritius in 1986 and that of the first President of the new Republic in 1992. The President had described his visit to India as being in the nature of a "spiritual home-coming". The Vice-Chancellor stated that his visit to Brindavan had brought him to the abode of the Avatar.

Prof. Sampath presented a brief report on the just-concluded Summer Course. The participants were privileged to listen to fourteen Divine discourses. The golden thread running through them was the message of Unity with Divinity. Bhagavan had emphasized the need for controlling the senses and caring for the physical body as pre-requisites for the pursuit of the spiritual goal of life, namely, Self-Realisation. On the penultimate day of the course, Bhagavan made a reference in a Discourse specially meant for teachers and students in His early life containing important lessons for the students on the code of conduct that they should adhere to and the responsibilities they had to discharge as their sacred duty.

The programme of the Summer Course consisted of morning sessions, with lectures by distinguished invitees and teachers and students of the Institute, on various facets of the central theme: "Indian Culture and Spirituality". In the afternoons, there were talks given by students and teachers, followed by Bhagavan's discourses. This year's programme featured three special events: a Panel-discussion on: "The Relevance of the Ramayana to Modern Times"; a Symposium on the topic: " My Life is My Message", and a second Symposium on the topic: "Sai Education and the New World Order". All those were conducted in the Divine Presence. Each day, there was a mid-afternoon session, separately for boys and girls, in which an attempt was made to give the newly admitted students an orientation towards the culture and way of life of the Campuses of the Institute and to focus the attention of all the students on Spirituality and Bhagavan's Life and Message. On one of the days, a Spiritual-Quiz Contest, centering on Bhagavan's Teachings, was held in the Divine Presence. On June 2nd, an examination was held to test the student's understanding of the contents of Bhagavan's Discourses in the Course. The evaluation of the answers revealed a high level of comprehension on the part of the students, several of whom scored as high a percentage of marks as 97 out of 100.

On the cultural side, the programme included a concert by the eminent musician, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, a session of bhajan songs by the students of the Brindavan and Prasanthi Nilayam Campuses; and enjoyable mimicry programme by a Sai devotee from Warangal.

Baba has created two magnificent institutions—the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, at Prasanthi Nilayam, as symbols of God's compassion for humanity—to show how to heal the physical heart and how to build the spiritual heart. The Institute of Higher Learning provided a base for combining secular education with the pursuit of spiritual goals. He said: “Bhagavan Baba makes the Summer Course a feast for the head. He wants the students to develop the traits of a lion—courage, fearlessness, strength and nobility. He wants them to be good students and good citizens. Our greatest good fortune is our proximity to the Divine Master. The only way we can show our gratitude to Him is to develop those qualities of head and heart that will help us to act, always, as Sai Messengers in the true sense.”

Mauritius President's call for unity

In his Valedictory Address, Sir Veeraswami Ringadoo said that he was most grateful to Bhagavan Baba for the honour bestowed on him and expressed the feeling that he would have missed a great deal if he had not come to Brindavan. He recalled that his grand-father went from India to Mauritius over 200 years ago. To him and to others who went with him and before him, it was not culture and spirituality to start with but hard work which they perceived was the best way of serving themselves and serving God. The eternal message is that, through service, we can make our prayer to God. The love of temples and rituals gave them the courage to withstand hardships.

The President stated that, till he could read and write, Indian Culture was a closed book for him. There were in Mauritius people who understood other religions better. Mauritius is known in the world today as a land of Unity in diversity. Indian Culture has taught his countrymen this unity and given them the message that all are sons and daughters of one family. Mauritius is able to offer an example to the whole world that, no matter what creed they observe, what religion they belong to, what colour they bear and what belief they have, these all are one and of one world. This was understood in India a long time ago and that is why Bhagavan's work is so important. The paintings that he saw in the Auditorium portrayed the world as it should be, to enable us to understand each other and not turn away from one another." This was, in his view the essence of Indian culture and civilization, and its contribution to the world to safeguard the future of mankind and preserve hope for all in the midst of bombs and nuclear weapons.

The President concluded his inspiring address by expressing the hope that, with the blessings of Bhagavan Baba and deriving strength from richness of ancient human culture, mankind will thrive on the basis of mutual trust and love. "It is of the utmost importance to believe in the work which Bhagavan is doing and learn to move forward, together", he declared.

Parents and Teachers must set the Example

*In this world life is transient,
Wealth and youth are not permanent;
Equally impermanent are wife and children;
Only Truth and reputation are lasting.*

*Concerned only with one's good and teaching the truth,
The preceptor may chastise or beat one,
Like the mother who administers unpalatable medicine
For the good of her child.
Do not forget this truth.*

*What greater gift is there than the gift of food?
What greater deity is there than one's parents?
What greater morality is there than promoting the public good?
What righteousness can excel compassion?
Is there any gain superior to the company of the good?
Is there any disability worse than enmity?
Is there any death on earth worse than infamy?
Is there anything more valuable than lasting fame?
Can anything be more sustaining than remembrance of the Lord?
Is there a heaven higher than inner joy?*

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

If children are to be persons of good character, adhering to good practices, the parents should be of good character and exemplary conduct.

The great teacher, Adi Sankaracharya, was the child of parents, who were highly virtuous and noble in their conduct. For the great name attained by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the credit goes to their parents. Many great men achieved name and fame by following in the footsteps of their parents.

A lesson for Gandhi

If Gandhi, who was an ordinary person, was able to achieve greatness and world renown, it was because of the lessons in good behaviour which he learnt from his mother. The mother used to observe a vow: she would take her food only after the cuckoo sang in the morning. Once when Gandhi was a boy, the mother was waiting for a longtime to hear the call of the cuckoo. Observing this, Gandhi went out of the house, imitated the call of the cuckoo and came in and told his mother that the cuckoo had sung and that she could take her food. The mother, who saw through her son's trickery, slapped him on the cheek and said: "You wicked fellow; what sin must I have

Her grief touched the heart of Gandhi. From that moment Gandhi took a firm resolve never to utter a lie again.

In his childhood, Gandhi used to be full of fear. There was a maid in his home called Rambha. Gandhi disclosed to her how he was always afraid. Rambha told him: "Child, always recite the name of Rama. By chanting Rama's name your fear will go away. From that time Gandhi was always chanting the name of Rama. The habit of reciting Rama's name, which began in his boyhood, continued right up to the moment of his passing. Nor was that all. By adhering to the chanting of Rama's name, Gandhi was able to achieve his aim of winning the country's freedom by non-violent means. For such a life of purity and virtue, the parents were primarily responsible.

Sins of parents

Unfortunately, today because the parents themselves have no purity of character and lack refined qualities, and do not lead regulated lives, evil practices and wickedness are growing all over the world. When the parents get up from their beds abusing each other, their children got up assailing each other. Because of the malefic effects of the Kali age, parents tend to be quarrelsome. Fathers are behaving like Hiranyakasipu. Because of such parents, Bharat is witnessing the spread of unrighteousness and evil practices.

In days of yore the people of Bharat earned name and fame by leading virtuous and sacred lives and were an example to the world. The children of today take after their parents. The tree is based on the seed and the seed determines the nature of the tree. For the evil ways and bad behaviour of children today, the parents alone are to be blamed. Few parents choose to tell their children to speak the truth, to act righteously and earn a good name. Because of such bad parents, the nation is forfeiting its good name. It is better that such children are not born at all. They are a disgrace to their parents and to their country. Their education and their jobs may help to bring to them power, position and wealth but do not serve to promote in them such virtues as compassion, kindness and sacrifice. All their acquisitions have no permanence. Whatever strength one may possess, without the strength of the Divine, he is a weakling. What happened to a valiant person like Karna? He had physical prowess, intellectual abilities and great scholarship, but lacking Divine support, he met with a pitiable end.

Teachers' failure

For all the ills with which the nation is afflicted today, the parents and teachers are responsible. The teachers do not punish the students (for their lapses). Because the students are not punished for their mistakes, they behave as they please. The teachers are responsible for the sins of the students. They do not teach the students the right path. They transmit only book knowledge, but do not teach right knowledge, wise living and higher values. If there are no morals and no human values, a man becomes a demon.

Only he is a real man who harmonises in his life the body, the mind and the Atma. A life based on the body and the senses is an animal existence. One who is totally dominated by the thoughts and fancies of the mind is a demon. One who ignores the calls of the body and the mind and follows the call of the Spirit is Divine. The animal, the demonic and the Divine possibilities are immanent in the human condition. Hence, one who values only the body and follows the inclinations of the senses is comparable to an animal. In a sense, the animal may be considered superior to such a man because it has "a season and a reason" for its behaviour. But one having the human form, who craves for sensuous pleasures alone, is worse than an animal.

Even for these three kinds of behaviour, the parents and teachers are responsible. They are responsible for the good or bad conduct of the students. It is the parents who lead children to the highest levels or cause their fall to the lowest depths.

Character more important than wealth

Parents are concerned solely about the material welfare of their children and have no concern for their moral and spiritual well-being, when a child is born, the parents desire that he should be educated, sent abroad, encouraged to make as much money as possible there by whatever means. This is all that they teach to their children. People today earn money in so many different ways, from begging to dacoity. It is not wealth that is important. Character is primary. Parents do not teach the children to cultivate good qualities. They do not control children who go astray. They condone the lapses of the children and often encourage them in their bad habits. They are encouraged in their wrong ways even as Duryodhana was encouraged by his father, Dhritarashtra. It is because of such parents that the children today take to wrong courses.

Dhritarashtra was not only physically blind, but lacked also the eyes of wisdom. He was totally blind. Parents today are tending to be equally blind. They don't correct the mistakes of their children or chastise them. They are afraid that the children might run away and commit suicide. Parents have the right to warn and correct their children. Why should they be afraid to do so? What does it matter what happens to such wicked children? Instead of being a running sore for the parents, it is better they are no more. Death is preferable to infamy. Nor is there greater wealth than fame. Better to have a renowned son who is short-lived than an infamous son with long life.

The way of Prahlada

The foremost thing which man has to acquire today is God's love. This love will secure world peace, peace in society and peace in the home. Through the individual's love and morality, there will be peace and security in the home. By individuals winning the love of God, society secures peace and order. When the people have got the love of God, the world as a whole enjoys peace and happiness.

Happiness and peace are not to be found in wealth, position or power. All these generate only fear and anxiety and not peace and happiness. Today, even highly educated persons do not

tried all methods to divert his son Prahlada from devotion to God. The child was subjected to every conceivable kind of torture and ordeal: trampling by elephants, biting by cobras and immersion in the sea. But Prahlada's devotion to the Lord saved him. Disregarding his perverse father, Prahlada held fast to the Lord. There is nothing great about being a father. No father can rejoice merely when a son is born. Only when the people praise the virtues of the son will the father rejoice over his birth. A righteous son redeems himself and his family. Verily, they alone are fit to be called parents who bring up such virtuous children. Prahlada declared: "He alone is a father who tells his son: Child, realise God. He is a true Guru who leads the disciple to God."

Such teachers and parents have become rare these days. All that had brought fame and glory to the country in the past has become a waste because of the decline of moral values and behaviour. The educational system is utterly vitiated. There is no attempt to promote human qualities. Noble and Divine feelings are absent. It is utterly unbecoming of those who call themselves human beings to behave like animals with no devotion to God.

"Bhagavan"

What does the word "Bhagavan" mean? It is not a nominal title. "Brahmeti, Paramatmeti, Bhaganaeti Sah", says the Veda. That is, Bhagavan is the One who is the Supreme Absolute and Over-Soul. The word "Bhaga" means "Sambhartha" and "Bhartha" "Sambhartha" is one who is responsible for creation of the cosmos. "Bhartha" refers to one who sustains and protects the cosmos. This means that "Bhagavan" is One who has the power of creation and protection. "Bha" means effulgence (kanti) and peace (Santhi). "Ga" means one who is all pervading, "van" means the one who has the capacity. Thus, "Bhagavan" refers to one who illumines and confers peace on the universe. Man today does not seek to comprehend the inner meaning of Divinity There is nothing in this world apart from the Divine. All that is seen in the phenomenal world is permeated by the Divine. The egoistic conceit of man which makes him that he is the doer and enjoyer is the cause of his ruin, This egoism has to be routed out. Man must seek to manifest his divinity. Only then can peace and security be established in the world.

Every effort has to be made to experience Divine love and purity. One who has secured Divine love can accomplish anything. Nothing is beyond his reach. Hence, one should be worthy of God's grace. Without Divine grace, man is no more than an animal. Man should strive to control his senses, develop good qualities and lead an ideal life. Parents are primarily responsible for bringing up children who will lead such ideal lives. Therefore, they have to reform themselves.

Today parents all over the country are worried about the conduct of their children and are not at all happy. They lament about the behaviour of their children, but do not realise that they are themselves to be blamed. If the parents had brought up the children on right lines, would they go astray? Pampering the children in various ways, they are allowed to go about like street dogs. How can such boys be reformed? It is impossible. When wealth grows, arrogance increases and morality declines.

Jatayu earned God's grace. A simple old woman like Sabari won God's love, but men today, despite their scholarship and scientific knowledge, are making no attempts to secure God's love. What is the use of this education or science? True science should serve to promote the progress of the nation. But today, in the name of science, the world is being destroyed.

Education should not breed a class of parasites, who exploit others. It should help to promote good qualities.

Truth and righteousness

Students should remember that this country was known in the past as a land where people led truthful and righteous life. Krishna told Arjuna that he should consider God and Righteousness (Dharma) as most important. Because the Pandavas adhered to Righteousness and had firm faith in God, they could ultimately enjoy all prosperity and happiness. Because of their love for God, they could bear with fortitude all troubles and difficulties. What was the fate of the Kauravas who ignored God? Not one of Dhritarashtra's hundred sons survived. Despite all the resources they had and the valiant commanders who were on their side, God was not on their side.

True victory can be won only by God's grace. Students! Strive for securing the love of God. Today, love is being misused for satisfying the senses, with deplorable results. (Swami related the dialogue between Yagnavalkya and his wife, Maitreyee, over attachment to the things of the world and pointed out how Maitreyee was as ready to give up worldly possessions as the sage himself). Today, such couples are rare. There must be such couples who will give birth to virtuous children. Only virtuous children can bring good name to the country.

Of what use is a son who does not use his hands to perform good deeds, who does not use his tongue to utter the Lord's name and who does not cherish in his mind truth and compassion? This is the triple purity that makes human life sublime.

Students should dedicate their lives to the service of others. Cultivate love. Remember the great mothers in the past who gave to the world Avatars from time to time. What is the inner significance of observing today as Mother's day? It moans that women should become such great mothers. The fathers should be exemplary in their conduct. When the fathers are not setting the right example, the children should be such as to have the courage to correct the parents. But unfortunately there are neither exemplary parents nor exemplary children.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the exhortation to the students: "Fill your hearts with love."

Bhagavan led the gathering in singing the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho! Rama, Rama, Ram!*"

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Kalyana Mandapam, Brindavan, on May 6, 1992

“Do Good: Swami will do the Rest”

Fifteen college-age students came to New York for a long week-end of casting, rehearsing and rewriting an original musical drama to be presented to Swami at the Summer Course in Brindavan in May 1992. The play is entitled *The Call of the Sublime*. The songs were chosen, the parts distributed and days of intense effort began. Swami later advised the team to come next year.

I have never seen 15 devotees work with such unity and harmony and absence of ego. There was never any conflict nor power struggle. There was only a simple, good-humoured willingness to give up personal preferences for the greater good. The result was that everything got done with great ease and joy. It was a wonderful experience. The boys were in good company and they knew it!

From different parts of the country, from very different backgrounds and with many varying interests, the boys met for the first time and seemed like old friends, best friends. In fact, that is so. All share a Common Best Friend, and share Him consciously. That sharing accounted for the sweetness, the hard work, the love that blossoms from the many experiencing the One, the unity transcending the diversity.

After the boys left, I ran into a neighbour in midtown who suggested we have a cup of coffee because she had some questions to ask me. She asked: "Who were those extraordinary young men you had as guests for the past few days"? In reply I asked Mary Ellen why she thought them so extraordinary. She said that her two grown up children were nothing like them nor were any of their many friends. She found the boys to be so cheerful and happy, with such natural and unusual friendliness that she looked forward to seeing them. They seemed, she added, to be very good people. Most of all, they just seemed to glow, they really glowed. She was so impressed that she wanted to know who they were and what they had in common and why they were in New York! I was then able to talk about Swami because of her inquiry! However, the boys had already said what was most important.

The same boys knew something of the sandwiches that I always carry with me for the homeless and two had seen a TV broadcast about this service project. Several boys at different times asked if they could make and carry peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to distribute while touring New York. Although I had not talked about what I was doing, some of them had observed it while we were out walking. From Wall Street to the Empire State Building, from the museums through the city streets, the boys carried sandwiches with them because their hearts told them to go and do so. They were rare, unusual and most welcome tourists here in New York. Clearly, we learn best by following Swami's example and our actions are His most effective message. Do good and good will result, for that is the natural sequence of events. Do good and

SUMMER COURSE IN BRINDAVAN

From Physics to Metaphysics

Loosely speaking, Science refers to the body of knowledge associated with the physical universe. The scientist is drawn to the subject by the beauty of natural phenomena, on the one hand, and intellectual curiosity, on the other, his overall objective being the unravelling of the Grand Design in Nature.

In the *Gita Vahini*, Swami refers to two types of knowledge: *Vishaya-jnana* (objective knowledge of the world or secular knowledge), and *Abheda-jnana* (knowledge of the identity of the *Brahman* and the individual *Atma* or spiritual knowledge for short). Science deals with secular knowledge alone and scientists fight shy of exploring beyond. Bhagavan Baba describes this, using the analogy of a circle. The quest for knowledge is like traversing a circle; scientists stop halfway, failing to move on to the more important part of the circle.

In ancient times, Philosophy was studied as one integrated subject and Natural Philosophy, as Science is known, was not divorced from Spiritual Philosophy. The separation between the two is of recent origin. Despite this parting of company, scientists have not altogether stopped believing in God. On the contrary, many scientists, including very eminent ones, believe in a *Superior Being*. Thus, for example, when Heisenberg discovered the governing principle of quantum mechanics, he told his wife "I was lucky enough to look over the Lord's shoulder while He was at work."

During the last few centuries scientific discoveries have poured out at breathtaking pace, taking us almost to the edge of secular knowledge. A few scientists have even dared to catch a glimpse of what lies beyond. In doing so, they have come to realise that beyond physics there is metaphysics. Indeed, the noted physicist John Wheeler has proposed that the very existence of the "material world" might depend on the participation of the mind. This is something that has been forced by discoveries in quantum mechanics.

Unfortunately, the run-of-the-mill scientist is not so humble or perceptive. Stimulated by his ability to explain laboratory phenomena, he often tends to dismiss spirituality and God. Not surprisingly, Baba chides scientists for adopting such an attitude. In a discourse delivered during last year's Summer Course, Swami observed: "It is necessary to pursue the study of physical science. But one should not get puffed up by one's scientific knowledge. Realising that there are innumerable things yet to be learnt, the scientist should cultivate humility and modesty."

the discourses on the *Gita* delivered by Bhagavan Baba. He points out that beyond the physical universe (*Bhutaakasa*) lie the mental universe (*Chittaakasa*) and the causal universe (*Chidaakasa*). The universe thus has a three-tier structure; each higher tier is incredibly vast compared to the one below. And beyond all these universes is the *Absolute Brahman*.

These higher universes can and have been explored. But, as Swami Vivekananda has stressed, they cannot be explored with the intellect. What then does one do and how does one see the *Brahman*? The Upanishads have the answer.

*Invisible is Thy form
Invisible to mortal eyes;
The seers alone
In their purified hearts—
They alone see Thee.*

Well, there is the magic formula and the recipe!

The problem of modern science is that it tends to stop halfway in its quest for Truth. What is worse, it encourages many to think that there is nothing beyond. As Swami Vivekananda observed: "Science has to collect facts, deduce principles, and then state the Truth—that is all. But if we begin by denying the facts [for example, Divine miracles], how can a science be?"

Modern science requires sophisticated instruments, on the one hand, and sharp intellect, on the other. But the exploration of the higher universes demands only a *pure heart*. To produce a pure heart one does not need advanced technology. Thus in ancient times when people believed in a pure heart, there was no dearth of seekers of the ultimate Truth. And they discovered,

*Sai naam binaa Paramatma nahi,
Hari bhajana binaa sukha shanti nahi!*

**From a talk given by Dr. G. Venkataraman at the Institute Auditorium, Brindavan, on
22-5-1992**

GURUDEV VANI:

SUMMER COURSE IN BRINDAVAN

Love the Motherland: Serve the World

*English education has become all-important;
Spiritual education has receded;
How, then, can purity of heart be experienced?
That purity alone is the backbone of education.*

*The Divine culture of Bharat
Bharatiyas make no effort to know their heritage.
What greater misfortune can there be than this?*

Dear Students!

True Bharatiya education consists in instilling in the students reverence for Bharat and its cultural heritage. It is not politics that will protect Bharat. Nor will bombs and arms protect it. It is the patriotism and spirit of sacrifice enshrined in the hearts of the people and their spiritual outlook that will protect the nation. Hence students today should be filled with the spirit of sacrifice, cultivate selfless devotion to the country and prepare themselves to pursue the spiritual path. Only such students—boys and girls—can protect the nation and safeguard its security.

Bharatiya education is not the kind of education which makes one spend a lot of money to acquire a degree and then go about with a begging bowl for jobs. It aims at promoting self-reliance, instilling in the student the noble idea of promoting the progress of the country in a spirit of sacrifice and leading a joyous life of dedicated service to the people. It seeks to promote unity in diversity. It prepares the minds of students to fight against all forms of injustice, corruption and wickedness afflicting society. Bharatiya education is not a prison-house for creating mental slavery or bondage to a job. It proclaims in strident terms: "The One abides as the Inner Spirit in all beings." It calls upon everyone to manifest his divinity. Thus, true Bharatiya education seeks to instill patriotism, promote the spirit of sacrifice, and encourage spiritual pursuits and thereby lead an ideal life.

Students I Education does not mean imparting worldly knowledge for leading a mundane existence. True education should inspire one with feelings and thoughts to lead an ideal life.

When a man is born, he is endowed with limited capacities. But owing to the misuse of the senses and the limitless growth of desires, these capacities are wasted away. As a consequence, he becomes prematurely old and dies. Hence, these limited capacities should be properly used by controlling the senses, thereby prolonging one's life, and dedicating one's knowledge and talents to the service of society. It is only when students develop character and integrity that they would be able to transform the moral climate of the world around them. It is because education has failed to transform human behaviour that there is no mental or spiritual development among them. For this purpose, a system of Dharma (or moral order) has to be established that will promote both worldly and other-worldly well-being. Only then will humanity be divinised.

Three qualities and three needs

A student has to possess three qualities. "Sarva loka hithe rathah" ("Rejoicing in the well-being of the entire world"). This is the first quality. The student must wish for the welfare of every country. The second quality is "Sarvajnana Sambhavah" ("Acquire all-round knowledge".) This means that his knowledge should not be confined only to worldly matters. His knowledge should comprehend the spiritual. Every man is endowed with knowledge (jnana). This assumes

a dream world. It is not a product of the imagination Jnana (in its profoundest sense) is the experience of oneness. ("Ekaika darshanam") "Advaita Darshanam Jnanam", declares the scripture ("Perception of the One alone is Jnana.") There is no duality in this Jnana. Ajnana (or ignorance) is the reverse of this awareness. This awareness should be reflected every moment, in every step of a human being.

To acquire such awareness or knowledge, one has to secure three capacities. One, a healthy body. Two, sense control. Three, restraining the mind. If anyone of these three is lacking, the awareness will be incomplete. All three should be in the right condition. If there is a defect in anyone of them, full Satwic knowledge cannot be got.

Abuse of the senses

The reason for the prevalence of various ailments among students today is the dissipation of energy caused by the abuse of the senses. For instance, the eye has a limited capacity to see. So the eyes should be used up to their capacity. This is the rationale for the motto: "See no evil. See what is good."

The ears also have limits to what they can hear. You should not let the ears hear whatever you like. Thereby, the ears lose their power of hearing.

The tongue is a powerful organ, but it also is subject to certain limits. By indulging in excessive speech, using harsh words and unpleasant language, the tongue's power is weakened. The tongue's power of speech is diminished by four practices: uttering falsehood, abusing others, indulging in slander, and excessive talking.

In this manner, the powers of the senses are being wasted by their misuse. As a result, one's life itself gets debilitated.

Education and sense-control

It is not difficult to go through the education process. By some effort, marks may be scored. But neither the blossoming of intelligence nor the unfoldment of good qualities can be witnessed in such students. The scoring of high marks or winning of high rank is not great in itself. What is important is the transformation of the mind. In the pursuit of education, practising what one learns is most essential. The external gains derived from education are accompanied by an equal amount of losses. The powers of intelligence and discrimination are lost. Knowledge of what is good, what is significant and what is supreme wisdom is lost. People are becoming slaves of the senses. The Kathopanishad declared: "The slave of the senses is a fool. Only the man who subdues the senses is a hero."

Here is an illustration. Ravana was a greater scholar than Rama. He was a master of 64 categories of knowledge. He knew also knowledge about the training of cows and elephants. Despite all these accomplishments, Ravana was described by Valmiki as a "moorkha" (a stubborn fool). Rama was described as the very image of righteousness (Dharmamurti). Despite

free play, he became a fool. Anyone who misuses his senses is a fool, whatever the extent of his knowledge.

Rama had full control of his senses and maintained perfect equipoise in all circumstances, whether of joy or grief. When he had to leave for the forest at the very moment that had been fixed for his coronation he left for the forest with serene equanimity. He was unaffected by gains or losses, pleasure or pain. Life is a mixture of happiness and misery.

Students! Your first task is to cultivate control over the senses. Only the student who has mastery over the senses can be heroic in his life and be strong and effulgent as a diamond. The one who is a slave of the senses will be a slave of the world. Self-control must be the primary aim of education.

Students today are not filled with love of the country. They are also lacking in self-confidence. And there is no sign of faith in the Spirit in them. Students therefore should cherish patriotism and develop self-confidence. Only then will they be in a position to make use of their education for serving the country and promoting the well-being and prosperity of the nation.

Ideals in life

Educated persons today are totally immersed in selfish pursuits. They do not think of service to others or the good of the nation. They are concerned about their jobs even before they complete their education. The link between education and employment should be completely snapped. Education should be for life and not for a living.

It is not earning a livelihood that is important. What matters is the ideals for which you live. The primary purpose of education is to enable one to manifest the divinity within him. When students pursue education in this spirit, they will promote the welfare of the nation, of society and their own good.

Therefore, education should not be pursued as a means for achieving a desired end. This is a degrading attitude. All worldly desires can confer only limited pleasure. How, then, is one to achieve lasting bliss? It cannot be got through the body. Only through inner experience can lasting bliss be secured. Then alone is there fulfillment in life.

Today there is no harmony between thought, word and deed. Thinking in one way, speaking in a different way, and acting in a different way, men are getting themselves bound by their own contradictions. In the process, they are deceiving themselves.

Education should be pursued, not merely for acquiring degrees, but for cultivating human values. All riches are ephemeral. Do not become slaves of wealth. Become subjects of good qualities. Wealth without character is worthless. Life becomes an ideal one when character constitutes one's wealth. The blossoming of one's character leads to radiance in life.

Reduce desires

When a child is born, he is innocent of all desires. As he grows older, desires multiply. These desires have to be kept within limits. Life is a long journey and the less luggage you carry, the greater the comfort. Reducing desires is the true mark of civilisation. The government has imposed ceilings on land, on houses, and on many other things. But there is no ceiling on desires. Education should lead to restraint on desires.

It should be realised that every organ in the body has a limit to what it can do. It is dangerous to use it beyond that limit. This applies to almost everything in life. Whenever the limit is exceeded, there is an adverse consequence. Excessive light will burn the retina. A deafening noise may damage the ear-drum.

Students! You are not unaware of the situation in the world today. Wherever you turn, there is disorder and violence. Man has been given two boons: Happiness and peace (Sukham, Santhi). Every person in the world, from a king to a beggar, desires only these two. But what is the happiness that he should seek? Is it physical, mental, or material pleasure? Men are not sure about what kind of happiness they want and wherefrom they can get it. If it is sensory pleasures that they want, they will find that these are only momentary and that they are weakened at the end. This is no pleasure at all. What about peace? People consider freedom from worry as peace. Thyagaraja declared that there can be no pleasure (soukhyam) without peace (Santham). How is peace to be secured? Only when desires are reduced will peace be secured. As desires grow, peace is lost.

Man is a prey to insatiable desires. As soon as he realises one desire, he develops a desire for something more attractive. He wants to become a legislator. Soon after he becomes one, he wants to become a minister and there after the Chief Minister. He is not content with that. He desires to go to Delhi. There is no end to these desires.

Develop contentment

Man should develop contentment. The discontented man loses in many ways. A student may desire to score high marks, but he should not wish that others should not fare equally well. This selfish attitude is unbecoming. All should fare equally well in the examinations. All should achieve excellence. Students should have this broad-minded attitude.

The stage of the student is like that of a tender sapling. When it is tended properly, it will grow into a good tree. From this young age itself you should see that the mind does not go astray. Do not give room for envy, hatred and arrogance. Rejoice in the success of others. Success will come to you of its own accord. Yield place to persons weaker than yourself in queuing for the bus. Shed the desire to get ahead of others. Do not always think narrowly about your own position. It is only when you develop a broad outlook that you will be able to emerge in the years to come as leaders of the nation. You are the leaders of tomorrow. It is only if you develop right attitudes now that you will be able to play your roles properly in the future. Purify your hearts. Control your senses. This is the right path.

Spirituality does not mean mere meditation or worship. It means getting rid of the pollutions in the mind. Students should be known for their serenity and orderliness. Instead, we find that there is excitement and agitation wherever a few students gather. This should not be allowed to happen.

"Be lions, not sheep"

Students! Yesterday Natesan brought two life-size figures in bronze of lions from his collection of antiques. You may wonder why these lions have been displayed on the stage. Many may be under the impression that they are kept for decorative purposes. But I considered them from a sacred point of view. The lion is esteemed as the king of animals. It is not prone to commit anything mean or lowly. It is only when it is hungry that it kills an animal. It does not kill animals wantonly. Because it is known for its nobility of character it has been dubbed King of animals. It has been said that human birth is rare among living beings. Hence every man should strive to become a lion among men. You should not fall a prey to weakness or fear. Be lions and not sheep.

Our students should become lions who will protect the people as leaders. They should be content to use their abilities for satisfying their minimum needs. Do not get involved in foolhardy adventure. Observe the proper limits in the use of your talents, wealth or position. Pledge yourselves to promote the advancement of the country with determination, courage and a spirit of sacrifice. Go forward with courage. "God is by your side. God is the Indweller in the heart. " Have this confidence in yourself: This confidence begets courage.

Mr. Justice Chandrachud said that the first requisite is courage. What kind of courage? "The one who is filled with doubts perishes." ("Samsayaatma vinasayathi") Never become "Doubting Thomases". Only when you are free from doubts will you become heroic. Doubts will disappear where there is self-confidence.

"Shraddhavaan labhathe Jnanam" (The earnest aspirant gains supreme wisdom) It is lack of earnestness that gives rise to doubts. Students should develop firm faith in sacrifice, patriotism and the spiritual goal. There is no need to tell you more about this, as you are familiar with all this as students of the Sathya Sai Institute. But there are quite a few new things which you have to learn. And there are many things which you have learnt which you have to put into practice and experience the fruits thereof. Moreover, you have to share and rejoice with others your experiences. That is the way to experience real bliss.

Firm faith in God

Students! The Vice-Chancellor expressed a wish that Swami should bless the students with knowledge of Bharat's culture as embodied in great works like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. These works are of value not only to Bharatians but to the whole of mankind. However, it is not enough if you merely listen to these discourses in the Summer Course. You should try to transform yourselves as a result. Without such transformation the Summer Course will be in vain. Therefore, cherish in your hearts whatever is said here. Develop firm faith in

of the Divine is demonstrated even" by science in many ways. For instance, the sun, the moon, the earth and other planets are moving in their different orbits according to certain speeds. It will be disastrous for the world if they change their courses. There must be an unknown power which determines their movements. Without such a power they would not be following their prescribed courses. Who has determined these orbits and limits? We must ponder over this.

We drop an object from the hand. We see the object falling to the ground. But we do not see the power of attraction of the earth—the power of gravitational attraction. The gravitational force is there even though you don't see it. To deny what you cannot see is a mark of ignorance.

How the Divine works

To give another example: During World War II, millions of men died in Europe. Two years after the war ended, the children that were born were predominantly males. What is the reason for this? It is the need for maintaining a balance between the ratio of men and women in the population. If such a balance is not maintained, the human race will be extinct. What is the power that maintains such a balance? It is the will of the Divine

Whoever enquires deeply into the workings of the Divine cannot fail to notice this. There is at the base of everything a power that is at work. That is divinity. Ignoring this, and placing his faith egoistically in some other power, man is falling a prey to unrest (asanthi) He is a slave to his conceit as a doer and enjoyer. This is wrong There is a Principle that is the Prime Mover. There is a power which governs the Cosmic process. Few attempt to recognise this.

However, it may be asked, if God is controlling everything, what is the need for human effort? God is like the electric current. But even if the current is there, you must have a bulb (to obtain light). It is only when the bulb is switched on to the current that the bulb will burn.

Students should understand how the four values: Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema, are inter-related. If a bulb is to shed light, it has to be connected to a switch by a wire and current should flow in the wire. Truth is the current. Dharma is the wire. Peace is the bulb.

Prema is the light. When the current of Truth is connected to the wire of Righteousness and enters the bulb of Peace, you have the light of Love. You can see how all the four are essential. Human effort and Divine Grace should come together like the joining of the negative and positive ends of an electric circuit, to accomplish anything.

Students! Fill your hearts with the resolve to promote the welfare of the nation. Do not succumb to selfishness and careerism. Dedicate your lives to the well-being of the world and the promotion of world peace.

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

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium at Brindavan, on 21-5-1992

"Despondency is Hell"

Drop the delusion that you have become old or diseased, or that you have become weak and debilitated. Some people begin to count the years and grieve over advancing age and shudder like cowards afraid of Death. But remember, elation is Heaven, despondency is hell. Have always some work to do and do it so well that you get joy. Vyamoha is the dust that settles upon the glass of the chimney of the lantern and dims the light. The attachment to sensual objects and to the pleasure they give is the soot that sticks to the inside of the chimney; that too dims the light. Clean the chimney by Namasmarana every day and the flame will shine for you and others. Also, have good activities and good companionship. That will help very much in spiritual Sadhana; proper atmosphere is very essential for the aspirant.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI

No Greater Sin than Ingratitude

*When rain falls on a sandy bed, it seeps down;
When the same rain falls on a bed of clay, it remains sweet water;
When raindrops fall into an oyster, they become pearls.
Likewise, devotion results in what one deserves*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

For all names and forms in the world, there is one that is basic. Without that basis no object can have a name or form. For instance, here is a tumbler. It has name and form. But its primary base is silver. When the tumbler is melted, what remains is only the silver. What happened to the earlier name and form? They have merged in the silver.

Likewise, the basic truth underlying all the myriad names and forms in the world is the Satwic principle. It is pure Satwa. It is Divine. It is this Divine Principle that enables everything to have a name and form.

"Ekoham Bahusyaam". "I am One, let me become the Many". It was by the Will of the Divine that all the myriad objects came into existence. The basic principle in this multiplicity is oneness. Between the numbers one and nine, nine is the larger number. But, in fact, the number nine is made up of nine ones (1+1+1 ...). One is the basic number. So also all the diversity has emanated from the One.

interlude, men are victims of a variety of desires. There is no harmony between men's thoughts, words and actions. What is the reason? Man's actions are not in accordance with his thoughts.

Man's thoughts are full of ideals. But he makes no effort to act up to these ideals. He thinks in one way, speaks in another way and acts in a different way. Consequently, he is subject to all kinds of sorrow and disorder. This is because he fails to satisfy his conscience. A man without self-satisfaction can have no peace. When can self-satisfaction be realised? When there is unity and harmony in thought, word and deed: to speak as you feel and to act up to your words.

Uses of adversity

Man today is racked by all kinds of troubles. Are these troubles designed to make man miserable or to elevate him to a higher level of existence? Every trouble is really a step in elevating man. If there are no troubles, man will have no proper lessons. Troubles constitute good lessons. Trouble and pleasure are inextricably mixed and cannot be separated from each other by any one. Pleasure has no separate existence. It is the fruit of pain. This basic truth is not recognised by man. When grief smites him he succumbs to it. He gloats over some happy experience. His entire life is bound up with these varying experiences of pleasure and pain.

Therefore, man has to cultivate the sense of equanimity in pleasure and suffering. There is a joy in sorrow. There is suffering in happiness. It is only when man cultivates the sense of equanimity in all circumstances, in pleasure or pain, that he will be able to experience peace.

Thoughts and deeds

All experiences of pleasure and pain have their origin in the thoughts of man. Thought is like the seed of a tree, which in due course puts forth branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. All that you see in a tree has come from a small seed. Likewise, although man's thought is subtle, it contains potentially the entire universe. The atom is the microcosm of the Universe. Students are aware of the huge size of the banyan tree. Its seed, however, is very small. The seed and the tree are essentially one.

Man has to keep a watch over his thoughts, because they form the basis for his actions. When his wishes are fulfilled, he is content. When they are not realised, he feels disappointed. Man does not enquire into the causes of these divergent results. His failures are the result of his own shortcomings. When his heart is pure, his actions yield beneficial results. His thoughts are the cause of the success or failure of his efforts. Hence, man must utilise his thoughts in the proper manner. His vision of the world depends on how he looks at it. "As he feels, so he becomes." When one's thoughts are sublime, the results are also sublime.

Man and society

Man receives help from various people in the world. Without such help, men cannot progress towards a higher level of existence. In childhood, the mother looks after the child. In boyhood, the father provides for his education. Later, he is involved in activities with friends. And then his kith and kin involve him in family relationships. Thus various persons assist man in

who has derived help in this manner, what help is he rendering to his fellowmen? It is good to render help to one who has helped you. It is even greater to help one who has done you harm. When this is the case, it is essential that man should serve the society that has helped him in so many ways. He owes to society the name and position he has achieved. Hence he must render service. This was the dictum of sage Vyasa as the distilled essence of his eighteen Puranas: " It is meritorious to render help to others; it is sinful to do them harm." This means: Help ever, hurt never. Do not cause harm to any one. If you can help any one, do so.

Duryodhana and Karna

Once Duryodhana declared: "I know what is good and what is bad. I also know that bad consequences will follow bad actions. But I am impelled to do only bad deeds. I know what is good. I know that good deeds will yield good results. But my mind is not inclined towards doing good. What is the reason for this? It is the absence of purity in my thoughts. My heart is filled with selfishness. My life has grown in the soil of selfishness. Out of selfishness I am seeking gains for myself. For selfish reasons I am harassing the Pandavas. I am aware of this. I am doing all this consciously." If one commits a wrong unwittingly, he is guilty of committing a mistake. But if he commits it deliberately he is committing a sin. This is the difference between a mistake and a sin.

In this context, it may be pointed out that Karna is a great example of one who cherished gratitude for the good done to him. He was not only a great donor who gave away whatever was sought from him. His loyalty to his master was unbounded. He was ever ready to lay down his life for his master.

The ruler of Panchala announced that his daughter Draupadi would be given in marriage to any bow-man who could bring down an overhanging fish-yantra by looking at its reflection in water. Rulers from many countries had assembled there. Draupadi was no ordinary woman; she emanated from a blaze of fire. Who was worthy of her hand in marriage? Those taking part in the wedding contest had to abide by one of two conditions. Either he should be a ruler or a Kshatriya. Karna was a great warrior. He had come to take part in the contest. Unfortunately, he was not the ruler of any state and he was a charioteer's son, not a Kshatriya. For these reasons, he was asked to withdraw from the contest. He felt depressed that in spite of all his other accomplishments he could not take part in the contest. As he was walking back, Duryodhana got up with the feeling: "There is no one equal in prowess to Karna excepting Arjuna. With Karna on my side I can always deal with the Pandavas." He came to Karna's help at that moment. In that assemblage, he made Karna King of Angadesa.

For that one act of magnanimity, by which he was made a ruler, Karna pledged himself to serve Duryodhana by shedding the last drop of blood for him.

Later on, the Kauravas and Pandavas had gathered their forces for war. Krishna had tried his best to prevent the Armageddon as he knew the infinite calamities war brought in its train. He went as an envoy of the Pandavas to plead for a peaceful settlement with the Kauravas. Arjuna

for battle.

Kunti and Karna

A day before the battle was to begin, Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, realised what was impending. She was the mother of Karna also. Karna was her first-born who was the child of a boon from the Sun-God. She was aware of his extraordinary powers and sought an opportunity to meet him. There may be bad sons, but there is no bad mother. A mother's love is unbounded. One day, Karna was performing Sandhya Vandanam in the morning after taking a bath in the river. Getting news of this from her maids, Kunti went to the riverbank. Karna was in meditation. Kunti stood behind him. As she stood, she was overwhelmed by grief at seeing him after a long time. She was also stricken with sorrow at the prospect of her near and dear ones dying in the impending battle. Unable to bear the grief, she wailed aloud. Karna emerged suddenly from his meditation. He saw Kuntidevi before him. He did not know that she was his mother, though he knew she was the mother of the Pandavas. He asked her: "Mother! Why are you in such great sorrow? I am Karna the son of Radha. I offer my salutations to you. Please let me know the cause of your grief." Kunti replied: "Dear child, you are not the son of Radha. You are my son. You were born to me as a boon from the Sun-God. To avoid public ignominy, I left you on the Ganga I am a great sinner. I pitilessly abandoned you on the Ganga though you were a new-born babe. For selfish reasons, to safeguard my name, I abandoned you in this manner. You are my eldest son. The Pandavas are your brothers and Dharmaraja is your younger brother. Dear son, give me one promise. If all of you were united, you could rule the entire world. You could become the emperor. All the Pandavas will obey you and follow your footsteps like a shadow. I give you my word. Do not bear any enmity towards the Pandavas in the impending battle. Consider them in your heart as your brothers. Ponder over the sorrow that afflicts your mother."

Karna's dilemma and pledge

When Karna heard these words, he was caught in a whirl and his mind was in confusion. "I had heard now and then about the secret of my origin, but never before from the mouth of my mother. The Pandavas are indeed my brothers. I am Kuntidevi's son. But at this juncture, am I to abide by my mother's words? Or am I to show my gratitude to my master?" Karna debated thus within himself. He told Kunti: "Whether he was a wicked or an unrighteous person, it was Duryodhana who gave me a position of honour and raised me to my present state. I cannot betray my master. I am even prepared to give up my life, but I cannot betray my master. But, because you are my Mother, I will give you, one promise", declared Karna, "Promise to the mother is one thing; loyalty to the master is a different thing. The former is in the nature of a right. The latter is a responsibility. They are like the two wheels of a chariot or the two wings of a bird. They go together. Mother, I give you this promise. When the occasion arises, I shall spare Dharmaja, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva. I will not harm them. But I will not spare Arjuna. If in this battle I lose my life, the five Pandavas will be your sons. In case Arjuna dies, you will still have five sons. I will take the place of Arjuna among the Pandavas. In any case, there will be no diminution in the number of your five sons. This is my plighted word" Saying this, Karna caught hold of his mother's feet and said, "Mother! The other day, in the court of Drupada, Duryodhana saved my honour. I know he is a wicked man. I also know that the Pandavas are the very

done to me by Duryodhana. I have to show my gratitude to my master. In this respect, there can be no change in my attitude," declared Karna.

Gratitude to God and the guru

Later, Karna gave away even the ear-rings given to him by the Sun-God. And he offered to Indra the armour he was wearing. He even laid down his life for his master. But he did not give up the gratitude he owed to Duryodhana.

It must be remembered that there is a means of atoning for the killing of a Brahmin or a cow or an infant. But there is no way of atoning for betraying the preceptor or the Divine. If you turn ungrateful you will be worse than a wild beast.

Kunti then declared: "I shall be happy if you remain a man with such high ideals. Let me tell you there is no one who can slay Arjuna. You bear animosity towards Arjuna. I am content with your promise. It is enough if you spare Dharmaja, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva."

Dharmaja's greatness

In this context, observe how much gratitude existed among the Pandavas. Dharmaja, Bhima and Arjuna were the sons of Kunti, Nakula and Sahadeva were the sons of Maadri (the second wife of Pandu). When Maadri was about to commit 'Sati' on her husband's funeral pyre, Dharmaja gave her a promise. He said, "Mother! You are about to give up your life for the sake of my father. I shall look after your sons with even greater concern than for my uterine brothers. Whatever differences may arise between us, I shall treat them as my own brothers." He gave this pledge to Maadri.

(Bhagavan then related the incident in the Mahabharata, during the stay of the Pandavas in exile, when the four brothers—Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva—died at a pond where they had gone to bring water and refused to answer the questions which the guardian Yaksha (spirit) of the pond wished to put to them before they were allowed to take the water. Dharmaja then came to the pond and answered all the questions put to him by the Yaksha. The Yaksha was so pleased with the replies that he granted a boon to Dharmaja. He was prepared to restore to life one of the four brothers whom Dharmaja would name. Dharmaja promptly asked that Nakula or Sahadeva might be restored to life. The Yaksha wondered why Dharmaja did not ask for the restoration of one of his own brothers, Bhima or Arjuna, but preferred one of the two step brothers. Dharmaja replied that as he was there as a surviving son for his mother Kunti, he wanted that a son of his stepmother, Maadri, should be alive. Dharmaja mentioned the pledge he had given to Maadri. Appreciating the large mindedness of Dharmaja, the Yaksha restored all the four brothers to life) Bhagavan continued.

Gratitude is a great virtue. When the power of gratitude is realised, it will be seen that it can give benefits much more than anyone can imagine. If out of narrow-mindedness, men become ungrateful, they will suffer grievously. If such is the case in regard to purely human relationships, how much rewarding gratitude can be when it is offered to God?

Dear students! This is a period of innocence and inexperience in your life. You are filled with desires. You tend to be selfish and self-centred. But even so, you can make your lives sacred and meaningful by carrying out the injunctions of the Divine. If you adhere to this one rule, you will redeem your lives and promote the welfare of your families and your society. Although Dharmaja asked only for the restoration to life of only one step- brother, the Yaksha revived all the brothers.

Concluding His Discourse, Bhagavan said: "Karna stands out as the supreme exemplar of gratitude. He demonstrated what it means to be grateful to one who has helped you, even if he happens to be a wicked person."

From Bhagavan's discourse at the Kalyana Mandap at Brindavan on May 10th, 1992

Prasanthi Nilayam and the Mother

The ways of the Avatar are inscrutable. What appears at first sight to be totally unreasonable or fantastic proves in the course of years to be a marvelous act of foresight. This was the case when Baba decided to build a new Mandir—to be named Prasanthi Mandir—on the slope of a hill somewhat remote from the old Mandir on the fringe of Puttaparthi village. Easwaramma, the "Chosen Mother"; was flabbergasted at the prospect of "her Sathya" becoming even more inaccessible to her. She said all that could be said against the project. But Baba coolly replied to all her objections and said: "There will be hundreds of pilgrims pouring in every day—and that place will become a Shirdi, a Tirupati and a Kasi!" How prophetic, except that the "hundreds" have swelled to "thousands".

Writing about Easwaramma's reactions to the new Mandir, Prof. Kasturi says (in his book "Easwaramma-the Chosen Mother")

Prasanthi Nilayam! Easwaramma shuddered at the mere name, at the vast vistas of meaning it held, of the yawning spaces it indicated between herself and Swami who could no longer be considered her son, between Swami and all the other 'Swamis' she had known or of whom she had heard. Would she ever be worthy enough to enter the portals of this monumental Abode of Peace that He would create?

On the eve of His ceremonial move to the new Mandir, Easwaramma secured another 'boon' from Swami that He would have His dining room on the east side of the upper floor even though He had chosen the rooms at the other end in which to live. Swami was very strict in enforcing the disciplinary rule that men and women must keep apart, so, while the men used the staircase at the west end, Easwaramma and her daughters climbed up the one at the east and spoke to him there. They were not allowed free entry into His apartment any more. But this promise of Swami's was

person, promise or pace or predicament can hold such a One as He? How could One who is all spirit be anything but elusive?

They would be waiting and waiting anxiously in the dining room and only when they were almost desperate would He come sauntering along the long verandah. He came to give Darshan and not really to eat. Sitting at the small table He would finger just one or two of the carefully offered items, release a few repartees or replies to their questions and rise, humming a tune, to return to the regions inaccessible to them.

The easy familiar days at the old Mandir were gone forever. But Swami in His compassion had however granted Easwaramma a few minutes of access to Him whenever she needed the healing touch of His Vibhuti, or relief from depressing routine.

The only means that Easwaramma could resort to, in order to be at peace with herself, was to relive Sathya's childhood and boyhood days and to remind herself of his pranks and repartees. When Swami announced His resolve to confer joy and wisdom on all men everywhere, she persuaded her mind to have faith in these words by counting the number of beggars He had led by the hand at her door and the quantities of warm clothing and food the boy had insisted on being given to them. She longed for similar revelations from Swami so that she could stamp the claim as authentic with the help of her memory.

As time flowed on, she became an ardent listener of the stories the devotees brought, of their experiences of Swami and the Baba of Shirdi. Her faith became firmer, her sympathy became wider.

A lover of children

She loved children. In every child she found Sathya hiding, inviting her to seek and succeed. Naturally, they cuddled in flocks around her. They watched with delight the twinkle in her eyes and the wrinkles on her cheeks and her chin as she joked and laughed.

She could be easily inveigled into the narration of hair-raising or heart-warming tales, in order to keep the children wrapped in excitement. Her pleasing pliant voice reproduced the screams of the kidnapped heroine, the wail of the wounded demon, the plaint of the frightened son, the roar of the victorious warrior and the crooning of the child cast on the jungle track. In fact she was quick in adding to her repertory stories of the Sai Baba of Shirdi and Swami.

The children watched the pictures she so realistically designed and described—the white umbrella with tassels of gold held over the pair of sandals, the emergence of the lion-faced God from the marble pillar of the royal audience hall, the dance of the child on the hoods of an angry serpent. Easwaramma forgot her physical ailments, the deeper deprivations and the assaults on her inner peace when engaged in storytelling. Invariably she rounded up the tales with emphatic perorations on humility and honesty, love and loyalty.

me to Bukkapatnam, four miles by road, for, I had to take a box of things and a bedroll. The cart belonged to Kesava, the young man who lived next door to the Ratnakaram family house. He was of the same age as Sathya, and Easwaramma being the champion storyteller of the village, he loved to hear the tales she narrated and he remembered all of them.

Easwaramma appreciated the earnestness and the enthusiasm of young children. Her grandsons were a bright lot and she insisted that they join higher classes and educate themselves to the utmost. She loved to encourage the sons and grandsons of others too. She prevailed upon Swami to agree with her choice and send money to them to meet their tuition fees and the cost of books and boarding. I was the person who filled forms for the money-orders and remitted the amounts at the Post Office. I was myself the postmaster for some years. Therefore it was from me that Easwaramma used to verify if the money had been sent to the boys studying in widely scattered schools. She felt pained whenever she discovered that the dispatch had suffered delay. "The boys cannot study well now," she used to say, they will be too worried to read in peace.

A hospital on the hill

Mother Easwaramma was perhaps the person most gratified when Swami announced that a twelve-bed hospital would be raised on the hill to the south of the Mandir. She grumbled about the site however, "How could those who are ill pull themselves upto that height?" she queried, and she was not satisfied when Swami replied that they can be brought to the hospital by devotees and volunteers in stretchers or they can come in bullock carts along the road specially laid for the purpose. The hospital, however, was welcomed wholeheartedly.

For her part, while Swami was at the village Mandir and even later, she could avail herself of the expert medical advice of Dr. Lakshmi, the famous physician gynaecologist from Nellore who stayed for weeks in the presence of Swami. Whenever, she, her daughters or others of the Ratnakaram family received the kind attention of that doctor, Easwaramma prayed to her to examine, diagnose and prescribe medicines for other village women too. She longed for a lady doctor who could stay at the Mandir year in and year out and help women in times of dire need.

And she mingled among the women devotees hauling sand, stone, bricks and cement from the road up to the site of the hospital. She lifted bricks herself, brushing aside the protest from the women. When the wards were ready, she sought out women patients, brought them to the doctor, pleaded that they be admitted and looked after until they could move about and take their normal share in the work at home and in the fields. Dr. Jayalakshmi, the gynaecologist trained in Wales, serving in the Sathya Sai hospital told me that Easwaramma was a pioneer, in serving enceinte women and babies. She advised against magical rites and the offering of fowls and lambs to Mariamma and lesser deities to drive diseases away. She sat with the patients while they were interrogated, waited until the diagnosis ended and held them firm as the dreaded needle was administered. And when women were admitted as inpatients she climbed the bulge of the hill more often in order to make the unfortunates know that there was a Mother interested in their recovery.

The grace of God cannot be won through the gymnastics of reason, the contortions of Yoga or 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 all living, 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 Bhakti, no triumph more praiseworthy than surrender.

—Baba

Pranams to Thee, Lord Sai

Salutations to Thee, Lord Sai,
To Thee, who fill our hearts with love so high.
With hearts full of love, we pray,
Protect us from every evil that comes our way.

We are but ignorant children at Your Feet,
Still we remember You at every heart beat.
Baba, bless us with knowledge and light,
And let our devotion to You always burn bright.

We're like little boats tossed on the rough sea,
Help us find the path that leads to Thee.
You're our saviour, ever so merciful,
Showering Peace and Love, ever so bountiful.

Forgive us, Swami, for the faults we make,
For we're trying hard not to let our faith shake.
Let our evil desires die and our anger subside,
Whatever we do let You be our constant guide.

May our devotion reach heights sublime,
Unaffected by any barrier, country or clime.
With our hearts and minds chanting Aum Sai Ram,
We offer You, at Your Feet, our humblest Pranam.

—*Sailendra Dewan, Class XII,*
Sri Sathya Sai Vidyapeeth, Sreesailam

The Rush for the Line

A time there was
When I rushed
For the first place
In the first line.

Time passed
No fragrant ash flowed
From Your Divine Palm
Into my cupped hands.
Your Lotus Feet eluded my grasp.

Time passed
I rush for no place, no line.
Let me, in the stillness of my being,
Feel the touch of Your Lotus Feet.

—*Prof. S. Jagadisan, Prasanthi Nilayam*

SAI MESSAGE IN EL SALVADOR:

Broadcasts for Children

For many years now, Mrs. George Teague, who runs a private radio station in San Salvador, capitol of El Salvador, has been broadcasting the message of Bhagavan Baba everyday from her radio station to thousands of listeners all over the country. When the Teague couple came to Prasanthi Nilayam in May 1991, Mrs. Teague sought Bhagavan's blessings for starting a special radio programme for children in her broadcasting station. With Bhagavan's blessings the programme was launched last year on May 19. The inaugural ceremony was conducted in the typical Sai way, with bhajans and Arati to Bhagavan.

The programmes are all run by children. They include songs and bhajans, stories relating to human values, advice on good behaviour and righteous conduct and all that is conducive to the promotion of character and integrity among children.

Mrs. Teague says that the inspiration for the programme came from Swami in an unmistakable manner. The programmes have proved extremely popular among children and parents all over the country have welcomed the transforming effect of the broadcasts on the children.

-N.

The Mysteries of Creation

*In this world,
Birds and beasts lead regulated lives
though they lack education;
Why does man lack this sense
though he is endowed with intelligence?*

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Today's man has learnt to fly in the air like birds, and swim in the sea like fish. But he has not learnt how to live as man on the earth. Science can teach man such things as flying in the air and swimming in the sea; however, it is only religion but not science, that can teach him how to live as man on the earth. So if science were to foster the all-round development of man, it has to seek the aid of religion. Religion does not mean blind adherence to some beliefs. On the other hand, religion helps man to attain the goal of human life based on discrimination and sacred values.

*All religions teach only what is good;
One should understand them properly
and regulate one's life accordingly.
If our minds are good, what wrong can
we see in any religion?*

Therefore, no religion can ever be bad. That is why the great scientist Einstein declared that religion without science is lame and science without religion is blind, thereby stressing the need for a judicious combination of science and religion to serve the needs of humanity.

Unity in diversity

Religion is of immense help in fostering the integral development of the human personality. It underlines the unity in diversity. True religion teaches the harmony and unity of all religions. The essence as well as the goal of all religions is the attainment of the purity of mind and heart. Every religion has its own precepts and principles. But no religion preaches hatred, untruth or unrighteousness. "Speak the truth", "Practise righteousness"—enjoin the Upanishads. Similar sacred injunctions are to be found in all the other religions too. Thus all religions emphasise the human values and serve as beacons for the proper progress and development of mankind. They all facilitate the manifestation of the divinity inherent in man. But the present day men in general, and the youth in particular, have forgotten our age-old culture and sacred values and are bidding good bye to God, having been enticed by the modern science and technology.

However, with the passage of time, scientists themselves are veering round to the view that the universe is being guided and governed by some divine power. The innumerable stars and planets in the universe are whirling at tremendous speeds. If they are to deviate even slightly from their orbits or their speeds, it would result in an universal holocaust. Who has ordained them to adhere to their speeds and orbits? Today's scientists are creating artificial satellites which are orbiting around the earth. But these satellites are crashing down or catching fire in a few days or months, where as the planets in God's creation are orbiting regularly since time immemorial, without any crashing, or catching fire. Light travels at the rate of 1, 86, 000 miles per second. Even with such a tremendous speed, it takes lakhs of years for light to travel around the families or constellations of the suns and stars. In the Milky Way that is visible to us, there are innumerable stars unknown to us. The light from some of the stars has not yet reached the earth, despite the lapse of eons since their creation. Even the scientists are in doldrums to understand fully such aspects of creation. What a contrast between the scientist who swells up with pride on account of discovering but a minute fraction of the mystery of creation, and the Creator (God) who is running the whole universe peacefully, silently, patiently and lovingly without any pomp or pride!

The sustainer of nature

Not this alone. The way this creation or Nature is functioning is amazing beyond words. For instance, the carbon dioxide exhaled by man is being taken up by the plants and the oxygen released by the plants is being inhaled by man. Who has made this mutually beneficial arrangement in Nature? Poet-saints like Purandaradas have sung the praise of the Lord Almighty in the following terms "Who has watered, manured and grown the small shrubs and the gigantic trees in the crevices of the rocks in the mountains? Who has painted the beautiful pea-cock and its tail with such attractive colours? Who has designed the wonderful combination of a green body and a red beak for the parrot?" The scientist may explain away all such things as the "Law of Nature." But are these scientists able to transcend Nature or to dispense with the materials available in Nature? Whatever the scientists claim as their "creation" is only derived from a combination of the basic materials found in Nature. For example, the scientist produces water by combining hydrogen and oxygen. But then, which scientist has produced or created hydrogen and oxygen? These elements are produced by sunlight. In the same manner whatever the scientist may produce is based only on the permutation and combination of the already existing materials in Nature. This fact is conveniently ignored by most scientists. When one ponders over the mysteries or secrets of Nature, even a fool will have to admit the existence of a divine power behind all these wonderful phenomena.

Let us consider another example. There are nearly 5.08 billion human beings in the world. But it is amazing that in such a huge population, no two persons look exactly alike. Which creator except God can do this extraordinarily wonderful feat! The goods manufactured by the modern "creators" are all alike because they come out of the same mould. What a striking contrast! The students should therefore, try to understand the mysteries of creation.

We are prone to take the creation for granted, thinking that it is but insentient Nature, thereby ignoring the Sentient Principle that regulates Nature and imparts a proper balance among its various constituents. Scientists and technologists in pursuit of selfish interests as well as of name and fame, utterly disregard the security and welfare of the society and the nation, by upsetting the balance in Nature, which results in various accidents, calamities, losses and misery to the public at large. For example, the oceans contain air needed by the earth for more than ten years. One lightning in the sky emits enough electricity required for the entire world for twenty years. By building gigantic dams and storing huge quantities of water in one place, the earth goes down in that area and consequently goes up in another area, like a see-saw. The indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources by the scientists and technologists such as various types of mines for extracting minerals, mica, coal, petrol and other oils results in imbalances and pollution of the five major elements, leading to catastrophes like earthquakes, and volcanoes etc. The rapid and excessive proliferation of industries, factories, automobiles etc., with the attendant pollution of the atmosphere is responsible for the increasing incidence of diseases like eosinophilia, asthma, deafness, pneumonia and typhoid etc. However, science *per se* is not bad; what is necessary is for man to put it to proper and judicious use.

Faith in God

Students of to-day have implicit faith and unquestioning belief in what the scientists say; but, however much you may din into their ears, they have no faith in God. Dear students! First of all, you must have faith in God's existence. One simple reason for this is that in the dictionaries of all the languages, you find the word 'God' among other words. Any dictionary contains only words which refer to things existing in the world such as birds, beasts and other living beings, as well as inanimate objects. Non-existing things do not have a place in the dictionary. The very fact that the word "God" occurs in all dictionaries is enough to prove the existence of God. Even if you have not seen or experienced some of the things included in the dictionary, there are other people who have seen or experienced them. So, based on your limited experience you cannot deny the existence of anything mentioned in the dictionary. If you have not experienced God, there are other people who have experienced Him and that is why the word 'God' finds a place in the dictionary. Some of you may argue that there are some words like "Sky-flower", "rabbit-horn" for which the corresponding objects do not exist in the world. But you must know that they are not single words as such, but compound words coined by combining two different words. Each of the single words 'Sky' and 'flower' refer to existing things; similarly there are rabbits and horns. But there are no objects in the world corresponding to the artificially coined words, namely 'sky-flower' and 'rabbit-horn.'

Mysteries of creation

One scientist wanted to know the meaning of the word "Parama Hamsa" (Supreme Swan) used in spiritual parlance. He was told that just as the swan separates milk from water by dipping its beak into a mixture of milk and water, the "Parama Hamsa" through his proper enquiry and the resulting wisdom separates the Atma (Self) from Anatma (Non-self). In turn, when the scientist was questioned as to who endowed the swan with the capacity to separate milk and water, the scientist replied that when the acid secreted by the beak of the swan comes into

water. But then the question arises as to who has placed this acid in the beak of the swan. Has any scientist done it? No, it is only God who has done this. Such, indeed, are the mysteries of God's creation!

About fifty years back, scientists believed that there is no greater power than the atomic energy. They expressed the fear that if the atomic power is further split, it will lead to disaster. But now after exploring and experimenting during the last fifty years, the scientists have been able to discover that there are greater powers than the atomic power. Similarly, persons who presently have no experience of God may have such experience, after ten years, say. Divinity is all pervading. You must firmly believe this. Without faith in God, human life would go in vain. Along with physical sciences you should also try to understand the spiritual science to some extent at least.

Unnecessary doubts

Now-a-days students give room to unnecessary doubts. One boy came to Me and said, "Swami! Sankaracharya has declared that Brahman is real and the world is illusory. But Brahman who is said to be real is not to be seen anywhere, while we are vividly experiencing the so-called illusory world in our daily lives with all the attendant gains and losses, joys and sorrows-that too not for one or two years but over a period of several years. So, how can we believe that the world is illusory?" To this I replied, "My dear boy! Don't waste your time in thinking about such questions. Why do you worry yourself about the reality or unreality of Brahman and the world? You leave that question to them (i.e. to Brahman and the world). First of all, find out the truth about yourself. You may think that you are real. But that alone is considered as real which does not undergo any change during all the three periods of time viz., past, present and future. In the light of this criterion, since your body undergoes change from moment to moment, and also since it is liable to perish altogether at any time, it is considered illusory. The same is the case with the rest of the world."

The youth of to-day argue that they do not undergo any change, forgetting the fact that their body is subject to change from time to time-birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood (manhood), old age and death. Thus, everything in this world undergoes change from time to time and that is the reason why the world is declared to be illusory. Sankaracharya did not say that the world is absolutely unreal. He called it illusory, because it is a mixture of reality and unreality, appearing at one time and disappearing at another time. However, students should understand that there is a substratum of reality underlying the illusory world. This can be illustrated by the silver plate which you see on My table. This plate can be converted into a cup tomorrow or into a spoon the day after. But the substance behind these changing names or forms continues to be the changeless silver. Nevertheless the silver and the cup (or plate) cannot be separated from each other. Similarly, the changeless reality of Brahman is the substratum underlying the ever changing, illusory world.

The students of today are victims of several doubts, because there is dearth of capable teachers who can comedown to the level of the students and explain things clearly to them Let the students understand the significance of the slogans exhibited on the hind wall of this auditorium, viz., "Samsayaatmaa Vinasyathi" (The doubter will perish) and "Shraddhaavaan Labhate Jnanam" (The one with faith gains wisdom). Both "Nissamsayam" (freedom from doubts), and "Shraddha" (faith and interest) are necessary for enlightenment, just as the positive and negative currents are needed for the light to emerge. Hence it is necessary that freedom from doubts on the one hand and faith on the other, should constitute the two banks through which the river of your life should flow, so that it may ultimately merge in the ocean of Divine Grace.

Garner the pearls

The woman saint, Meera said, "Braving all hardships, I dived deep into the ocean of the worldly life and at last got hold of the precious pearl of the name of Krishna. If I lose hold of this pearl, I may not get it again. Therefore, Oh Lord! You are my sole refuge." So also, you students may not get such golden opportunity (as this Summer Course) once again. You should therefore, try to carefully garner the pearls of precious ideas that are now being made available to you, so that they may stand you in good stead throughout your life.

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium at Brindavan, on 26-5-1992

THE DIVINE AT WORK II

"Swami does not disappoint"

Bhagavan Baba gave explicit directions in August 1991 for me to bring 20 U. S. boys to the Summer Course on May 20th (1992). "I will make all arrangements. I will take care of everything", He said and then moved both of His Hands forward twice as He opened His Fingers twice emphasizing the number 20, "You bring them. I will change them and send them back." With His assignment given, a very special adventure along the Divine Path began.

The 20 boys were soon identified and plans were made for the trip with great enthusiasm and a sense of awe awakened by the Divine Source of the invitation Work began on a play to be presented at His Lotus Feet, and the March (1992) visit in New York (of the selected boys) developed a strong bond among the 15 who were able to come together at the time. Plane reservations were made and all the details for the trip were taken care of. It was very surprising that the airline did not ask for payment when full payment was insisted on for a group trip leaving seven weeks after our departure date.

We awaited final clearance from Swami which seemed to be only a routine formality. However, we later heard that Swami said that this year was very crowded and it was better next year for the overseas group. Everything possible was done to seek His Divine clearance: letters, telegrams,

clearance, it was improper to go. His protocol, His discipline must be meticulously followed. Practically speaking, the 20 boys did not have the finances to support themselves in India without University arrangements and our reason forgoing was His direct invitation. I spoke with all the boys and we agreed to send a wave of prayer to the Lord on the Easter weekend in the hope of His sending the required approval. That did not happen.

"Love my uncertainty"

Three weeks before the departure date, the airline finally asked for payment and we reluctantly cancelled the reservations. On the morning that I decided to phone the boys explaining the situation, two Sai friends called me within an hour of each other. Both told me of interviews with Swami when He said: "Swami does not disappoint." What an interesting "coincidence"! Those words reinforced and strengthened my understanding of what was taking place "Love My uncertainty. I do not make mistakes" and "Patience is the only strength a man needs" are His reminders to us. He teaches discipline, surrender and detachment from our ideas about what is best for us. Two years ago, He spoke these words which are my precious daily guides: "Be attached only to Me." There can be absolutely no question that this experience is His Divine process at work. It has focused us all on Swami and whenever that happens, very good must result in our lives. "Swami does not disappoint" must be understood properly. He changes the time frames. He is the Master of Time. "I am Time" He has said. Not understanding that, we misinterpret our experience as disappointment and suffer the consequences. This is a mistake on our part. After a while, from the perspective of his Time, His Place, His Circumstance, we will grasp the truth that "Swami does not disappoint." He is taking care of everything now. This trip is only on hold for next year and the experience is His way of sweetening the final fruition.

"He knows best"

The boys accepted the surprise change with remarkable equanimity. Yes, there was disappointment but that was overshadowed by their applying His values to the test He chose to give. Here are some direct quotes from the boys immediately on receiving the news

"Swami is in-charge here—it will be O.K."

"That's the way it's supposed to be. He knows best and we hope for the best."

"The opportunity has already uplifted me."

"I'm numb and don't know what to think. Whatever happens it will be good."

"I'm standing back and watching as an instrument and will enjoy the ride."

"I'm shocked but things will work out the best."

"I'm not worried at all. I had my Baba dream and He gave me an invitation to the Summer Course. If we don't go this year, we'll all get together and put on the play and go next year."

"More tests. It's typical Swami. It's humorous and interesting to watch. Swami is at work directing me now and showing me which direction to go."

"Whatever is God's will. I have no problem with waiting and no extreme breakdown disappointment."

"I'm unmoved. It is interesting to watch. He is working His process which is for our good. It's not a great disappointment. I know I won't be disappointed. I'm excited to see how it's going to turn out. I'm excited because I know that I am part of the miracle."

The continuing miracle

The miracle continues. Clearly, His Divine Process is at work. He has strengthened the characters of all involved. He has enhanced the human values within each one, the values for which He has come amongst us.

"I will make all arrangements. I will take care of everything." He is doing just that. We are grateful to be part of His unfolding plan. We are grateful for His help in allowing us to accept His Will with equanimity.

"I will change them," He said. He is doing just that. He is changing us by focusing our attention on Him. He is changing us and we have yet to leave the country. This trip is not over. It has only begun.

Swami heals, He guides, He protects. He awakens in our hearts His Bliss and His Love. He does all this and vastly more. There is one thing that He does not do. Swami does not disappoint

—*Hal Honig, New York*

AVATAR VANI:

SUMMER SHOWERS IN BRINDAVAN

Rise from Animality to Spirituality

*Man is dogged by two defects
Which prevent him from thinking of God;
He conceals his myriad faults;
And proclaims the minor faults in others.*

Student!

Bharat was contributing to the security and prosperity of the world from ancient times by its adherence to the spiritual path. From then to this day, the message: "Let all the peoples of the

immersed themselves in experiencing the joy of the Spirit.

Today, because of the influence of modernism and modernity, young men and women treat with levity the very term "spirituality". There is a reason for this attitude. Over the centuries, the people in the country were mouthing spiritual sayings, parrot-like, without understanding their meanings, with the result that students today are unable to understand the true meaning of spirituality. Even scholars and men of spiritual eminence have been unable to convey the spiritual message to the young people of today in a manner that is meaningful to them and appeals to their hearts. The impression that is conveyed to the young people is that spirituality consists solely in good actions like performing bhajans, offering puja (worship), reciting the names of the Lord, going on pilgrimages and visiting temples. The primary reason for this is the failure on the part of the propagators to comprehend the profound message of the Vedas and Vedangas and realise the underlying truths embedded in the great epics and Puranas.

No one among the young men and women today understands what is the meaning of spirituality. They imagine that spirituality means meditation on God, bathing in sacred waters, and visiting holy shrines. This is not the correct meaning of spirituality. Spirituality means destroying the animal nature in man and making him realise his divine consciousness. Spirituality implies that one should not develop egoistic pride on account of the divine potencies in man but utilise them for achieving spiritual strength. Spirituality calls for the recognition of the manifold capacities manifesting in man as emanating from the Spirit and not from the mind. It means developing the faith that all powers come from the Divine.

Spirituality does not mean proceeding from the human to the Divine. It seeks to unfold the divinity in man. Spirituality does not mean passing from the mundane to the Divine. Spirituality means making man manifest the divinity in him.

People today have the wrong impression that spirituality is concerned with the journey from the mundane world to the Higher realm and vice versa. Because of this mistaken view, students today are in a state of confusion about spirituality. Spirituality appears meaningless to them.

Spirituality is the realisation of the role of the Spirit in daily life. It is a way of life. Our entire life is bound up with the Spirit. All the powers of man are derived from the Spirit. It is totally wrong to think that Spirituality is divorced from daily life and that our daily concerns have no relation to spirituality. Nor does spirituality mean leading a lonely and secluded life. True spirituality calls for the recognition of the oneness of all mankind and to demonstrate the spiritual truth underlying this Divine unity.

Our entire life is bound up with the spiritual. Whatever one says, whatever one does, whatever one thinks, all of it is related to the Spirit. Spirituality is the expression of the promptings of the Inner Spirit. The good deeds by the external instruments of the body cannot be deemed spiritual.

End animality

The very first thing one has to do is to destroy the animal nature in man. Without eliminating the animal nature, all rituals and acts of charity are of no avail. Of what use is it to foster one's animal instincts, while doing acts of charity or conforming to religious injunctions? As a man grows older, his desires also grow, instead of diminishing. Performing external rituals without subduing the animal nature, men are only pursuing wrong courses. However much one may contemplate on God, from time to time he is a prey to attachment ("Raga") and hatred ("dwesha"). These two animal propensities have to be got rid of at the outset.

People participate in bhajans. This is doubtless a good act, but it is only an auxiliary element in spiritual discipline. People take part in bhajans, but are they transforming their attitudes as a result? No. All the animal qualities like bad feelings remain along with participation in bhajans. Without getting rid of such attitudes, the continuous participation in bhajans is of no value. Without removing the animal nature, a singer of bhajans continues to be a sinner. The bhajans should be used as a means for overcoming the animal nature. Participation in bhajans and performing of worship should lead to the elimination of animal qualities. Without the conquest of animal nature, all forms of external worship are of no use.

Practice and precept

People expatiate on the greatness of Bharatiya scriptures and praise the glory of the Vedas. But all scriptures are intended to promote right practices and not merely to be used as texts for reading. Of what use is it merely to read these scriptures as a routine ritual without practising their teachings? The sacred books of the different religions—whether it be the Vedas, the Bible or the Koran—are intended to promote spiritual practices and not be used for ritualistic reading. Even eminent scholars treat these scriptures only as texts for parayana (ritualistic recitation). It is because of the mistaken notions of these scholars that young people today have failed to grasp the true import of spirituality.

All the spiritual propaganda that is carried on today is totally divorced from practice, with the result that spirituality has made little impact on the youth today. The young do not get a compelling vision of spiritual truths. Here is an illustration

In ancient times, people used to perform yagas and yajnas (religious sacrifices). These sacrifices were being performed according to the rules laid down in the scriptures. But while conforming to the prescribed procedures, few understood the inner meaning of these sacrifices. All their lives were spent in external observances. In the performance of sacrifices, they used to offer cows or other dumb animals as sacrifice (bali) and propagated the view that such offerings were in accordance with scriptural injunctions. This was a great mistake. These were meaningless practices.

Offering animality to god

What does "pashutwa" (animal nature) mean (when it is used with reference to the sacrifice of animals)? "Pashutwa" (Animal nature) refers to one's way of life ("jivatatwa"). The manner of

existence). What is the delusion regarding the body? It is the identification of the body with the Self (the "I"). This is the mark of the animal nature in man. The real meaning of "animal sacrifice" is the sacrifice of the animal nature in man. Everyone has to get rid of egoism and the sense of "mine" (Ahamkara and Mamakara). Without sacrificing these animal tendencies, sacrificing dumb animals is unworthy of human beings.

The word "bali" is used with reference to the sacrifices in yagas. What is the "bali" that is to be offered in the sacrifice? It is the offering of one's bad qualities and bad thoughts as an offering to the Divine. How can one offer bad things to God (it may be asked), God alone can accept such offerings and give good things in return. No one else in the world will accept the bad and give what is good in return. This kind of exchange is possible only for the Divine. An example for this may be had from ordinary life.

There is a soiled and tattered currency note with you. No one is prepared to accept it from you. But when it is tendered to the Reserve Bank, which issued it, it is bound to accept it and issue a new note in return. Likewise, who is competent to accept one's bad thoughts, perverse feelings and evil intentions? Only the Almighty can accept them. He is the spiritual Reserve Bank that will accept the soiled notes of your mind and give in return good currency (in the form of good thoughts).

Hence, offerings should be made only to those who are competent to receive them. All bad thoughts and feelings should be offered to God so that we may receive, by His grace, good thoughts and feelings in return. Spirituality, thus, means transforming one's life into an ideal one by offering one's bad qualities to the Lord and receiving from Him good qualities in return.

Meaning of horse sacrifice

In ancient times, they used to perform "Ashwa Medha Yaga" (Horse Sacrifice). What does the "Horse Sacrifice" mean? By "Ashwam" (Horse) is meant that which is restless. The horse cannot remain steady even for a moment; it will be always shaking one part or the other of its body. The horse is an animal which represents the unsteady mind. The word "Medha" in "Ashwa Medha" literally means the mind. Thus to perform the Horse Sacrifice really means to offer the restless mind to God.

The horse is not only restless but it also runs fast while riding thereon. So also, man's mind is both restless and very fast-moving. That is why Arjuna complained to Krishna (during the Gita dialogue) that the mind is restless, strong, obstinate and dangerous. Such a highly fickle mind which is comparable to the horse (an animal) should be surrendered to God as a sacrificial offering. This indeed is the real meaning behind the Horse Sacrifice; but now-a-days every one is misguided by the outer meaning only and nobody takes the trouble of knowing the inner meaning. Some may try to argue that in olden days animals were sacrificed during "Yajnas" and "Yaagas" (sacrificial rites). But they are not correct. Only a few ignorant "Pandits" (scholars) and misguided elders used to indulge in animal sacrifice. But those who recognised the inner

man while performing such religious ceremonies.

Nandeeshwara

The sum and substance of the various religious observances is to destroy the animality in man. Here is one more example to illustrate this point. In temples of Easwara (or Siva), you find "Nandi" (image of bull) in front of the deity. What is the inner significance of this? The usual reply you get is that "Nandi" is the "Vaahanam" (vehicle) of Easwara; as if He could not afford to have a better vehicle than a bull. This is a wrong idea. The truth is that just as "Lingam" is the symbol of the Lord (Easwara), "Nandi" (bull) is the symbol for "Jive" (individual soul). Therefore, just like the Nandi, man should turn away from "Prakriti" (the world) and direct all his attention towards "Easwara" (God) only.

There are some more meanings for this symbolism. For instance, it is said that no one should stand between Easwara and Nandi. One should have the vision of Easwara by looking through the space in between the two ears of Nandi. The underlying idea is that through the Sadhana of using its ears to listen about Easwara only, and its eyes to see Easwara alone, the animality in the bull becomes transformed into divinity and because of its merger with Easwara it is called "Nandeeshwara" (Bull-God). Thus the lesson of the symbolism is that man should also try to merge with God, by following the example of the Nandi.

History = His Story

Students! Try to understand the correct meaning of what is recorded in the "Charitra" or history of Bharat which is highly sacred. History (charitra) is derived from the actual actions (charyalu) of people but not from mere writings or discourses. Practising, experiencing, enjoying bliss, and sharing the bliss with others—this indeed is "Charitra" which is called "History" in the English language. In other words, "His Story is History". It means that the story of God is history. Students should understand such inner meaning. What is meant by "Rama's Charitra" (History of Rama)? What Rama did during His lifetime is His Charitra or History. How He had mastered His senses and mind during all the vicissitudes of life, how He was neither elated by pleasure nor depressed by pain, how He accepted His exile into the forest with the same happy countenance with which He had prepared Himself for His "Pattabisheka" or coronation—this story of His which describes His equanimity under all circumstances of pleasure or pain, or loss or gain, is what is known as History.

Animal versus man

Running towards pleasures and fleeing from pain is characteristic of animality. An animal will rush towards you when you show it the green grass in your hand but it will run away from you when you show it the cane in your hand. Thus, attraction to what appears to be good and repulsion from what appears to be bad is the nature of animals. But man should be prepared to confront both with equanimity, because in this worldly life these pairs of opposites always go together. No one can separate pain from pleasure, sorrow from joy, or loss from gain, since they are inextricably intertwined. We can never find anywhere unadulterated pleasure or pain separate from each other. The fruit of pain is pleasure and *vice-versa*. When a son is born, the father

dies, he becomes depressed with sorrow. Thus the same son is the cause of both joy and sorrow to the father. Birth and death are the root cause for joy and sorrow. But, for whom are these births and deaths? Death is for that which is born, and birth is for that which has died. If there is no birth, there is no death. This body is the root cause for birth and death as well as for "Ahamkara" and "Mamakara" (the feelings of "I" and "Mine"). Only because the father had seen and experienced the form of his son, he is afflicted when that form of his son is taken away from him. The very same "father" had never wept for that very same son, before the latter was born in that form.

Don't forget your source

Today we are fascinated only by the form. We are being tormented by this transient form which is but a reflection. We are to take cognisance not of the form but of our divine source. Atma (Self) is our source, which is also called "Adhyatma", because it is the Adi+Atma, i.e., the Atma which is Adi (the beginning or source). Hence we should get back to our source. Then alone can we experience total (unalloyed) bliss.

If you bring a fish and keep it in a gold vessel studded with all the nine precious gems, it will not at all feel happy. On the contrary, it will struggle restlessly to get back to its source, namely, water. So also, we have strayed away from Atma, our source. Having been enticed by the worldly pleasures like wealth, gold, vehicles and other properties, we are forgetting our very source. When we deeply ponder over this matter, the fish seems to be more intelligent than man. Why? Because that fish has not forgotten its source, while man who, despite all his education, intelligence, culture and sophistication, has forgotten his source.

Our bodies are like vessels. Whatever changes the vessels may undergo, our source will never change. For example, a silver plate, a silver tumbler and a silver box—the names and forms of these three articles are different. The ways in which they are made use of will also be different. But when any one of these three articles is melted, what remains is silver alone. In other words, in spite of the change in the names and forms of the articles, there is no change in the silver which is the common substratum of all of them. Similarly whatever names and forms we may assume, the common substratum of all these forms will continue to be the same Atma which is changeless. Always remembering this fact is what is called "Spirituality".

Reduce your desires

Sacrificing your ego is Satwic (pure and noble), while sacrificing any animal is Tamasic (impure and ignoble). Today you need to enter into the Satwic life and sublimate your human nature into divine nature. This, indeed, is the primary goal of your life's journey. Every man undertakes the usual pilgrimages and other routine good activities like charity etc., but all these will not save him from worries, until and unless he gives up—Ahamkara and Mamakara i.e., "I" and 'Mine'.

A rich man bundled up all the necessary luggage in his bed-holder and started on a pilgrimage. He visited Kasi (Benares), Prayaga, Haridwar, etc. Although tired with day-long

sight) of beautiful images of Gods and Goddesses and to bathe in the sacred waters of holy rivers. He was happy that by these "religious" activities his sins were being washed away. However, when he investigated into the reason for his not getting sleep during nights, he found that there were lots of bugs in his bedding. He should get rid of those bugs. Then only he can have sound sleep. In the same manner, in our bedstead called the body there are any number of bugs, namely, endless desires of various types. As long as these desires are there, one cannot escape from miseries wherever one might go. One should, therefore, reduce one's desires.

Students of today are the victims of several kinds of desires. No sooner does a student step into the college than he thinks of getting his degree immediately and going abroad for higher studies. You should not give room to such fanciful desires which will sap your mental powers. During your stay in the college, concentrate wholeheartedly on your studies. Don't entertain all sorts of unrealistic and imaginary aspirations. What is supremely important is the present.

My life is My message

Whenever undesirable feelings like anger, hatred, jealousy etc., raise their ugly heads in you, crush them down forthwith. For instance, when somebody criticises or abuses you, you will get angry immediately. But you should not react to such things on the spur of the moment. You must coolly reflect thus: "Am I having in me the defects which he has pointed out? In case these defects are in me, will it not be a mistake on my part to criticise or abuse him in retaliation? Suppose there are no defects at all in me; then why should I get angry?" When you reflect like this, your anger will leave you at once and you will become calm and cool.

Students! I am an ideal example in this respect. That is why I say, "My Life is My Message". Many will be criticising Me, while many others will be praising Me. But I am neither depressed by their criticism nor elated by their praise. Why?—Because, if some people mention about whatever qualities are actually in Me, I need not pay any attention to them; if anyone attributes to Me what is factually not in Me, I need not be worried about it. For instance, if some one calls Me "Butta Thala Sai Baba" (i.e., Sai Baba with a basket-like crown of hair), I should by all means accept their remark, because I have such a bushy hair on My head. On the contrary if any body accosts Me as "Batta Thala Sai Baba" (i.e. bald-headed Sai Baba), why should I accept it? I have no bald-head. So if defects which I do not have are pointed out directly even in My very presence, I do not accept them and hence I am not upset by them. That is the right "determination", indicating self-confidence. It is not good for you to be either elated or dejected by others remarks, without having confidence in yourself. So, first and foremost, you should develop self-confidence.

I am a man; I am not an animal

Students! If any body asks you, "Who are you?" You will reply, "I am a man". This is only a half-truth. What is the other half of the truth? It is: "I am not an animal". Thus, the full truth is: "I am a man; I am not an animal". When you recognise the second half of the truth that you are not an animal, you will not give room to any bestial qualities in you.

heart, you will turn out to be ideal persons in this world. All histories are sacred-whether they pertain to Bharat, Islam or Christian. It is in their followers that you find all sorts of omissions and commissions. They are full of animality. That is why the hatred between one religion and another is ever on the increase. However, there is nothing wrong with the religions per se. All religions have preached good things only. Men should recognise this fact and conduct themselves accordingly. What is wrong with religions, if only your minds are good? Good and bad are creations of your mind only.

From animality to Divinity

You should not be misguided by the worldly and superficial meanings, and forget the inner meanings. This is the crux of spirituality. The waywardness of your mind prevails in the gross state of wakefulness as well as in the subtle state of dreaming. How can you change such a fickle mind? If you keep away from animality during waking state, then animality will not enter even in your dreams.

Students (Embodiments of Love)! In the first instance, try to understand correctly the meaning of spirituality. You should transform your nature from human to divine. You must direct your attention to God. Nandi could become Easwara, only because it turned its attention to God. Similarly, Hanuman, the monkey, and Garuda, the bird became dear to the Lord Therefore, if you get rid of your "Pashutwa" (animality), you will become "Pashupati" (the Lord of all beings).

Control anger and hatred

You should not become a victim of the feelings of anger, hatred, ego or pride which may arise in you. When such feelings arise in you, sit silently for a few minutes. Instead of doing so, you must not give vent to your anger by scolding or beating others as you like. How to put this into practice? As soon as you get angry, you should immediately leave that place and go out into the open and quietly walk a furlong. Then your anger will disappear. An easier method than this is to stand before a mirror and look into your own angry face. You will dislike your own face and look upon it with disgust or aversion. Then try to laugh heartily and your anger will leave you. If you find it difficult even to do this, go into your bathroom and turn the water tap on. To the accompaniment of the tune of the sound created by the water flowing from the tap, begin to sing a good song. Then your anger will certainly disappear. Or else, drink a glass of cold water. Like this, you have to seek ways and means of regaining a calm and peaceful mood. Instead of doing so, if you allow your anger to grow, restlessness will also grow along with that anger, depriving you of peace of mind. You should never give tit for tat, or word for word.

Talk less

The less you talk, the more will become your mental power. With the increase in your mental capacity, there will be increase in your power of discrimination too. Consequently, you will give up "individual discrimination" and resort to "fundamental discrimination". Because of this, you will begin to consider the good of the world at large rather than your own individual welfare. You must cultivate such broad feelings from this young age itself.

Practical knowledge

What is the reason for the students of Bharat taking to wrong paths and becoming victims of unrest? They are not making any effort to understand matters in the proper perspective and to act accordingly. One should try to understand everything thoroughly, and not rush forward blindly into all matters. Then only you will gain “practical knowledge” and that will guide you along the desirable and sacred path. You will find guide posts here and there on the roadside, to indicate which path you should take to reach any particular place. The ups and downs in the path can be experienced only by those who tread the path, but not by the guide post. Most of the books to-day are like the guide posts. However, you must not be like mere guide posts. You should actually practise and get the needed experience.

Expand your love

Students! You can gain all things through love alone. Without this love, you cannot obtain anything. Love can win over even the strongest of enemies. True love is desireless and natural. It is based on the Atmic relationship. A small example for such love: a mother is walking along the street, carrying her young baby. If you happen to be walking behind them, that child will smile on seeing you, and naturally you will also smile at the child. Who is that child and who are you? Although there is no relationship whatsoever between the two of you, the child is able to make you smile. What a profound bliss would you experience in such love! If you weep, you have to weep alone. But if you laugh, others too will laugh. It is such love and bliss that will make you one with God. Therefore expand your love and thereby experience expanded bliss.

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium at Brindavan, on 24-5-1992

GURUDEV VANI:

SUMMER SHOWERS IN BRINDAVAN

From Knowledge to Wisdom

*Not one in a hundred among today's students
Cares to study the prescribed texts.
They are anxious only to secure a pass
Modern education has become a farce.*

“Vidyaa dadaati Vinayam” Education confers humility. Humility does not mean merely an external show of respect. The true meaning of humility is the absence of a feeling of egoism and the pride of possession (Ahamkara and Mamakara). Education should aim at inculcating such an attitude among students. Every man should cultivate such feelings of egolessness and detachment and lead his life on this basis.

(declared the Lord in the Gita). "I am the embodiment of spiritual know ledge", observed Krishna in the Gita. Pursuing spiritual studies, the ancient sages realised spiritual truths and divinised their lives. The greatness and glory of Bharat are based on its spiritual heritage. The true wealth of Bharat consists in its spirituality. If spirituality declines in this land, the nation will go to seed.

Together with this spirituality it is essential to have morality. Morality means ethical behaviour. It is the supreme duty of students to demonstrate such conduct in their daily life. A characterless student can never enjoy peace or happiness.

Morality, thus, determines humanness and leads to spiritual illumination. Students should recognise this truth. It was for this reason that in ancient times the people of Bharat propagated constantly the value of morality and proclaimed the greatness of spirituality.

Students! "Through perseverance anything can be accomplished", is a well-known adage. For instance, goodness in a person is like a piece of burning charcoal. However, the fire in it is covered by the ashes of worldly desires. When the ashes are removed by sadhana (spiritual practice) the fire of goodness is revealed. Without this sadhana, the goodness will not be manifest. In fact, in every man, goodness is shining within as an effulgent light. But this remains invisible because it is enveloped in a cloak of worldly attachments.

"Vijnana" and "prajnana"

Science and technology are making rapid strides today. But along with scientific knowledge, ignorance is also growing *pari passu*. "Vijnana" means light. Where there is light there can be no darkness. So, where there is "Vijnana" there is no room for ignorance. But today we notice that everywhere, every moment ignorance is apparent. This means that the light of "Vijnana" (scientific knowledge) is not shining brightly enough. If we had the full light of "Vijnana", there would be no sign of ignorance at all. It is clear, therefore, that the light of "Vijnana" (science) today is not comparable to the light of "Prajnana" (the light of complete awareness). "Vijnana" is a form of ignorance. It is obvious, therefore, that more than knowledge, what is essential is the refinement of human behaviour and conduct ("Samskara"). Sacrifice and charity are more important than wealth or position. Hence, for every individual, practical knowledge of the world is more essential than mere position or authority (adhikaram). The first prerequisite for this is the promotion of human values.

Human values come first

Because of the absence of human values, it has been impossible to demonstrate the value of human existence. Man, therefore, has to start with the cultivation of human value. These human values can be developed only by spiritual practices and by no other means. Only when a seed is planted in the soil and watered can it sprout and grow from a sapling into a big tree.

But if the seed is kept in a tin and watered, it will only rot. Likewise, human values, only when they are implanted in a heart that is sacred and spiritual and nurtured there, will they

selfish concerns. His love is confined to himself and his nearest kith and kin. He does not realise that his welfare and the welfare of his family are dependent on the well-being of the society. This inter-relationship should be grasped by students. They should take a firm resolve to eschew selfishness and self-interest and dedicate themselves to the service of society. When the society fares well, the nation also will be prosperous. Students should realise the integral unity of their individual well-being and the well-being of the society and the nation.

Man aspires for a fruit that is ripe and sweet. Whatever the quality of the seed, if the fruit is unripe it will not be enjoyable. No one likes a tasteless fruit. Likewise, society will shun an individual who lacks a social consciousness. A student who seeks to earn the respect and regard of society should conduct himself properly. He should be a person of integrity. Spirituality should be manifested in his behaviour. He should set an example to others. Most students today are lacking in such idealism.

Students tend to have narrow ideas and petty objectives. They have no conception of human values. Whatever studies one may pursue or position one may occupy, one must cherish human values.

Education and life

As a youth, one tends to be hot blooded and conceited. Puffed up with pride, he treats others as men of straw. Most students today are immersed in trivial chatter and meaningless pastimes. Sacred and ennobling ideas have no appeal for them. In this situation, when they enter on their studies, they develop arrogance and ostentation and get into evil ways. They are filled with bad thoughts, bad feelings and indulge in bad actions. In the process the primary purpose of education is forgotten. Education is regarded as an exercise in getting acquainted with books. He forgets that the aim of education is to understand the purpose of life. He relies on the strength of body, wealth, position and scholarship and forgets that true strength is derived from Righteousness and Divine Grace. Without the power of Righteousness and the grace of the Divine, all other forms of strength are of no use. The world has plenty of men with wealth, physical prowess, position and authority. Have any of these given them mental peace? No. They can only confer name and fame in the mundane sphere. They cannot confer peace or happiness. Recognising this truth, students should consider the royal road that will take them to the right goal in the future.

The foremost thing that should be considered by the students today is how to get rid of the bad thoughts and bad desires in which they are enveloped. They are the worst enemies of man. Man's best friends are good thoughts and good intentions and good behaviour.

The glory of Bharat

From ancient times it has been the greatness and glory of Bharat to proclaim to the world the message of human welfare and praying for the good of all mankind. The world acclaimed the fame of Bharat. In those days no other country enjoyed such peace and prosperity as Bharat. Bharat was esteemed as the spiritual leader among nations. She was regarded as the preceptor for

culture, develop a fascination for exotic manners and customs, and give up Bharat's own traditions and practices. It is good for the well being of every nation to adhere to its own traditions and practices. Students should learn to stand on their own legs and not depend on others. You must rely on the Divine and not become subservient to others in worldly matters. That alone is true freedom ("Swechha").

Freedom and responsibility

"Swechha" means knowledge of the Atma or Spirit. Self-control is true freedom. Spiritual bliss is freedom. Self-Realisation is freedom. "Swa"+ "Iccha"="Swechha". "Swechha" does not consist in living according to one's whims and fancies, indulging in the fleeting pleasures of the senses and wasting one's entire life in experiencing momentary joys. "Swechha" (freedom) means acting according to the dictates of one's conscience.

God, man and the cosmos

In his address earlier this morning, Dr. G. Venkataraman mentioned that the Divine, after Creation, did not keep all powers within Himself but gave them to mankind. This is true. God is the creator. He created everything in the Cosmos. But He did not retain within His hands the responsibilities relating to the Creation. He gave to human beings all capacities. But He laid down a condition relating to the use of these capacities. Men are free to live as they like. They can utilise all the material objects in creation. There can be no objection to this from anyone, not even from God. But, the Divine has declared that there is no escape from the consequences of one's action. This has to be properly understood.

For instance, in the morning's lecture a good illustration was given. The wind blows; rains fall. In the Dwapara age, Indra caused a heavy downpour. The people, who were affected by the deluge, prayed to the Lord: "Oh Lord! We and our cattle are suffering from this downpour. Save us from the rain." The Lord replied: "I cannot stop this rain. Whatever has to happen in Nature has to go on. But I have the right to protect you from its adverse effects. Rain comes according to the laws of Nature. These natural phenomena should go on in their respective ways. But, having regard to your devotion and prayers, I shall lift this hill and provide shelter to all of you. But I will not stop the rain." (The reference is to the lifting of the Govardhana Mountain by Sri Krishna).

Now, the wind has the power to blow out a lamp. The Divine has endowed the lamp with the power to shed light. The powers of the wind and of light are derived from God. But it is foolish for anyone to order the wind not to blow out the lamp. What one can do is to protect the lamp from the blast of wind by fixing a chimney. This is within human capacity.

Action and reaction

Through these examples you should learn how to regulate the forces of Nature and not seek to go against natural laws. It follows that man has the freedom to enjoy the things provided by the Creator. But man should exercise his discrimination to determine what are beneficial for him and what are not fit to be used. Because all things are available, one should not use them as he

avoid these consequences. If you are prepared to face the consequences, you can act as you want. What is happening, however, is enjoyment of something with relish and later bemoaning the adverse after-effects. This is a mark of mental weakness.

Nature (Prakriti) is like a mirror. It reflects your action. Standing before a mirror, you offer a namaskar to it. The image in the mirror reflects your actions. If you attempt to hit the image, the reflection will hit back. Basing on this law of action and reaction, the Vedanta declared: "Yadbhavam Tad-bhavati." ("Whatever your thought, that you become").

Hence, in the realm of natural phenomena, whatever actions you do will be followed by consequences which are inescapable, sometime or other.

Discrimination

Students! As human beings, you have to ascertain by the use of your intelligence and discriminating power (Vijnana) what are the actions that are proper and what are to be avoided. Whatever appears to be good, you better do it. But, if, knowing that something is wrong, you do it, you can never escape from its consequences. The Lord created the Cosmos and offered it to mankind. Consequently, the responsibility for properly utilising all objects in the world rests on humanity and not on the Lord. If men use things in the right way and benefit from them, they will experience happiness. If you misuse them or put them to wrong uses, you will have to bear the troubles resulting there from. This is the lesson to be learnt through education ("Vidya").

What is the meaning of "Vidya"? It means "jnana" (or knowledge). Is it worldly knowledge or spiritual knowledge? Is it experience of the external or the internal? The meaning of knowledge will vary according to whether it relates to the external or the internal. Students should enquire into both of these. After such enquiry, they should try to reconcile both of them in practice.

Do as you would be done by

The divinity present in man is present everywhere. It is not limited to man. It is common to all living creatures. You should realise that, if what is done by others causes pain to you, similar action by you will cause similar pain to others. If you desire others to show respect towards you, show that respect to others first yourself. It is not possible for you to win the esteem of others without your showing the same feeling towards them.

The world is governed by three principles: Reaction, Reflection and Resound. Hence you should see that your actions, your vision and your words are right. For every man, humility and reverence are valuable ornaments. Humility is the hall-mark of right education. Humility is lost when men are filled with self-pride, or discontentment. Humility should be observed in all circumstances. It should be manifested from the heart. Egoism is an acquisition from outside. The arrogance of knowledge is an acquired vice. In young persons, it is destructive of human values.

Students! Remember that adolescence is an intermediate stage in one's life. It comes in the middle and passes off quickly. In the brief period that it lasts, It appears glamorous but only for a fleeting moment. Hence, one should be very careful how this period in one's life is used. Adi Sankara declared "There is pain at birth. Old age is painful. Therefore, be vigilant always." All relationships and all possessions are temporary. One should not get deluded by them. All things pass away in due course. Only the Divine abides forever. Only the present matters, because both the past and future are in the present. Today's sapling has come out of yesterday's seed and is the parent of the tree into which it will grow. Don't worry about the future or brood over the past. Make good use of the present. Then life will be filled with joy. Be happy. That will lead you to union with God.

In the railway journey of life, students are like long-distance passengers. They should not burden themselves with too many desires. Reasonable aspirations to achieve distinction in one or other field are legitimate. But there should be a limit to such desires. Insatiable desires result in disappointments which cause mental disability. Man forfeits peace largely because of the desire to amass and hoard wealth. As birds and animals have no such tendencies, they lead a freer and more contented life.

Sacrifice and sharing

Students! You are entitled to become masters of Nature. Do not become its bond-slaves. Make faith in God the breath of your life. Realise that you have to share with others whatever you acquire by way of knowledge or wealth. It was the spirit of sacrifice and sharing which made Bharat famous in the past. Today the spirit of sacrifice has given place to selfish enjoyment. This has become a cause of disease.

The truly educated person is one who uses his knowledge for the good of others. He is entitled to be called a jnani (a man of wisdom). Knowledge which is used for sense-enjoyment or for the satisfaction of worldly desires is not Jnana (wisdom).

Students! Become messengers of peace and security for the world. Prepare yourselves to make sacrifices for the world rather than to derive personal benefits from it. Derive joy from renunciation and not from sensuous pleasures.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with an exhortation to the students to make proper use of the Summer Course and to lead exemplary lives. Swami sang the bhajan, "*Prema muditha manase kaho!*")

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium at Brindavan, on 22-5-1992

Cause of Grief

well as its immediate precursors: affection and hate. These two are the results of the intellect considering some things and conditions as beneficial, and some other things and conditions as not. This is a delusion, this idea of beneficence and malevolence. Still you get attached to objects that are considered beneficial, and you start hating the others. But, from the highest point of view, there is neither. The distinction is just meaningless. There is no two at all. How can there be good and bad, then? To see two where there is only one, that is delusion or ignorance. The ignorance that plunged Arjuna into grief was of this nature—seeing many, when there is only ONE.

—Baba

Work is Worship: Duty is God

Work is worship: duty is God

I had an occasion to watch a group of Seva Dal workers from North India engaged in seva during Swami's 56th Birthday Celebration. They belonged to different regions of Northeast India, but had become one in spirit. Harmony and joy pervaded. They were busy at their job with devotion and dedication. What made them so cheerful when they were only plucking grass and engaged in work away from the Nilayam itself? They said that it was *Sai Seva*, *Sai Puja*. This set me thinking on what Baba has told us so often that Work is Worship and Duty is God.

Any work is transformed into worship when it is done with devotion, and an attitude of dedication and reverence. When we go to a temple, we are already tuned to a worshipful attitude because that is what is expected of us there. They are places of worship. So, we associate worship only with temples, mosques, churches. But in these places set apart for worship of God, we do not do any work. In fact work is taboo. Men work for a living, women work in the kitchen, peasants work in the fields; labourers work in the factories. Baba wants that every type of work by everyone should be carried out as if we are worshipping God with that work.

How to transform work into worship

How can we transform work into worship? Is it possible to pluck grass and feel that you are worshipping God thereby? Worship involves devotion and dedication, born out of love for whatever we are doing. A dedicated worker is one who is in love with whatever he is doing. In fact, even devotion to God means that we love Him. That is why Baba asks us to love Him as a friend and not place Him on a pedestal. Today our worship in the temple or elsewhere is not suffused with love. Most often it is based on greed or fear or a desire to conform to custom. People find it easier to love God than loving the work of plucking grass. For, the latter demands from us an awareness, sincerity and a high degree of sensitivity.

The lesson taught by grass

Let us try to understand something more about grass. "O! Why worry about grass? It is such a lowly creature" we declare. But, just consider, who planted the grass. It grows on its own. As

blades, and the whole field is a thick carpet of green. The grass bears flowers and they become seeds; in due course, the grass withers away, having fulfilled itself. The fulfillment of the grass is to ensure that the species continues to live on. When it comes into existence it fulfills itself soon and then disappears to appear again. So, what is lowly about it? It is only our attitude arising out of our ignorance of its fascinating self-fulfillment life story. When we look at the world around us, we find that the story is the same about all of nature. The mango destroys itself, to become a sapling which in due course yields innumerable fruits which cater to our tongue. Mirdad, the One who came to teach the Companions of the Ark said, "In doing its work, the world does your work, you do the world's work also."

Everything is sat-chit-ananda

To transform work into worship, believe that there is no work which is 'high' and no work which is 'low'. All work is prompted, promoted and consummated by the One Divine. Our work is an expression of His Will. How can He express Himself more or less? "That is Full, This is Full"; Baba has declared... "The Universe is but One, though you may be able to distinguish stars and planets, rock, tree and bird in it. Whatever there is, *Sarvam Brahma mayam*, all is *Brahman*. All of it is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, no more, no less." This truth must be not only intellectually understood, but emotionally felt. Then only can it be sublimated as worship.

We have read and heard the assertion that Truth is God, and Love is God, but Baba adds, "Duty is God". Duty is a task or work or job which has to be done. It is a term used for specific tasks which are assigned and definable. Clearing the grass was the duty assigned to the Seva Dal. They also had to do "n.d." that is to say "night duty", keeping watch at the Prasanthi Nilayam during the night. Cutting vegetables at the Canteen Kitchen which the lady members of the *Seva Dal* did, was the duty assigned to them. All these duties must be carried out reverentially, for they are God.

Worship picture as God; not vice-versa

Let us start with the familiar mode of worship of God. When we go to a temple, in order to establish relationship with Him through worship, we pray to God. We invoke the great source of Power, Knowledge and Wisdom that resides around us and also within us, God, through the Idol. Baba says that any kind of duty must be offered as worship to God, Baba says, "Worship the picture as God, not God as the picture." This also applies equally to work; worship Duty as the symbol of God. Just as you use the picture to adore God, do your Duty to adore Him and to recognise His Constant Presence. Let us sanctify the act of Duty with an awareness, a sensitivity, an attitude of love, reverence and joy. Baba says, "Before you experience the Divine in every being in the Universe and in every Cell and Atom, you have to experience it in yourselves. Each deed, word and thought must be charged with that Awareness." Then all work becomes an act of worship to Duty, whatever work is on hand, as God!

—*Dr. M.V.N. Murthy, From "The Greatest Adventure"*

Our Lord Sai Baba

From near and far we come, dear Lord,
To hear Your word of wisdom
With love in our hearts
We sit at Your Feet
To learn how to reach Your Kingdom.

Let go of the ego and submit our will
To our Lord who patiently waits.
We know what to do but cannot release
This world of its transient states.

But always remember, God is our friend
Who will never lead us astray.
He stays by our side to show us the way
He'll pick us up if we stumble and fall,
For our God is our refuge, God is our all.

—Barbara Parker

Vital Importance of Thought

'As a man thinketh, so is he'. And as Swami says: "As are his thoughts, so are his actions. As are the actions, so are the fruits thereof. The fruits determine the goal. It follows that man's destiny is determined by his *thoughts*." We will either progress towards the light, or descend into its negation, which is darkness, by our collective *thinking*. Thus every human being bears a responsibility for the future of our planet, and of mankind. Each of us either adds to the light or obscures it. We do this all the time, every hour of the day. This in itself is a most sobering thought.

Our thoughts create our individual auras, which in turn affect everyone and everything we approach. When Baba surveys the masses of devotees at darshan, this is what He sees I His own fantastic aura of love- wonderfully described by Dr. Baranowski transmutes and lessens those vivid and not always pleasant colours.

Both positive and negative thinking are questions of habit. As we all know, habits grow by their constant practice. This is where we have to be careful and ever on our guard. For human nature being what it is, it is easier to fall into habits prompted by the lower mind, which is centred on the self and its comforts, desires and preferences, than to train ourselves in the habits which our higher self aspires to.

People say they read 'thrillers' depicting violence, crime, murder, torture, horror, revenge and kindred negative emotions when they go to bed 'to take them out of themselves or their problems and worries'. But where are they taken to when they turn out the light? Very often to the confused lower astral regions, for the mind gravitates to those planes where the conscious thoughts have been dwelling. In my opinion, Television is greatly at fault for showing 'horror films' late at night. As for what are called 'video nasties'—which the authorities seem incapable of restricting or prosecuting—the less said the better—and this includes the people who indulge in them, and even let their children see them. It is essential to have beside reading of a spiritual or uplifting nature—preferably some of Swami's discourses— or to meditate, and visualise the Light suffusing and enfolding the planet. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, in the United States, reported that television violence definitely encourages similar behaviour in children of disadvantaged families.

The turning point for our planet has come, and it is a call to arms. If only we could broaden our mental horizons and always hold before us the stupendous fact that right thinking *can* change the world—even physically. Mass thought waves are so powerful that, misdirected, they can affect the weather, produce earthquakes, eruptions, floods and droughts. Conversely, when directed towards the light through right daily living and love-in-action in all things—which in itself constitutes a perpetual prayer by the ever present awareness that *all* life is *one*, and we are part of that one—deserts will eventually bloom through the gradual spiritualisation of matter. This is not an impossible dream. That is why the great Avatar has come in a triple Incarnation which will see mankind into the 22nd century!

What we think, and therefore generate in our auras and thought-forms, affects countless other people beside ourselves. In addition, the thought of a united group or mass of people is far more potent in effect than merely the sum total of its members when separate. Therefore the importance of group work is incalculable at this time.

Let us experiment by trying to make an analysis of our daily thoughts as we think them. This should, if we are honest, give us some idea whether we are generally positive or negative in our reactions to people, things and events. When we instinctively recoil from news of violence and brutality, do not hate, but instead send out light and love to both the victims *and* the perpetrators.

It is a most salutary, indeed shaming thought, that of the myriad kinds of animal life of all descriptions on this planet, it is *only* Homo sapiens which kills and destroys its *own species*. No other creature does that—only Man.

The avatar's assurance

The Avatar has said, "The calamity that has befallen mankind will be averted. I shall not fail. It is not in the nature of Avatars to fail." And He advises us to "Sow in the field of your heart the seeds of *good thoughts*, charged with humility; irrigate it with the waters of *love*; protect the growing crop with the pesticide called *courage*, feed the crop with the fertiliser, *Concentration*;

that revelation comes, you were always He, though you did not know it so far."

May we each of us determine to play our part to the full. Even our hatred of the wrongdoer will be quenched by compassion when we realise that we are all droplets of water in the Ocean of Divinity—but that some droplets have been, as it were, caught in an oil slick.

—*Peggy Mason*

Be silent yourself; that will induce silence in others. Do not fall into the habit of shouting, talking long and loud. Reduce contacts to the minimum. Carry with you an atmosphere of quiet contemplation, wherever you happen to be. There are some who live in a perpetual hullabaloo, in a tornado of noise. Whether they are in an exhibition or a fair or in a hotel, or a temple or the Prasanthi Nilayam, they wag their tongues and will not stop. These will not proceed on the Godward road.

—**Baba**

Because of Thee

No vision have I had
No blessed voice
No love confirming dream
No sacred ash.

No footsteps in my room
No amrit sweet
No token from thy hand
No silver ring.

And yet because of Thee
My Dearest Thou
Love Joy and Peace
Flame within my heart
And my whole being
Breathless, knows Thy worth.

The Waiting Game

Within us our Beloved

And waits,
While we –
Fret or frolic,
Dance and dally,
Shed our rears
Suffer much

He waits,
All knowing, and –
(I have not any doubt)
Sometimes much amused.

—Miriam Jordan (from "Facets", U. K.)

A LETTER FROM ST. PETERSBURG

The Sai Message in Russia

Serge! Neapolitansky, in a letter written on behalf of the Sathya Sai Centre of St. Petersburg (former Leningrad), and published in the summer '92 number of the Quarterly Magazine edited by Peggy Mason (London), says:

Beloved brothers and sisters, OM SAI RAM. With Baba's grace and through His devotees the flow of Divine Love is spreading rapidly in our city. The purity, might and depth of Baba's sayings attract, inspire and unite many people. Sri Sathya Sai is continuously showering us with His miracles. Many hearts and minds are united by these marvellous manifestations of Baba's Love. We made a one-hour radio programme of Sai's teaching and activity so Sai's voice sounded all over Russia. After the programme our Centre received many letters from all over the country, and what was so marvellous was that the programme was transmitted on His Birthday!

Several weeks later this programme was on the air again... This brought a visit from TV producers who heard the programme 'by chance'. They were so amazed by the personality of Baba that they decided to make a series of programmes about Him. Their programme is very prestigious, all Russia watches it (it is called 'The Fifth Wheel').

"His wisdom is healing RUSSIA"

Not long ago a well-known St. Petersburg lady visited us. Baba came to her in a dream and asked her to visit our Centre. When she saw His image over the altar she exclaimed in ecstasy 'It was He who came to me in my dream I' Yes, Sathya Sai is coming to Russia. The flow of His Love is filling this country. Aurobindo and Theosophists predicted Sathya Sai's mission; the Great Russian artist Roerich, his wife and sons, who lived in India but are greatly revered in

for Baba's garden of Love. His wisdom is healing Russia. Only love can save the world, only love.

The Sai movement includes all spiritual cultures, all human values, all religious systems. Ideas of Sathya Sai have become the centre uniting different spiritual paths, and this is another marvel. Buddhists, Christians, Hindus—even the leaders of Petersburg Muslims—expressed their wish to take part in the Inter-Faith Movement initiated by Sathya Sai. Truly, 'there is only one religion, the religion of Love: only one language, the language of the heart.' It is a joy to see people who come to Sai meetings. They are so different—professors and workers, artists, producers, philosophers, musicians... What unites them is the thirst for knowledge of Sai Baba, and all of them join in spiritual practice.

EHV seminar for teachers

In March a 2-day Seminar took place in St. Petersburg. Co-ordinators from Malaysia and Holland took part in it. About 100 teachers attended. We think this seminar will become a good foundation for further EHV activity.

There are two aspects of Seva we are involved in: educational activity and charitable activity. Anything donated to the cause is distributed among schools, orphanages, children's homes, invalids, and large families... The money we received from our British friends was spent on beautiful children's books which we sent to the children of Chernobyl. We are taking part in distribution of food coming through Ananda Marg (a Christian confession). They asked us to help and we are very happy to do so.

This is a very strange time here. The prices have soared up to what we thought was a limit, but after April 1st the prices will go up once again because of the increased price of fuel and petrol. 80% of the people are living below the poverty line. But people still have hope. The activity of enterprises is growing.

We are taking part in raising people's spiritual potential... so we give lectures, organise seminars and study groups as well as the charitable work. Recently we organised lecture programmes at the Association of Journalists, and on television, and at the Astrological Association, as well as talks in other Russian towns. We are training people to organise and deliver spiritual lectures at different seminars and programmes.

Though the situation in this country is very, very difficult in every respect, still our Lord makes it possible to give people the eternal spiritual knowledge which dissolves the veil of ignorance, the cause of all suffering. Our task is to publish as many of Babas own books as possible.

We send our salutations and hope this letter finds you in high spirits.

Training of Nurses of Sai Maha Vaidyalaya

The immediate establishment of facilities for the training of nursing personnel for Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences at Prasanthigram was announced by Bhagavan Baba on July 14th, after delivering His "Gurupournima" discourse to a vast gathering in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The announcement was greeted with rapturous cheers.

Bhagavan said: "Embodiments of Divine Love! Bharat is not lacking in experienced doctors and specialists in every field. Many of them have gone abroad, acquired the latest knowledge in medicine and surgery and established a reputation for themselves. Indeed, very few people possess the amount of fortitude and determination which Bharatiyas are capable of. Our doctors take a good deal of trouble for the care of the patients. Even in foreign countries, a very large number of Indians are rendering medical service. There is a very well known saying in Andhra Pradesh, "The jewels are ours; the display is yours." Much of the medical service abroad is rendered by Indian doctors. But, others get much of the credit.

Why go abroad?

Likewise, in India also, there are any number of highly capable doctors. But, people do not value what is very near to them. They are attracted by what is distant. Those who are near to Swami all the 24 hours do not recognise His value so much. The value is realised only when one is away from Swami. For instance, there is a lighthouse. The light is visible afar but not to those under it. Similarly there are among Bharatiyas many dedicated and capable persons. We do not lack exceptionally able persons. Despite the fact that we have so many able and competent persons, there are few who give them encouragement and recognition. It is for this reason that a large number of doctors, nurses and other Para-medical personnel go abroad. They are not given adequate opportunities here. Nor is that all. They are not also given the positions and authority commensurate with their abilities. Even the status that is appropriate to them is not accorded. Juniors are promoted as seniors and seniors are demoted as juniors. Because of this treatment many prefer to go abroad.

Why should we allow such able and competent men to leave our country? Realising that we should make use of their services here itself, Swami has inspired many highly eminent doctors to serve in our hospital.

Dedication and devotion

Although Dr. Venugopal appears diminutive in size, very few people can understand the magnitude of his skills and capabilities. Here is another doctor, a short person, Babadas. Both of them work ceaselessly day and night untiringly.

Need for nurses

When we have such highly capable and dedicated doctors, Swami willed that there should be a sufficient number of trained nursing personnel and therefore training facilities for nursing

taking care of the patients after the operations. It is easy to slice vegetables. But, to prepare a tasty dish out of that is very difficult. This task of “cooking” is done by the nurses. If there is no good nursing, even the operation may be a failure. Therefore, in order to train a good band of nursing personnel, training facilities are being provided. All those who are pure-hearted and filled with a spirit of service, may approach Dr. Safaya for undergoing training to serve in the hospital. They need not incur any expense. The entire training is free Elsewhere, if people want to undergo such training, they have to pay all kinds of fees. Here nothing will be charged. Everything will be provided free. Only, we want persons with pure hearts to join the course.

Relief to the poor

Today we have quite a large number of people working in our hospital. But, there is more work to be done because of the ever-growing number of patients seeking relief. Hence, we need many more nursing personnel. We are asking for nurses not for Swami's sake but for the sake of the nation. There is a Sanskrit saying: "Jananee janmabhoomischa swargaadapi gareeyasi". The mother and the Motherland are greater than Heaven itself. Hence, such sacred activities must be spread all over the country. It is not easy to make available such facilities for people in remote and isolated villages. Because in this village this magnificent hospital has been established, it has been possible to provide relief to a very large number of poor villagers. Many are not aware of the genesis of this Institution. What counts is only action and not advertisement. When a heart operation is performed, the patient has generally to stay in the hospital for at least a month. It is no exaggeration to state with reference to our hospital that within a day after the operation, the patient starts eating on his bed the very next morning. On the third day, he starts moving about. On, the 5th day, the sutures are removed. On the 7th day, the patients are discharged fully recovered.

An example to the world

Our students are aware of the case of Prof. Radhasawmi. He is here in the audience. He was not aware at all that he was suffering from heart trouble. It is a mystery how he was carrying on his duties. But the moment he was examined it was found that an immediate heart operation was necessary. Complicated operation had to be carried out. Today he is very much fit for this work and extremely happy. Health is the greatest blessing for anyone. If a person is in good health, he can accomplish anything. There are now a very large number of people enjoying good health after undergoing operation in the hospital.

What is happening in the hospital is not for today or tomorrow. It is an example to the whole world.

People should not suffer from ailments of any kind. Regard this hospital as yours. It is not mine. This exists for your sake. Anyone is free to come to the hospital and seek relief and lead an ideal life thereafter. This is my benediction on all of you.

President Calls for Restoration of Values

Declaring that as the President of India, elected by the people, he considered himself the "first servant" of the nation, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma said that he had come to Prasanthi Nilayam soon after assuming office to receive the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sol Baba.

Dr. Sharma, who flew from Tirupati to Prasanthi Nilayam on July 28th, addressed a vast gathering of students and teachers of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning as well as devotees from many countries, in the Poornachandra Auditorium on July 28. It was a memorable event in many ways. It was the first public function in which President Sharma participated after his inauguration. The presence of Bhagavan Baba and the sacred atmosphere of Prasanthi Nilayam invested the event with a unique sacredness. Bhagavan's discourse, which came after the President's address, envisaged a brighter future for the country because of "good men " at the helm of the nation.

The meeting began with a Vedic invocation by the students of the Institute.

Sri K. Chakravarthy, Registrar of the Institute, extending a cordial welcome to the President, said: "That you have come to Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of peace, from where the love, and illumination of Bhagavan radiates all over the world, as soon as you have assumed the highest office in this country, is a matter of immense satisfaction to all lovers of peace and seekers of illumination. You are no stranger to Prasanthi Nilayam, having been a devotee of Bhagavan, or to the state of Andhra Pradesh, having been a Governor. Offices of great responsibility have not diminished your simplicity even a little. Your catholicity of outlook and tolerance of all beliefs, religions and persuasions make you the visible symbol of the enlightened leadership of Bharat. We all prey to Swami to shower His Blessings on you, so that your presidency is marked by peace, harmony and welfare for all fellow-human beings. Vijaya Sai, a student of the Institute, next speaking, said that the nation had honoured itself by electing as President one who was a great devotee of God and a sadhaka. He said that through the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Bhagavan Baba was preparing ideal students to serve the nation in various fields.

President's address

The Registrar then invited the President to address the gathering and deliver his message. The President said:

Revered Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, fellow devotees of Bhagavan Baba and students, whom I consider the future of India! I really came here to seek Bhagavan's blessings because, after assuming office. I thought that, when I was chosen as the President I had been chosen by the people of India as the first servant of India. Naturally, as the first servant my desire is that I may be able to

humanity because India constitutes a very significant part of the world.

We have got so much of suffering and discard at this time and so much has got to be done that the blessings (of the Divine) are needed so that we may be able to have faith in ourselves As Vivekananda said: "Faith in yourselves, Faith in the country and Faith in God—this is the secret of greatness." All this is possible only if we have Divine Grace, which I have come to seek from Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

This is my first public function. I had not thought that I would be called upon to speak, because, in His presence, who am I to guide you or tell you? However, His command must be obeyed and I am standing here abiding by that command

So far as Bhagavan Baba is concerned some people have objected to my calling Him Bhagavan, but I find authority for it in Srimad Bhagavad Gita itself. "Yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya glanir bhavati Bhaarata, Abhyuthaanam adharmaasya thadaatmaanam srujaamyaham". ("Whenever there is a decline of Dharma and there is an upsurge of unrighteousness I incarnate, O! Bhaarata.")

Why avatars come

Today what we are witnessing in the world, and India in particular, is "Glaani" of Dharma. The true path has been forgotten, the path of Love, the path of respect for other human beings. There cannot be a greater instance of Glaani (decline) of Dharma than when nation is fighting nation and people are fighting people. We find in our own country people are fighting with each other. At such times, as Lord Krishna said, it is necessary for the appearance of personages who take people back to the essentials of Dharma. The Avatar comes to bring back people to Dharma. This Dharma is the Dharma of Love, respect for each other and working in the spirit of service. This is what Bhagavan Baba has been doing all the time and this is what our country needs.

Sciences and moral values

Here is your Institute, which is having various faculties of Science, Medicine and so forth. They are very important and I have absolutely no doubt in my mind that India is second to none in these studies. Our engineers are equal to engineers anywhere, our doctors are making their mark in the USA. World leaders have accepted that in Computer Software, our people are superior to people in most other countries. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visualised that our future depends on the development of science and technology. But he was always clear in his mind that science and technology alone will not do. We need ethical and moral values.

I told you that our engineers are comparable to anybody elsewhere. But why are we lagging behind? Is it not a fact that there is something lacking? That something is ethical and moral values. We had Bapu (Mahatma Gandhi) and others who believed in sacrifice and we were able to win freedom by the path of love, Ahimsa. It is something unique in the world. But what is happening today? We are not able to progress because corruption and casteism have entered into

the Rig Veda has said: "Ekaiva Maanushi Jati" ("There is only one caste of humanity").

I have referred in my speeches often to our achievements in the past in science and technology. We gave the world the basic instruments of science. We can feel proud that it was India that gave the world the numerical system in which the intrinsic value of a number is derived from the place where it is put. The value of Pi (used in geometry) is mentioned in the Vedas themselves as 22/7.

We cannot, however, stop with these achievements. The Rig Veda says that noble thoughts, noble ideas and knowledge should come from all parts of the world. The eternal quest for knowledge should continue.

After I was elected President, I made an extempore statement to the press in which I said that, like every other citizen of India, I yearn to see India as a land of peace, prosperity, harmony and social justice, making her own useful contribution to a better future for all mankind. These words of mine found sympathetic response from all countries. President Bush in his congratulatory letter quoted these words of mine.

The human family

I was very happy when in the Tirumala Temple yesterday the priests recited from the Atharva Veda the Prithvi Sukta. They recited the portion which I had quoted in Parliament in my inauguration address. In the Prithvi Sukta, there is a prayer addressed to Mother Earth, Prithvi, which says: "O! Mother, where people of different faiths and different persuasions live like a family." Five thousand years ago our ancestors thought of the whole of mankind inhabiting the earth as one family. What are we doing today? Have we any right to say that we are the inheritors of the Vedas?

Students! The seal of your University carries the emblems of various religions. This means you must respect all religions. When the Parsees came here, we embraced them as fellow human beings. Christianity came to India in 52 AD, much before it entered Europe. Those of you who are from Kerala may know the place where St. Thomas landed. India is a land of tolerance and understanding. In Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's commentary on the Quran, you find how Islam stands for equal respect for all religions. The Frontier Gandhi, Badshah Khan, who was with me in his last days when I was Governor of Maharashtra, used to tell me that he had not learnt secularism and Sarva Dharma Samabhava from Mahatma Gandhi but from the Quran itself.

You have the symbols of different religions on the seal of your Institute the cross, fire, etc. You must realise that these symbols are meaningful. Bhagavan wants you to cultivate the spirit of equal respect for all religions.

The message of santhi

In the ancient invocation to Santhi or peace, our ancestors prayed for peace everywhere in the universe. The prayer mentions: "Prithvi Santhi! Aapah Santhi!" There should be peace on

should be no star wars). Today we are talking about the environment. But the Santhi prayer said

"Vanaspathayah Santhi, Aushadayah Santhi" (Let there be peace in the Vegetable Kingdom and Herbal Kingdom). How can a country believing in such a prayer devastate its forests? Our trouble is that we chant Mantras and forget their implications. We pay reverence to the form but forget to practise the message.

Bhagavan—the real acharya

Before I conclude I would like to say that in Bhagavan you have got a real Acharya. The Taittiriya Upanishad has compared the Acharya to God. Acharya is a very meaningful word. Acharya is one who from his Acharana (conduct) makes others follow his teachings. Bhagavan Baba is able to impart discipline and inspire among the people the spirit of service by His example.

This is the first speech I am delivering as the first servant of India, and that too under Bhagavan's orders. I had not thought of speaking at all. Why waste your time when you have got the fountainhead of knowledge, wisdom and experience before you? We must see that every one of us fulfils his task. We cannot take refuge by considering what others are doing. You cannot say, "If the world is corrupt what will my being not corrupt do." If everybody thinks like that nothing will happen. Let us not bother about others. At least you should make your contribution to changing the world by following the right path, with the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. If we are able to follow His path India will achieve the peace and position which it deserves for the whole of humanity. I would like to quote Bapu: "I want India to be free so that when the need arises India may sacrifice everything for the sake of humanity." That is the message we can carry to the world. If it spreads throughout the world, the world will have peace, harmony and prosperity.

The meeting concluded with the singing of the National Anthem

AVATAR VANI:

SUMMER SHOWERS IN BRINDAVAN:

Perennial Message of the Ramayana

*Sweeter than sugar is Rama's name
Tastier than curds and
Much sweeter than honey,
Full of nectarine sweetness is Rama's name,
Chant ever and anon the name of Rama.*

Students!

The Ramayana depicts the triple qualities of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The relevance of the Ramayana is not confined to a particular time, place or circumstance. It is of universal significance for all times. Its relevance is not limited to India alone.

The Ramayana holds out Rama as an embodiment of Ideal qualities. As a son, friend, husband, master and ruler He was an ideal without a parallel. In the world one may be an ideal son, but not an ideal friend: one may be an ideal friend, but not an ideal brother. But Rama stands out unique as an embodiment of all ideal attributes.

Students should note an important aspect relating to the breaking of the bow of Siva at the court of Janaka. Though the bow was broken, the string connecting the two ends of the bow did not break at all, for the two ends of the bow stand for Sita and Rama—Prakriti and Purusha. In fact the bond between Rama and Sita, Paramatma and Prakriti is an unbreakable one. The Ramayana demonstrates the inseparable bond between Prakriti and Purusha.

The Ramayana has been divided into two sections: the Poorva Ramayana and the Uttara Ramayana. The Poorva Ramayana deals with the valorous deeds of Rama, his victory over indomitable heroes like Parasurama, Vali and Ravana. These events speak of the dauntless courage, the matchless valour and the immense physical and mental prowess of Sri Rama. The Uttara Ramayana (the latter half) is suffused with Karuna (compassion) and seeks to install the Rama Tattwa (The Rama Principle) in the hearts of the people.

Rama-the ideal

The Ramayana exemplifies the amity and harmony which should prevail among the members of a family. It extols the glory of ideal brotherhood, noble, friendship and the greatness of love and affection. Rama was an ideal ruler who ruled his people with due regard to their likes and dislikes, having their welfare as his primary concern. As a ruler Rama has no equals. He was a veritable mine of strength, virtue and love. Hence it is essential that every student should take Rama as an ideal to be emulated and derive happiness by practising the ideal of Sri Rama.

The first canto in the Ramayana is called Balakanda (the canto describing boyhood of Sri Rama). Sage Vishwamitra came to Dasaratha and sought the help of his two sons, Rama and Lakshmana, for protecting his Yaga (sacrifices). Rama and Lakshmana were fourteen years old when the Sage sought their help. When Dasaratha was hesitating to send his sons in view of their tender age, Vishwamitra remarked, "O! Dasaratha! Swayed by paternal affection, you have mistaken them to be mere mortals, of flesh and blood, whereas in fact they are Divine incarnations. Do not give vent to sadness. They are the embodiment of Divinity. Send your sons with me without any hesitation."

The three gunas

Rama, while going with the Sage, encountered three women of three different temperaments. The first woman he confronted was Tataka of tamasic temperament. The tamasic nature makes a person mistake truth for untruth and untruth for truth. It robs one of the

Vishwamitra's yagna. The two brothers saw to it that the yagna was performed without any obstruction. After the successful completion of the yagna Vishwamitra proceeded to Mithila, accompanied by Rama and Lakshmana. On the way Rama came to the hermitage of Sage Gautama. There he absolved Ahalya of the curse which had turned her into a stone. Ahalya might be deemed a woman of Rajasic temperament. After imparting moral advice to Ahalya, Rama went to Mithila with Vishwamitra.

It was in Mithila that Rama encountered Sita, representing the Satwic quality. Having killed Tataka of the tamasic temperament and redeemed Ahalya representing the Rajasic temperament, He accepted Sita, who represented the Satwic quality. The marriage of Sita and Rama is symbolic of the union between Prakriti and Paramatma. The citizens of Mithila greatly rejoiced hearing about the prospective marriage of Rama and Sita. (Swami recited in His own mellifluous voice a ballad in praise of the wedding of Rama and Sita).

One of the rites in the marriage ceremony in India is "Talambralu" the act of pouring rice on the head of the bridegroom by the bride. Since Janaka, the father of Sita, was immensely rich, he arranged for the pouring of pearls instead of rice. Sita held a palmful of pearls in her hand over Rama's head. The white pearls in the palms of Sita shone with reddish splendour as her palms were of reddish hue. When she poured the pearls on the white turban which Rama wore for the occasion, the pearls shone with the white hue of the turban. The pearls, rolling down the body of Sri Rama assumed a dark blue colour reflecting the bluish colour of Sri Rama. The pearls shinning with reddish hue in the hands of Sita are symbolic of the Rajoguna, conveying the message that one who is Rajasic in the company of Prakriti. The pearls shining with whitish splendour are symbolic of the Satwa guna, indicating the fact that one acquires the Satwic nature in the company of God. The nature of persons who belonged neither to Prakriti nor God will be tamasic persons like the colour of the pearls that rolled down from Rama's head. People of divine orientation shine with Satwic serenity and purity People with a worldly outlook display Rajasic quality while those who are neither worldly nor Godly are tamasic.

As Sri Rama was a king, His friends too were kings. Jambavan, the king of the forest, was a Satwic friend. He became a friend of Rama out of sheer love for Him. Sugriva, the king of the monkeys, was a Rajasic friend of Rama, who sought Rama's friendship for securing his help. It is out of desire for getting relief from his troubles and tribulations that he sought the help of Rama. Sugriva wanted his kingdom and wife to be restored to him. The third friend was Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana. He represents the Tamasic quality, as he belonged to a Rakshasa family.

Rama had three enemies, whose qualities represent the three gunas. The first enemy was Vali, a Satwic enemy; He was a Satwic enemy because, at the end, he acknowledged his mistakes and accepted the punishment meted out to him by Rama. Ravana was the second enemy, who harboured hatred for Rama. He refused to acknowledge his mistake and was responsible for the downfall of his country. He was a Rajasic enemy because a Rajasic enemy never acknowledges his mistakes. The third enemy, Kumbhakarna was a tamasic enemy. A

these three enemies.

The redeemer

Rama was the redeemer of the fallen "Patheeta-paavana". He redeemed and gave salvation to three characters in the Ramayana. They are Sabari, Guha and Jatayu. Sabari was a helpless and hapless old woman with no one to look after her. Her preceptor told her about Lord Rama. She was yearning for the arrival of Ramchandra whom she considered to be her saviour. She was deeply absorbed in the contemplation of Rama's name at all times and in all places. One day sage Matanga said to her, "O, Sabari, Lord Narayana has descended on the earth in the form of Rama. He is living in the garb of an ascetic. He will be soon arriving here, but I will not be alive at the time of his arrival. He is an embodiment of immaculate purity. Greet him and honour him with devotion." From that day, Sabari started preparing herself for the arrival of Sri Rama. Since she thought that Rama might ask her to give him something to eat, she would gather all sorts of fruits, and to satisfy herself that the fruits were sweet, she would taste them first and keep only the sweetest ones for her Lord. That was how Sabari transformed herself into a Sathwic devotee. Rama responded to her inmost prayers and Sabari in the end merged herself in Rama.

Guha, the forest chief, was another to be redeemed by Rama. Though he was a friend of Rama, his life as a forester was filled with wrongful acts, nevertheless, he never gave up contemplation of Lord Rama's name. Among the fallen, he belonged to the Rajasic category because of his worldly life. The third "patita" to be redeemed by Rama was Jatayu. He yearned to serve Rama and was eagerly waiting for the arrival of Rama from the day Rama entered the forest, as an ascetic. A great opportunity to serve Rama's cause presented itself to him. When he sighted Ravana carrying away Sita he fought to the bitter end to rescue Sita from Ravana. When he fell mortally wounded and succumbed to the injuries, Lord Rama performed the last rites for Jatayu, a service denied to his father Dasaratha. After crossing the sea of Moha (infatuation), Rama encountered in Lanka the three brothers representing the three qualities of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. He crowned Vibhishana of the serene temperament, King of Lanka, and destroyed Ravana and Kumbhakarna, who symbolised Rajasic and Tamasic qualities.

Thirteen qualities in man

Who was Dasaratha? Dasaratha was the emperor of Ayodhya. The word Dasaratha signifies the body endowed with the senses. These ten senses are five Karmandriyas and five jnanindriyas. Dasaratha is the chariot drawn by the ten senses. The three wives of Dasaratha represent the three qualities, Kaushalya symbolising Satwic quality, Sumitra, Rajasic quality and Kaikeyi, the tamasic quality.

The ten heads

Who was Ravana? Ravana is described as a demon with ten heads. These ten heads are the six vices, namely, desire, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and jealousy, Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (will) and Ahamkara (Ego). Since these ten are present in every human being, all men are Ravana indeed! Whoever beheads all these ten heads in fact becomes a Rama. It is

heads will go and he will merge in Rama.

Four brothers—four Vedas

Who are Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna? The four Vedas came in the form of the four brothers to the abode of Dasaratha and sported there. Rama was Rig Veda and Lakshmana, who closely followed Rama, was Yajur Veda. Bharata who always delighted in chanting Rama's name, was Sama Veda and Shatrughna, who obeyed the commands of the three brothers and surrendered himself completely to them, was Atharvana Veda. Hence the four brothers were the embodiments of the four Vedas.

Lord Rama was Pranava Itself (AUM). The three brothers are the syllables of 'A', 'U' and 'M' in Omkara. Lakshman was 'A', Bharata was 'U' and Shatrughna was 'Ma', and the Lord was the Pranava.

We can realise the sacredness of the Ramayana when we comprehend its inner significance, instead of being absorbed only in the external form of the narrative.

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium at Brindavan, on 25-5-1992

AVATAR VANI:

‘Bright Future for Bharat’—Baba

Hailing the advent of Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma as President and Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao as the Prime Minister of India as a happy augury for the nation, Bhagavan Baba envisaged a bright future for the country with prosperity and peace in the coming years. Bhagavan Baba was addressing the vast gathering of students, teachers and devotees from all countries on July 28th in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the occasion of the President's visit to Prasanthi Nilayam to receive the blessings of Bhagavan. Baba delivered His discourse after an Inspiring address by Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma (published separately). Bhagavan, in the course of His address, said:

Embodiments of Divine Love f

Love is the form of the Supreme (Brahmam). Love permeates Brahmam. Only when love is merged with love God can be attained. There is nothing greater than Love in the Cosmos. Love is sweeter than nectar. It is because men have forgotten this love that they have become a prey to all kinds of ills and lost peace of mind. Because men have lost the love of God and fear of sin they have become veritable demons.

There are two kinds of love-worldly love and the love of the Divine according to the scriptures. The love of the Divine is called Bhakti (Devotion) or Prapti.

Man needs both worldly love and spiritual love. Devotion is turning the mind Godward. Faith is essential for devotion. Without faith man can never realise his true nature. Faith, however, has to be suffused with Love. Such love can make the Divine and the devotee dance in ecstasy oblivious to everything else. The nation is plunged in myriad troubles because it has forgotten the supreme principle of Love.

Our President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, referred to Swami Vivekananda's message: "Faith in yourselves, Faith in the country and Faith in God—this is the secret of greatness."

Dear students! Today the educational system does not promote the spirit of patriotism. Education is pursued to achieve individual aspirations. It is because patriotism is absent that we have differences between individuals and groups. It is essential to promote love of the country among students. Just as you say that this is my body, you must say this is my nation.

The three H's

The President compared Science and Technology to the head of the human body. But it is not enough to have only the head. Spirituality constitutes the heart of the body and that has to be developed equally. Science and Technology is the head, Spirituality is the heart and Dharma or Righteousness is the hand. Hence man must develop the 3 H's—head, heart and hand. People refer to EHV (Education in Human Values). It is the cultivation of 3 H's that is most important; this is called Trikarana Shuddhi (purity in thought, word and deed) in the scriptures and when you have the triple purity you acquire Divine Love. Dear students! Today all of you should cultivate the love of the nation. The larger the number of persons you love the greater is the joy you experience. Develop the conviction that the Divine is equally present in all beings. It is not enough to utter the Upanishadic saying that the Divine is present everywhere and dwells in every being. Your actions must be based on a recognition of the truth of these sayings.

Practice and study

Many of those who read the Ramayana are not really practising the message contained in it. Rama is praised for acting according to the behest of his father. But how many obey the injunctions of their parents today? Of what use is it in reading the Ramayana without practising any of the lessons contained in it. Practise is very essential to realise the fruits of such study. Students should realise that time is infinitely precious. God is the embodiment of time. Even a single moment should not be wasted.

The President referred to the importance of Service (seva). More than wealth, rendering Seva is vital. A great devotee in the Bhagavata prayed to God as follows: "I do not seek any kingdom. I do not seek any heaven nor do I seek freedom from rebirth. But I desire only the opportunity to relieve the sufferings of fellow human beings." The Divine cannot be experienced by Yaga and Yagna (sacrifice), not by indulging in charity and other good deeds. Only when you engage yourselves in service to society, eschewing egoism, you can really get peace. The Upanishadic message of harmony and cooperation is relevant to all mankind. The differences of caste and community are utterly irrelevant to the practise of these truths. All the basic elements

from air, fire, water, earth and sky. All differences arise because of man's self-interest

The truths proclaimed in the Upanishads—Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness)—have to be practised by everyone irrespective of caste or community. The practise of good conduct is the natural duty of man. You should realise that the happiness of the individual is dependent on the welfare of the society as a whole. The transformation of the individual is a pre-requisite for the transformation of the world. Together with changes in the political, social and economic spheres, we need transformation in the mental and spiritual spheres. Without such transformation all other changes are of no use. Therefore, make your actions pure. Only then can the human rise to the level of the Divine.

The president's career

Students! You must realise the process by which our President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, rose to such an eminent position. In the early years he pursued education diligently. He completed his studies in the University and acquired refinement of a deep culture. He became an M. L. A., and a Member of Parliament in due course. Starting as a minister at the state level, he became a minister at the Centre. Then he became a Governor. He then rose to the position of the Vice-President, and from Vice-President he became the President. You can see that he rose step by step and had no setback. Other persons have had ups and downs in their careers.

In the case of Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, his refined culture, his faith and his sacred ideals have served to carry him to the most eminent position. He considered reverence for the mother and love of the motherland as greater than heaven itself. He adhered to the ideals of devotion to the mother and service to the motherland. His mother is alive today. He begins his day's activities after offering prostrations to his aged venerable mother. The status he has now achieved is due to these qualities. In the election for President he sought no one's help. He has full faith in God. He believed that God would give him whatever he should get and left everything to the will of the Divine. Honours come unsought to the pure-minded (Swami here recited a song in which the mind is asked not to seek any favour but to leave everything to the Divine Will. Did not the Divine shower His grace on Sabari and Jatayu without their seeking any favour.)

Good men at the helm

Students! This year must be regarded as a very fortunate year for the nation. Our Prime Minister (Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao) did not seek any office. He did not even contest the election. The office sought him. Only then he stood for election. Likewise, our President, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, also did not seek the office but he was selected by the Congress to stand for election as President. As is the seed so is the fruit. Likewise, with good men at the helm of the nation, it will experience good results. All of you should pray for such fruit. You are the future builders of the nations. The welfare of the country is dependent on the students. You must therefore strive to follow the lead of such good men at the helm and lend your support to them for the progress of the nation. Through unity you have purity and through purity Divinity is realised. You all should be united. Union is strength. But alas) there is no unity today. It is the

unity within the Institute. You must go out into the world and promote unity.

Both the Prime Minister and the President are 'silent workers'. They do not indulge in issuing statements to the Press with or without provocation and they come to decisions of vital nature only after deep enquiry and consultation with the people concerned. Under the auspices of such people at the helm of affairs it is hoped that the country will proceed on right lines.

This year is also notable for another significant fact. The first President of India was Babu Rajendra Prasad. He entered the Rashtrapati Bhavan wearing the Gandhi Cap, symbol of the nation's struggle for freedom. After so many years, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma made the entry into the Rashtrapati Bhavan wearing the Gandhi cap. With such a President and Prime Minister we can look forward to a better future for the country with peace and prosperity.

The President referred to the advent of the Divine as Avatar whenever there is decline of Dharma (Dharmasya Ghanir Bhavati.) How is the victory of Dharma (Righteousness) achieved? The answer is given by Sanjaya in the Gita. Where the Divine and the pure minded (like Arjuna) come together, there is bound to be the victory of Righteousness. Purity leads to unity and unity leads to Divinity.

From the point of view of the students the message given by the President of India today is supremely important. Whatever aspirations and ideas he had as student, he has presented them to you today. He has therefore set an example. The true role of a preceptor (Acharya) is to practice what he teaches. This is the meaning of the term Acharya.

Students! Bharat is entering on a sacred and glorious period. Many sacred developments are bound to happen. The nation's prosperity and glory will grow.

Man has to pursue both the worldly path (Preyo Marg) as well as the Spiritual path (Shreyo Marg). Man should combine the mundane with the Divine. Students should learn to combine these two paths. Develop faith in God. Without faith in God life is useless. Everything depends on faith in the Divine. The Divine is the basis of all that happens. Therefore, develop faith in the Omnipotent Divine. Anything in the world can be accomplished with faith in God.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*").

AVATAR VANI:

GURUPOORNIMA SANDESH:

God Alone is the Sadguru

*Brahmanandam Parama Sukhadam Kevalam jnanamurtim
Dvandvateetam Gagana Sadrisham Tattwamasyadilakshyam
Ekam Nithyam Vimalam Achalam Sarvadhee*

It is not easy to understand the divine principle. The ego of I'll, and the attachment of "Mine" are responsible for all difficulties. Man attains divinity very easily the moment he gives up ego and attachment. Atma is omnipresent. Atma is infinite Atma is the One without a second. But, it appears as many because of the diversity of forms. Spirituality is that which recognises the One that subsumes all diversities as the Atma.

Unfortunately, today there are many intellectuals who divide the One into the many. But, there are very few who see the One in the many. Here is an example. We have built a mansion. In this mansion we have one room for bath, one for cooking another for dining and yet another for living. What is it responsible for this division? It is walls in between. If you remove the walls, the mansion becomes one again. Because of the walls in between, there are different rooms with different names and forms. Similarly, the mansion of Atma is only one. Since we have created in this mansion of Atma, different rooms of the body, senses, mind, intellect, will and ego, the diversity appears.

Who is the guru

Since this divisive tendency is on the increase among mankind to-day there is great need for the "Guru". Who is a true Guru? What is the truth underlying the Guru principle? Is he the one that teaches worldly education? Is he the one that explores the properties of matter, a Guru? Is he the one that describes in detail Natural Sciences, a Guru? No, they are only teachers. A true Guru is the embodiment of Brahmananda (transcendental bliss). Who is this Brahmananda? Where does he exist? When we enquire on these lines, we find that there is nothing comparable to it in the universe. All the joys of the world are immanent in Brahmananda (transcendental bliss).

Brahmananda

What kind of joy does a man experience when he is happy, healthy and contented? What is the type of joy that man derives out of wealth, properties, pleasures and fortune? This is called Manushyananda (human joy). Hundred times more than Manushyananda is Indrananda; hundred times more than Indrananda is Devendrananda; hundred times more than Devendrananda is Devananda; hundred times more than Devananda is Brihaspati Ananda; hundred times more than Brihaspati Ananda is Prajapati Ananda; hundred times more than Prajapati Ananda is Brahmananda. This is the true measure of Brahmananda. Such an expression as Brahmananda (transcendental bliss) which is beyond all human imagination is used in common parlance to mean worldly joy. People say, "My daughter's marriage was performed with Brahmananda!" or "My son is in foreign country with Brahmananda!" or "My son has secured good results in the examination with Brahmananda!" But, is Brahmananda such an easy and cheap thing to be attained? Is it worldly or material? No, not at all. This Brahmananda transcends the material, moral, religious and spiritual aspects of life. The true Guru is one who experiences the supreme bliss of Brahmananda. Who is he? None except God has the competence to experience such bliss. All the other joys are inherent in this bliss.

Supreme happiness

The next aspect of Guru is "Param Sukhadam" (highest happiness) This happiness is higher than all the happiness in the world. This is not worldly happiness, which has a beginning and an end and is ever changing; it comes and goes. But Param Sukhadam neither comes nor goes. Mundane pleasures are just water bubbles. They may burst any moment. The happiness with changes is not true happiness. All the pleasures enjoyed by man in this world change with time and place. A true Guru is one who enjoys and confers changeless supreme happiness.

The third aspect of the Guru is 'Kevalam' (the ultimate). What is Kevalam? It means that which transcends time and space. All the things in the world are bound by time and space. But He is beyond space and time; and there is nothing higher than Him. That is why He is called Kevalam. He is none other than God.

Jnanamurti

He is Jnanamurti (embodiment of wisdom). What is Jnanam or true wisdom? Is it material or worldly knowledge? Is it the knowledge of chemistry? Is it Science? No, all this knowledge is related to materials in the world. But, true Jnanam is the basis for all types of knowledge and is beyond them. It is infinite, unmanifest and remains ever as the One. "Adwaita Darshanam Jnanam" (true wisdom is the vision of Oneness). All this is One and there is no second object in the world. Even if there is a second object, it is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of the first One. Real wisdom is the vision of one's own true nature. Knowing oneself is true wisdom. Where does the man who seeks to know himself go? With which Guru does he take shelter? Is a person who asks others, "Where am I" a wise one? No, he is ignorant. None would search for oneself in the external world. But, to-day's men are such ignorant ones. One who knows himself is the wise one. He is none other than God. God is the very embodiment of wisdom. He is the very form of truth and infinite. Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma (Brahma is Truth, Wisdom and Infinite).

Beyond duality

The next is "Dvandvateetam" or the One who transcends the pairs of opposites. What is this principle? It transcends heat and cold, happiness and sorrow, gain and loss or praise and blame. This principle can only be God and none else has this power He is the true Guru.

All-pervading

Gagana Sadrisham is the next aspect. Where is Gagana or sky? It is all-pervading. "Akasham Gaganam Shoonyam" Really, it cannot be seen. We look upward and say it is the sky. But, it is not the sky, which is just a combination of clouds. Sky is the one that provides space for them. This sky (space) exists everywhere. Is it possible to show it? Yes, it is possible. It is there when you snap your fingers or clap your hands. It is there when Swami speaks. What is the nature of this Aakasa (space)? Sound is its nature. Wherever there is sound, there is the space. Even inhalation and exhalation are sounds. Therefore, where is the place without space? There is no such place at all. Space is present everywhere. One who is more Omnipresent than space is God Himself. Therefore, such a God is the true Guru.

The Mahavakyas

Tattwamasyadilakshyam is the next aspect. What is Tattwam? There are four great pronouncements. "Prajnanam Brahma"—this is the essence of Rig Veda; "Aham Brahmasmi" is the essence of Yajur Veda; "Tat Twam Asi" is the essence of Sama Veda; "Ayam Atma Brahma" is the essence of Atharvana Veda. All those four treat declarations point to One Divinity. Though they state and explain differently, their goal is One Divinity.

The first pronouncement is "Prajnanam Brahma". What is 'Prajna'? We call an intelligent person as a 'Prajnasali'. Is Prajna merely intelligence or cleverness? No. Where is this Prajna? This Prajna is present in the body, senses, the mind, intellect, inner will and ego and all over. This Prajna is present in all the living and the non-living alike. It is called Constant Integrated Awareness. What is Awareness? Awareness is nothing—To know what? Is it fractional knowledge? No, it is complete knowledge. It is the knowledge of the principle that is immanent in the living and the nonliving alike. Actually, Prajna and Brahman are synonymous. Some scholars interpret that Prajna is Brahman. But, they are not two different things. What is Brahman? Brahman is the all pervasive One. It is the "Brihat" principle. The universe itself is the Brihat principle. Brahman is immanent in the whole cosmos. To put it in simple terms, Brahman means pervasiveness. It is all-pervading. True Guru is the one with these attributes.

Omnipresent witness

The second pronouncement is "Aham Brahmasmi". People think that "Aham" is "I." No. It has another meaning also. It is witness, He is witness to everything. He is the Atma. Aham is the very form of Atma. The Awareness or Consciousness which is present everywhere is installed as Atma in man. Atma, Consciousness and Brahma are not different. What is this? (Bhagavan showed the handkerchief in his hand). This is cloth. If you remove the idea of cloth, you see thread and if you remove the idea of thread, you see cotton. The cloth, thread and cotton are one and the same. Similarly, the same principle takes upon the names of Atma, Brahman or Aham at different times and situations. Therefore, the statement of "Aham Brahmasmi" means that the witness Atma or "I" in me is Brahman Himself.

The third declaration is "Tat Twam Asi". This is the essence of Sama Veda. "Tat" means "That" and "Twam" means "This", "Asi" means "one and the same". When "I", and "You" stand apart, "I" am different from "You". But when "I" and "You" get together, the difference is lost and they together become "We". The two become one. The one with the Upadhi (body) is "Twam" and the one without the Upadhi is "Tat". One is the Jiva (individual) and the other is Deva (God). Sama Veda explains clearly that Jiva and Deva are one and the same.

Three in one

"Ayam Atma Brahma". You should enquire into this statement clearly. There are three words—Ayam, Atma and Brahma. But, they are one and the same. This statement depicts the oneness of the three persons—"The one you think you are", "The one others think you are" and "The one you really are" i.e., the body, the mind and the Atma. You act with the body, think with the mind and you witness both as the Atman. In wakeful state you are the "Vishwa", you are

The real guru

The real Guru is the very embodiment of the Divine principle, which is the inner meaning of these four great pronouncements. He is the one who has experienced and enjoyed the essence of these declarations and takes upon Himself a form to teach the same.

"Ekam"—Brahmam is the One without a second. It is only One. It is the One that exists before birth, after death and during ones lifetime. It does not change. God is the only One. All other things are diverse manifestations. A Guru is one who has recognised that the many exist in the One. Take for example, a banyan seed. It is one. Within this small seed exists the huge tree with branches and sub-branches with flowers and fruit. Roots are different, the branches are different, flowers and fruits are different. But, all of them come from the one seed. The tree Is one but one person may look at the branches, other at the leaf, another at the flower and yet another at the fruit. The Guru is this Ekam (the One). Who is it? It is God Himself.

"Nityam"—The One who never changes under any circumstances. The sun and the moon move and change: but He does not change. When some one is born he is a child, at 10 years he becomes a boy, at 30 a man and at 75 a grandfather. Thus man changes with time. But, He remains same in birth and death. In fact, He has neither birth nor death, neither beginning nor end. He is God Himself: He is the Guru.

"Vimalam"—is the next attribute He is the One without any type of impurity. He is pure, unsullied and sacred. He is not tainted by anything worldly. Whatever is put into fire is burnt into ashes. The things thrown into fire may be pure or impure. Fire remains ever-pure. You may burn the body, wood, iron or gold in fire, but the fire is not tainted. He is pure and sacred. Who is He? He is God.

"Achalam"—All things change and move. The earth rotates around its axis at a speed of 1016 miles an hour. Not only does earth revolve around itself, it moves round the sun at a speed of 66,000 miles. But, we cannot see its movement. We think we are moving and the earth is still. No. The earth is moving. The moon and the sun and the planets are also moving. On a cinema screen 16 pictures of the film move in one second but the screen is steady. Similarly, He is steady and motionless. He need not move anywhere, because He is here, there and everywhere.

The eternal witness

"Sarvadhee Sakshibhutham". He is the witness of everything. A drama is being enacted on the stage. The king is speaking majestically, the minister is explaining something and the servant is standing with a stick in his hand. But, the light on the stage is not affected by their conversation it remains ever the same. Harishchandra is grieved; Chandramati is lamenting; Rohitasva is fallen dead by a serpent bite. But, nothing affects the stage-light. All the changes are for the actors on the stage. But, the light is not affected by them. It remains as a mere witness. The Guru is such an Eternal Witness.

"Bhavateetam"—He transcends mental comprehension and verbal explanation. None can explain His nature. He is beyond all feelings and thoughts. He is the true Guru.

"Trigunarahitam"—The three qualities of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas are the characteristics of Nature. Wherever these qualities exist, happiness and sorrow follow. When these three are absent, there is neither happiness nor sorrow. Who is beyond these qualities? He is God; He is the true Guru.

Guru and the cosmos

Who is a Guru?

*Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu Guru Devo Maheswarah
Guru Sakshat Para Brahma Tasmaiah Sri Gurave Namahah.*

Guru is Brahma. He is the Creator; He Himself is the creation and He is the One that exists in the creation. The universe is filled with Brahman. It becomes clear that the One who Himself has become the universe is the Guru.

Guru is Vishnu. Who is Vishnu? Is He the one with conch, discus, mace and lotus in His hands? No. Vishnu is one who has the quality of pervasiveness. He is the Doer and also what is done. The universe is the action, God is the Doer. God is the consciousness behind the cause and effect. The whole universe is the form of Vishnu. This Vishnu is the Guru.

Meaning of 'guru'

Who is a Guru? If one who teaches a 'mantra' a Guru? No.

*Gukaro Gunaateetsn, Rukara Rupavarjitah
Gukaro Andhakaarascha Rukaro Tannivaaranah.*

'Gu' stands for Gunateeta (one who transcends the three Gunas) while 'ru' stands for Rupavarjita (one who is formless). Also 'Gu' means the darkness of ignorance. What can dispel the darkness? Only light can do it. Therefore Guru is one who dispels the darkness of ignorance. Guru is not the one who gives a mantra or teaches you Vedanta. Those whom we call 'Gurus' in the common parlance are not real Gurus! You may call them teachers. Those who practise and teach the same to others are called 'Acharyas'. Acharya is one who demonstrates through practice. Today we have neither Acharyas nor Gurus. Today the so-called 'Gurus' whisper a mantra in the ear and stretch their hands for money.

Guru is 'Maheshwara'. Who is Maheshwara? He is the one who rules all beings in the Universe. He commands and ordains everything in the universe in the right manner. Sun-rise and Sun-set go on according to His command. Seasons, rain, the day and night are His commands. Ishwara is one that makes everything-follow its discipline without any lapse. Guru

himself.

Recognise unity is Divinity

Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Ishwara. Some people may say that Vishnu and Ishwara do not go together. But it is ignorance to think so. It is only the narrow-mindedness of these devotees. Some call themselves Vaishnavites (the Worshippers of Vishnu) and some others namely Shaivites (Worshippers of Siva or Ishwara). But Vishnu and Siva are one and same.

Vishnu holds in the four hands the Conch, the Discuss, the Mace and the Lotus. Conch is the symbol of sound, the Discuss of time, the Mace of power and the Lotus of the heart. He is the mater of sound, time and power, and the hearts of all beings. Similarly Siva holds in the hands 'Damaru' (the drum), and Trisula (trident). Here Damaru stands for sound and Trisula for a three pronged time. He is the master of time and sound. Thus both are same only names and forms are different. Here is an example in the context of Indian traditions. Both Vaishnavites and Shaivites visit Tirupati. There is only one God there Shaivites call Him Venkateshwara and Vaishnavites call Him Venkataramana There may be different in their feelings but God is cane. They create differences in order to satisfy their petty minds. Another example, Siva is called Pashupati, the Lord of pashu or beings. The individual with mind-principle are beings. Vishnu is called Gopala, the Lord of Cows or beings. Actually both mean the same. Only narrow minds create differences. Narrow-minded people can never attain higher states whatever practices they undertake for any length of time. We should recognise the unity in diversity. This is true spirituality. You are yourself God. As long as you do not know this truth you are jiva (individual); once you know, you are Deva (God).

The power of faith and surrender

Today you have heard Anil Kumar speaking with joy about the devotion and the experiences of devotees in Japan, Thailand and Hong Kong. Some people think, these people from far off places have such intense devotion, sense of surrender and many experiences, but how is it that being so near Swami for so long, we do not experience these? Swami does not shower any extra compassion on them. God responds according to one's faith. Their faith is responsible for everything. Of course, there are right and wrong things both here and there. But because of the great distance, they develop more intense devotion and sense of surrender. Intense feelings remain secure under all circumstances. When the devotion is not intense, it becomes fickle. Here is an example. There are huge trees on the roadside. These trees remain green in spite of famine and draught. On the other side there is the paddy crop nearby. You have to water it everyday. Even if you do not water it one day, it will dry up. Foolish ones may think, "Paddy crop dries up if it does not get water for a day. How is it the trees remain green even, in a long period of draught? What is the reason for this? The roots of the tree have gone deep dowry to the water level, whereas the roots of the paddy crop remain on the surface. We do not have steady and strong faith. Faith is our breath. We listen to Swami's discourses everyday, but we do not derive any benefit. There are some who hear only one but remain strong forever. Anil Kumar had delivered discourses all over India. His discourses are highly attractive and colourful. But his monkey mind is full of jumps and bumps. Sometimes, he doubts these things which he himself

devotion and sense of surrender. He has understood that their faith is responsible for every thing. All the difficulties begin when one's faith wavered.

Prahlada loved Hari (God) and his father Hiranyakasipu hated Hari. The father went on arguing and denying the existence of God, whereas the son went on establishing His existence. Who protected Prahlada when he was thrown down the mountain? His faith protected him and not Vishnu. His faith took the form of Vishnu.

Divinity in all forms—the Shirdi episode

Once in Shirdi, Tatya's wife prayed to Baba to visit their home and partake food there. Baba accepted her request and promised to visit their home. She prepared everything for Baba's visit and kept everything ready. But Baba did not come at the appointed hour. She served food in the plate and went to Baba's photograph and said, "Baba, why are you putting me to shame? More than my humiliation, you will be called a liar if you do not come. Why do you utter a lie? You should keep up your word!" Meanwhile, a dog came into the house, started eating the food in the plate served for Baba. When she turned round to see what was happening, she found the dog. She got angry and beat the dog with a stick and sent it out. She was very sad that food served for God was eaten up by a dog. Next day she went to Baba and pleaded with him, "Baba! Should you not keep up your words? Why should you utter falsehood?" Baba got angry and shouted at her. "Saitan! What is the need for me to utter falsehood?" In Shirdi, Baba used the word "Saitan!" often, now Swami uses the word 'Dunnapotu' (he buffalo). Baba continued angrily, "There is no need for me to utter any lie even if it is to satisfy you, My form is Truth but you are not able to recognise it out of your narrow thinking, you assume that Sai Baba is only this body measuring five and a half feet. All forms are mine! You do not have such broad mindedness. You are narrow-minded. The dog was none other than Myself."

Divinity is that which identifies itself with all the forms. It is narrow-minded feeling to adduce Divinity to be in one physical frame and have all our acts of devotion on such an assumption God can come in any form. All forms are His. Swami tells something to some boy; He may tell something to Anil Kumar. He may send the message through any body. One may die of serpent bite, another by being struck by a lightning and yet another by slipping and falling. People might think, "Why should he die in this way? Why did not God protect him?" But serpents and lightning were sent by God Himself. They are none but the messengers of God.

The Super-Speciality Hospital

We have built the Super Speciality Hospital here. Why did we start it? Many people suffer from many diseases. It is difficult to expect every one to develop divine feelings of devotion and surrender. Some people have faith in medicines, some in operations and some others in doctors. Whether it is a verandah or a choultry, it is enough if one sleeps. Similarly, here our purpose is that people should get rid of their ailments, given good health and live happily. Further, many medical experts like Dr. Venugopal and his team from Delhi, and the team from Hyderabad are performing the operations with great devotion and dedication. What is the reason for all these

the good aspiration to give joy to one and all. They do all this keeping Swami in view.

Earlier, heart operation was a very frightening thing and people would shudder at the prospect of this operation. They would be afraid of the consequences. The patients would cry and make their kith and kin cry. But in Prasanthi Nilayam today, heart operation has become an easy thing like removing the thorn from one's foot. None has any fear. That is fearlessness! Even little children come to our Hospital with a smile on their face. When Swami went to the Hospital a little child in the cot who was operated, saluted Him with a broad smile on her face. Neither her parents nor relatives were there but she was full of joy. What is the cause? It is because of the environment. Their faith is mainly responsible for this. All the things are going on very joyfully. Every one thinks it is Gods work. There is no trace of ego in those who work here.

We may get fresh vegetable from the market. We prepare good sambar with dhal, tamarind, chilies and salt. But the sambar is spoilt. Is it the mistake of the salt or dhal or tamarind? No, the vessel is not tinned. The operation may be done spending lakhs of rupees. If there is no love and devotion in the work, it is like cooking sambar in an untinned vessel. Faith is most important for success or failure. It is faith or lack of faith which is responsible. Without this faith if you get into argumentation in the name of devotion, it is only the effect of ego and ostentation.

God, the only guru

Embodiments of Divine Love! If you want to understand divinity, you should have the firm faith that divinity is everywhere. There is no place or object without divinity. Gurupoornima means full moon without any defect or lacuna.

Moon is nothing but mind. When the mind is completely perfect, it sheds light. Gurupoornima is not performed by circumambulation and offerings to the Guru. What is the real offering? It is the offering of one's love. To know that God exists everywhere is circumambulation. If you understand these terms, everyday is Gurupoornima. There is only one Guru, that is God and there is no other Guru. Contemplate on that Guru.

(Bhagavan sang the bhajans—*Bhajana bina Sukha santhi nahi*, and *Prema mudita Manase kaho Rama Rama Ram*)

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on July 14, 1992

Swami—Divya Janma

This enlightened person can reveal the way of enlightenment to others and help them actually to become what they already are, potentially, but Swami has not assumed the form of an ordinary human being. His is the three-role-presentation of the Cosmic Consciousness as

from above of That, which we have to develop from below; it is the descent of God into that Divine Birth of the human being into which mortal creatures must climb. It is the attracting Divine Example given by God to man, in the very type and form and perfected model of our human existence."

The Lord entered the 'mind' of Pedda Venkapa Raju, as He is described to have entered the mind of Vasudeva; the 'father' communicated the Lord to the 'mother' as the Preceptor communicates the 'mantra', the mystic formula of Liberation to the disciple, and the Lord grew in the womb of Easwaramma as is described in the Bhagavata Purana by Sage Vyasa: "As the Moon grows in the sky", drawing no sustenance from the womb which He sanctified and illumined. "Janma Karma cha mey divyam" "My Birth and Activity are both Godly", says Krishna. Swami has said that He chose His parents and that He wills every step in His earthly career. "No one can come to Puttaparthi unless I will it so", "My task can never be delayed or denied", "I shall never fail", "My resolution is undefeatable", "I respond, whatever the Name you utter to call Me. I have no one Name with which I can be designated", "I am the One God who answers the prayers that rise in human hearts, in all languages, from all lands, addressed to all forms of the Deity", "I have no place which I claim as Mine. All places are Mine", "I am behind you, before you, beside you, whatever you are", "I sustain all the worlds" Swami announces thus before an astonished but deeply grateful world. "I was the Sai Baba of Shirdi; I had declared I would reappear eight years after the Shirdi manifestation merges in Brahman. I am incarnating again, after finishing the task I have laid upon myself " These are not, as some dare interpret, reverberations from a High Heavenly Throne. They are genuine facts experienced by humans all over the world, from New Zealand to Iceland, from Trinidad to Tokyo. Thousands stand witness to the astonishing authenticity of these splendorous facts of the Avatar, that is Swami.

—*Prof. N. Kasturi*

Grace can remove Karma

The easiest path to self-realisation is the surrender of ego: sharanagati.

You might say that the karma of the previous birth has to be consumed in this birth and that no amount of grace can save man from that. Evidently, some one has taught you to believe so. But I assure you, you need not suffer from karma like that. When a severe pain torments you, the doctor gives you a morphine injection and you do not feel the pain, though it is there in the body. Grace is like the morphine, the pain is not felt, though you go through it. Grace takes away the malignity of the karma which you have to undergo: you know there are dated drugs, which are declared ineffective after a certain date: well, the effect of karma is rendered null, though the account of karma is there and has to be rendered or, the Lord can save a man completely from the consequences, as was done by Me to the Bhakta whose paralytic stroke and heart attacks I took over, some months ago, in the Gurupoornima week! It is wrong to say that "Lalaatalikhitam" cannot be wiped out: that what one has earned in previous births must the

Love—Swami's Greatest Miracle

Love, and the Incarnation of Sathya Sai Baba, are the only two phenomena of any real importance in today's demented world; everything else, like wars, the Megaton bomb, the United Nations, the starvation of millions, is of secondary importance. Love is the ultimate energy, the energy behind all energies, and the Incarnation of Sai Baba is probably the most significant event since this tiny planet solidified from primal spirit.

Swami tells us that former Avatars, like Krishna and the Buddha, were not recognised during their lifetimes, and I doubt if Jesus of Nazareth had more than a hundred true adherents at the end of his mission. Sai Baba, while still only halfway through His triple Incarnation, has 78 million devotees in 98 countries of the world. It is indeed mind boggling.

It is difficult for ordinary people living mundane lives to raise their consciousness to take in such concepts, but after 13 years of dedicated service to Swami I am convinced that what I am writing is true. He has said that the pure heart becomes inspired and sees beyond intellect and reason, and that the best *sadhana* (spiritual exercise) to purify the heart is loving, selfless service to mankind. I do not pretend to have a heart without blemish, but 13 years of loving service have helped. One begins to think with what I call 'the mind in heart' which is really tapping the divine intuition.

Loving service

In loving service the ego is eliminated, a ceiling is placed on material desires, which cease to hold the same attraction, and the heart chakra expands. One experiences joy rather than pleasure, and one finds it much more fulfilling, for joy comes from the soul and pleasure from the body. It happens naturally, at its own pace, and therefore does not seem like sacrifice (although in time sacrifice becomes a joy). There is nothing about this development which smacks of a dour adherence to some rigid theological dogma, causing frustration. It just happens as natural growth and takes nothing away from one's joy of living. And Swami accepts that it should not happen too quickly, but gradually. Yet the goal should be kept in mind from the start.

Love is a radiance which emanates from a pure heart, which is why it is said that 'religion is caught, not taught'. It is the secret of Baba's amazing success with hardened sceptics and intellectuals. His Love penetrates their hearts and brings them to life for perhaps the first time in their lives. They often break down and weep, and they are never the same again. Listen to Dr. Sandweiss, who was a Freudian psychiatrist from California, and author of *The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist*: 'Something broke inside me. Some of Baba's joy and love penetrated my soul

own set of values and beliefs seemed to shatter into dust, giving way to a sense of awe and mystery. I felt somehow transformed in one dazzling, incredible minute. I was left with my mouth hanging open, feeling dazed and humble.' He is no longer a Freudian!

Love is the vital ingredient in the process of spiritual healing. If a healing fails, subject to favourable Karmic considerations, then either the healer lacks the necessary love or the patient fails to reciprocate.

It is true that some people prefer the word 'light' to 'love' I feel their approach is a little too intellectual. They engage in an advanced form of meditation and yoga, primarily for self-development, whereas the pure Seva Dal worker finds that love is its own reward. He does not engage in Seva for the sake of self-development, yet ironically this is just what he achieves; the more love he gives the more love he finds he has to give. As Swami puts it: 'Only in loving can the embodiment of love be gained.' Seva Dal is really a means of self-development without seeking it, and is therefore not tainted with ego. I also find that some intellectuals tend to regard love as sentimentality. Well, there is nothing sentimental about Swami's love, yet it is both human and divine. One could call it humanly divine and divinely human. The last thing it is sentimental

The power of love

The power of love is infinite, for Swami tells us that God is Love Without love there would be no life, for it was the energy of love that created the universe, and it is the energy of love that sustains it in being. Just imagine, without love there would be no planet Earth, no humankind, no animal, vegetable or mineral kingdoms, no stars and no sun, no solar systems, indeed no universe just a vast black void.

No insect would flit, no planet twirl no two atoms would stick together, and nobody would be healed. It is literally true that love makes the world go round, as the old adage has it. Love is the miracle worker. It is the liberator of souls. It is the only integrating force in the world, and the only hope for the world. And Sai Baba is its embodiment.

Indeed He has said so in these last words. He has said, *'I am the Embodiment of Love; Love is My instrument. My message is Prema (Love). My activity is Prema. My teaching is Prema. My way of life is Prema. There is nothing more precious than love within human grasp.'* And again: *'The sole purpose of your incarnation is to grow in love, to expand that love, and to merge with God who is Love, and this is best done through service.'*

Service, or love in action, is therefore the top of the list of Swami's priorities. He has said the one cannot obtain liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth unless one does Seva. Some may think that meditation, yoga, and scholarship are enough. They should listen more carefully to Swami's words: *'If you think you can win the grace of God by the contortions of yoga, the gymnastics of reason, or the denials or asceticism you are woefully mistaken; Love alone is the sine qua non.'* And: *'Scholarship can be an impediment, for it caters to egotism and the desire*

this in discussion programmes on television!

Only real panacea

No, Love is the best and the only real panacea for the world's ills, and it can come from the so-called high and low with equal commendability. There is the story of Yogananda, the great Indian sage who founded the Self-Realisation Centre in California. He was on a lecture tour in New York, and one day he decided to take a walk. He was mugged by two young criminals. They demanded his money. With complete equanimity he handed over his purse, meanwhile pouring out all the love at his command from his heart, solar plexus and third-eye chakras towards the muggers. They hesitated, as if something incomprehensible was happening. Finally they apologized, handed back the purse, saying, 'we can't take money from you'—and ran off.

Faith in God

If love is so important, how, you may ask, can I improve my capacity to love? I answer unhesitatingly: by taking up Seva, or if you are already doing it, to improve its quality. Swami does not want us to abandon our responsibilities to our family or society—He has made that quite clear. But within this context it still might mean a total transformation of one's life and something of a 'leap in the dark.' A typist might become a nurse, a stockbroker a social worker, a rich man a philanthropist. Remember the words quoted from a poem by King George VI in a Christmas broadcast during one of the darkest periods of the Second World War: *And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied. 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'* Indeed it is—a 'leap in the dark', if undertaken with sufficient faith, courage and personal effort, invariably succeeds, not necessarily in the material sense but in the sense of spiritual growth and fulfillment.

Finally, I ask you to bear in mind what Swami says is His greatest miracle. We all know something of the wonders and marvels performed by this great Being for the past 60 years since He was a little boy of 6 of the thousands of healings of virtually every disease known to mankind, including two well documented occasions of raising the certified dead; of the tens of thousands of materialisations by a simple wave of His hand of anything from a ring or a locket, a japamala necklace to a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, or transforming one thing into another simply by blowing on it, and of course literally tons of *vibhuti*; of the myriad projections of Himself in dream or vision and sometimes in actual physical form which He has given to countless people in the four quarters of the globe; of the daily proof He has given us over the past half century of His omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. Yet despite this mind-boggling record of miraculous activity He says, with simple profundity:

'LOVE IS MY GREATEST MIRACLE.' Greater even than raising the dead!

—**Ron Laing.** (From A Quarterly Magazine, U.K. Summer 1992)

Chara, speak the truth and act virtuously. Thira, whenever you have a few moments to spare, repeat the name of the lord, with the form in your mind. Fourth, never indulge in talking ill of others or try to discover faults in others, and finally, do not cause pain to others, in any form. —BABA

NOTICE

Our attention has been drawn to a book by Satya Pal Ruhela titled "Narang Amma Sai Ma". We note with deep regret and anguish that Satya Pal Ruhela, who holds the position of Professor in Jamia Millia Islamia University and claims to be a devotee of Bhagavan Baba, has chosen to write a book that is misleading.

Though it has been ostensibly written as an expression of his devotion to Bhagavan Baba, the purpose of the book, namely, to project one Mrs. Narang, wife of Shri Satprakash Narang, Reader and Head, Department of Library and Information Science, Punjabi University, Patiala, as having been declared by Bhagavan Baba as His Second Mother and hence called Sai Ma is highly objectionable. And his statement that Bhagavan Baba Himself had told Mr. Ruhela that Mrs. Narang is Bhagavan Baba's Second Mother and that Mrs. Narang's house at Patiala is Baba's Second Puttaparthi have no basis in truth. Ruhela's claim that Bhagavan Baba told him in Mrs. Narang's shrine, which he calls as Sai Ma's shrine, to write the above mentioned book and that Bhagavan Baba gave Ruhela all necessary information in two sessions are totally unfounded.

The book has been written as though Bhagavan Baba had told at every stage what Ruhela should write, such as the personality and message of Mrs. Narang. The claim that he has been able to write about her only as much details as Bhagavan Baba has graciously disclosed to him and that as a matter of fact Bhagavan Baba is the real author of the book and that Ruhela acted only as a nimitha-matra are absurd and have no validity and are to be rejected outright by all devotees of Bhagavan Baba and the public. Further there are many statements attributed to Bhagavan Baba as though they have been personally narrated and conveyed by Baba to Mr. Ruhela in this book. All such statements attributed to Bhagavan Baba in the 'two sessions' that Mr. Ruhela had in the so-called shrine at Mrs. Narang's house, needless to say are totally devoid of truth and deserve to be discarded.

There is absolutely no truth in Mr. Ruhela, Mrs Narang or any others claiming to act as the medium of Bhagavan, either to answer questions on His behalf or being invested with any authority by Bhagavan to do any acts on His behalf. It is made further clear that Bhagavan Baba does not invest any person such as Mrs. Narang or anybody else, for that matter, with any authority or authorisation to answer any questions for devotees and, therefore, the claim that Mrs. Narang is the medium or agency of Bhagavan Baba is to be rejected by all right thinking devotees. There is no question of Mrs. Narang as "Narang Amma: Sai Ma" being able to answer personal questions of devotees of Bhagavan Baba.

public.

All devotees and public are warned against believing and acting upon such claims being made by Mr. Ruhela or Mrs. Narang.

Boundless Devotion: Abundant Grace

"Devotion in spate." Those three words would sum up the impression one got from the response of tens of thousands of devotees from all parts of Andhra who gathered in Bhagyanagar for four days from August 27 to 30 to have darshan of BABA and received His blessings on four successive days.

Bhagavan's visit to Bhagyanagar (the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad) was eagerly looking forward to by the devotees as it came after an interval of 8 years. For one reason or other, Swami had put off His visit to the Andhra Capital despite repeated requests from leading Sai devotees in Andhra Pradesh. Swami apparently waited for the completion of the new building of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar and the magnificent Kalyana Mandapam in Srinagar Colony to undertake His long awaited visit.

Bhagavan left Prasanthi Nilayam on the morning of 27th by the 20 Seater DORNIER aircraft, with small entourage of barely half a dozen persons. The flight was historic because this was the first time Swami flew from the Sri Sathya Sai Aerodrome, which had been commissioned in November 1990, itself. The plane which was specially diverted to Prasanthi Nilayam to take Bhagavan and His party, arrived at 12-15 p.m. A large gathering of students and others were present at the air terminal to give a hearty send-off to Bhagavan.

As the plane was up in the air, Swami waved His hand from the window to the devotees below. The aircraft flew one round over Prasanthi Mandir before heading for Hyderabad. Long before the Dornier reached the Begumpet airport, enormous crowds had gathered near the air terminal to greet Bhagavan on His arrival on a momentous visit. Elaborate security arrangements had been made to control the crowds and prevent a stampede. Swami gave darshan to the waiting crowds before leaving for "Sivam" (in Hyderabad). Thousands of devotees had assembled in Sivam from early in the morning to greet Bhagavan on His arrival. Loud cheers went up as Swami's car entered Sivam. Swami gave darshan to the devotees and blessed them before going into His sanctum.

From the moment of His arrival, Swami was continually busy meeting VIPs, visiting the new Kalyana Mandapam, to finalise the arrangements for the inauguration ceremony on the 29th, and giving darshans in the morning and the evening at Sivam to gatherings which not only filled the spacious Sivam compound but overflowed into the road outside. To give darshan to these enormous crowds, Swami had to walk over the compound wall of Sivam so that he could be seen by the large number of devotees on the road. But even this was not enough because the devotees had filled the road on either side of Sivam up to nearly one kilometre. Swami walked up and down among the devotees to give them darshan.

Altogether, Swami gave darshan to the devotees at Sivam on seven occasions from the evening of the 27th to the morning of the 30th. On three days the devotees took out

Bhagavan's darshan. Thereafter there were Bhajans at 8 O Clock, which lasted half an hour. In the afternoon, the devotees had darshan of Bhagavan at 4 PM followed by Bhajans and Arati to Bhagavan.

Regardless of the time of the day or of sun or rain, there were always thousands of devotees all the time at Sivam hoping to get a fleeting glimpse of Swami as he came out from the building or as he entered it from His trips outside.

Before the inauguration of the new Kalyana Mantapam by the Prime Minister on the 29th, Swami visited the building several times to finalise the arrangements for the inaugural ceremony with meticulous attention to every small detail.

On the 28th, on His way back from a visit to the Kalyana Mantapam, Swami came to Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar where the children and the, staff were eagerly awaiting His arrival to receive His blessings. The children were reciting Bhajans for nearly two hours by the time Bhagavan arrived there. The school compound was filled with a large gathering of devotees. Swami went round the classrooms and later watched a programme of Bharat Natyam dances in the spacious assembly hall of the school. Swami was pleased with the children's performance and distributed sweets to all of them.

Bhagavan had reason to feel happy about the final shape of the Kalyana Mantapam, which is an architectural jewel as well as a multi-purpose community hall, with excellent facilities not only for celebrating marriages but for holding important conferences and cultural programmes. The four-crore project financed by the Sathya Sai Central Trust was carried out by the ECC group of Larsen & Toubro Limited within a record period of one year. Mr. R. Chakrapani, an architect from Madras, gave shape to the suggestions of Bhagavan Baba, who visualised several unique features of the edifice. The mantapam is situated on two acres of land given to the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust by the State Government. Work was begun in August '91. The entire designing was done with the help of computers. The imposing auditorium has a seating capacity of 1,500 including 12 galleries in the shape of boxes resembling the boxes in European Opera houses. The spacious semi-circular wooden stage measuring 54 x 32 feet has a motif of Meenakshi Kalyanam on the facade of the stage. There is an excellent air-cooling system and the acoustics of the auditorium are perfect. An annex attached to the main building has rooms for marriage parties or other residents. In the basement below the auditorium, there is a marble floored dinning hall measuring 11,000 sq. ft. with a kitchen equipped with modern gadgets. The dinning hall overlooks a landscape-garden carved out of a huge rock. Adjoining the auditorium is a Ganesha temple built by an experienced sthapati from Kanchipuram.

The stream of man's life is marked by different stages. In each stage man falls a prey to vices like egoism, jealousy and falsehood instead of cultivating truth, righteousness and humility. A life, which should be holy and pure, is turned into poison. What should be a meaningful and divinised human existence is converted into a worthless and evil life.

The first stage in human life is that of boyhood. At this stage he leads an innocent life, without being aware of the worldly or the sacred path (Preyo or Shreyo Marga). But as he advances in age, he takes to the worldly path rather than to the sublime path (Shreyo Marga). Endowed with the vigour of youth and in full possession of his mental and other powers, he forgets his basic human qualities and leads a worldly life devoid of any meaning. He loses the power of discrimination between good and bad and forgets what is high and what is low. He forgets even his essential human nature. He is unaware of the Divine. He descends to the level of the animal. At the end, he ceases to be human.

Plunging into the river of Desire, tossed by the waves of Delusion, getting immersed in the waters of family life, and submerged by peacelessness and strife, man is swallowed by the whale of discontentment. To turn human life from this mundane existence towards the Divine it is essential to have association with "Sat" (Satsangam). The term 'Sat' refers to that which is not subject to change over time. It is the Truth which remains the same regardless of time, place or circumstance. Man should associate himself with this Truth. Merging one's consciousness with this Truth he should experience the bliss of such association. Satsangam (association with Truth) means experiencing Sat-Chit-Ananda (Truth-Awareness-Bliss).

The Satsang has three facets as indicated in the Manu Dharma Shastra. ("Bhadram pasyanthu, Bhadram srunnanthu, Bhadram kurvanthu") See only what is good, hear what is good and do what is good. Unfortunately, in the stage of manhood, these qualities are absent in man. At this stage, he may appear to have devotion but it is neither sincere nor constant. Spirituality is viewed more as a formal observance than an inner experience.

What really constitutes spirituality? Do bhajans constitute spirituality? Or repeating the words "Sai Ram" or making pilgrimages to shrines? All these are signs of human weakness. True spirituality consists in the elimination of all animal instincts in man and manifesting the Divine light within him. This is the true meaning of spirituality.

Today, man practises meditation and performs japa, but along with them the animal qualities are also allowed to grow. As long as these qualities remain, the observance of religious practices is worthless. All such spiritual practices amount to practising deception on the Divine itself. Therefore, true Sadhana or spiritual practice means getting rid of all the animal qualities in one such as cruelty, wickedness etc. Two qualities make a man alien to God: Envy and Egoism (Asooya and Ahamkara). Envy and Egoism are two pests which destroy the tree of life. They deprive man of his essential human nature. With these bad qualities people get divorced from the company of the good.

Significance of the festival

The essential purpose of the Vinayaka Chaturthi festival is to teach a person to avoid the company of bad people and cultivate the company of the good. What does the term Ganapati signify? "Ga" means Buddhi or intellect. "Na" means Vijnana (Wisdom). "Ganapati" means one who is the Lord of the intellect and of wisdom. He is also the Lord of all Ganas (spiritual entities). Ganas also symbolise the senses. Ganapati is thus the Lord of the senses. "Vigatho Nayaka Iti Vinayakah" (Vinayaka is one who is without a Master above him).

All festivals of Bharatiyas are full of transcendental significance and are not related to worldly phenomena. The first thing which is done on a festival day is to hang a festoon of green leaves on the front doors of the house. A festoon of green leaves is a sign of suspiciousness. By having such a festoon, the householder indicates that he seeks auspicious happenings. This custom has also scientific significance. The green leaves hang at the door serve to absorb the Carbon dioxide exhaled by people and they release Oxygen which is inhaled by them. Thus scientifically the green leaves serve a vital purpose.

Inner and outer purity

On a festival day every person in the house takes an oil bath early in the morning. Personal cleanliness is conducive to good health. Moreover, as the Divine dwells both inside and outside the body, external purity is also important. To achieve inner purity one has to get rid of all bad qualities and cultivate good qualities. The significance of wearing new clothes on festival days is to replace the dirty linen in the mind by good thoughts. The heart is called 'Vastra', which is the term used for cloth. Hence, inner purity has to be achieved by purifying the heart. The wearing of new clothes is intended to serve as a prelude to purifying the heart within. Thus the different festival practices have an inner significance, apart from the external observances.

Prasadam for Ganesha

In connection with the Ganesha festival, prasadam is offered to the deity in the form of "Kudumulu" and "Undrallu". What are the kinds of edibles that should be offered to the deity? The preparations should not involve the use of oil or fire. They have to be cooked by the use of steam. Using rice flour and some pulses and til, one kind of offering is made for Ganesha. In this preparation no oil or fire is used. The significance of this offering is: During the month of Bhadrapada, the farmers bring home the harvest of til seeds. Til seeds have medicinal properties for curing lung and eye diseases. When the til seeds and pulses are cooked by steam, the preparation comes easily digestible. In offering such food to the deity two purposes are served. The offerings are tasty and wholesome (giving pleasure and promoting good health). These were the reasons for the observance of various festivals by our ancients.

Buddhi and siddhi

It is only when a man is pure that the intelligence blossoms. It is only with the blossoming of intelligence that the spiritual goal is attained (Siddhi). Vinayaka presides over the intellect and spiritual realisation (Buddhi and Siddhi). Siddhi signifies the realisation of Wisdom. The

his two sons. Siddhi and Buddhi symbolise the powers of attraction of Ganapati.

"See your faults"

The Ganapati festival is an occasion for people to purify their minds. People generally tend to see in others the faults which they themselves have. Thereby they try to cover up their own defects by attributing the same defects to others. This is a bad quality. A man can improve only by recognising his faults and not by seeing the same faults in others. You must see what is good in others and look at your own defects. Only such a person can improve. Man does violence to his human nature by ignoring his defects and magnifying the faults in others. This trait is widely prevalent among students today. Students should aim at achieving harmony in thought, word and deed.

Harmony in the Lord's family

Men today are too much immersed in selfish pursuits. Animals and birds display less selfishness than man. The purpose of festivals like Ganesha Chaturthi is to remind men of their inherent divinity and awakening in them the sense of oneness of all mankind.

Easwara's family consists of Shiva, Parvati, Ganapati and Subrahmanyam. When you consider the vehicles of the four, you find that by nature they are antagonistic to each other. Shiva's vehicle is Nandi (the Bull). Parvati's vehicle is the lion. By nature the bull and the lion are inimical towards each other. On Easwara's head there is Ganga. In His forehead He has fire. There is natural antagonism between water (in the Ganga) and fire in the Lord's forehead. Ganapati has the elephant's face and His vehicle is a rat. There is a natural antagonism between Parvati's lion and Ganapati's elephant-head. Likewise there is natural enmity between the serpent round Easwara's neck and Ganapati's vehicle, the rat. There is also enmity between Shiva's serpent and Subrahmanya's peacock. In spite of the natural enmity of these different vehicles of Easwara's family, there is no discord at all among them. Perfect harmony prevails among the members of the family and their different vehicles. This harmony and unity is an example to the world.

Good company

Unity is essential for achieving good things. There should be no unity for evil purposes. Whether a person achieves eminence or goes down depends on the kind of people with whom he associates. However, students should not associate with fair-weather friends. The only true friend is God. All others are friends only for their own selfish purposes. God is always with you, in you and around you. He will not give you up in any circumstance. But if your heart is polluted, God will leave you. There is no room in a polluted heart for God.

The elephant head

Vinayaka has the head of an elephant. What is its significance? No human being has an elephant's head. It is against the order of nature. How then did Vinayaka acquire an elephant's head? This has an inner significance. Vinayaka is known for His supreme intelligence. The elephant is also known for its high intelligence (Gajatelivi). The elephant will not trust anybody

is symbolic of supreme intelligence. Those of you who are staying in the hostel notice cars going up and down the road. On the other side of the hostel is Sai Geeta (Bhagavan's elephant). Sai Geeta takes no notice of the innumerable cars going on the road. But, without any notice, it smells, as it were, the passing of Swami's car and immediately comes out with a roar to greet Swami. That is the devotion of Sai Geeta to its Lord. The faith of the elephant is as strong as its intelligence. His love for the master is equally strong. It is steadfast love. These qualities of devotion, faith and intelligence are associated with the elephant. Whoever has these qualities can be regarded as endowed with the head of an elephant.

Purpose of festivals

Students, who may be inclined to entertain doubts regarding the reasons for Ganesha having the head of an elephant, should understand the inner meaning of this appearance, apart from what is seen on the surface. Unfortunately, people attach more importance to external forms than to the inner meanings of these festivals. As a result meaningful festivals are often reduced to superstitious practices. And often sacred rituals are reduced to ludicrous observances. (Swami illustrated this tendency by relating a story about the earlier practice of confining the cat in the house in a basket during the performance of the Sathyanarayana Vrata so that the cat would not go after the various offerings kept for the deity. The cat was maintained in olden days when there was the fear of rats eating up the grains stored in the house. Even though there are no rats any longer in houses today and there is no need to keep a cat, the practice of confining a cat in a basket is being observed as a part of the religious ceremony. This is how a practice, which was relevant in the past, is observed though it serves no purpose).

"As you sow"

Students! You should realise that for every action there is a consequence and the results of each action depend on the nature of the action, just as the nature of the tree depends on the seed which is sowed. The consequences of one's actions are Inescapable and it was for this reason that the Emperor Manu laid down that all should observe Dharma. The consequences of actions may appear sooner or later but they are bound to occur.

Students like to worship Ganapati. They pray to Ganesha to confer on them Buddhi (intelligence) and Siddhi (the capacity to realise their aspirations). In the name Ganapati, 'G' stands for Guna or virtue and 'Na' stands for Vijnana (wisdom). When Ga and Na. are joined we have the combination of Vijnana (Scientific knowledge) and Prajnana (Spiritual wisdom). It is out of the combination of Vijnana and Prajnana that Sujnana (Supreme Knowledge) emerges. Sujnana is the distinguishing mark of a true man. Ajnana is the sign of ignorance. Ganapati is the Lord of Vijnana and Prajnana (worldly knowledge and spiritual wisdom). Therefore, when a devotee prays to Ganesha, he asks for the conferment of Vijnana, Prajnana and Sujnana.

Education today lacks all the three types of knowledge (Vijnana, Prajnana and Sujnana). You have only bookish knowledge and superficial knowledge. They are of temporary value, perhaps, no farther than the examinations! If the value of education is to last all through life, students have to cultivate faith in God. They should realise that when they constantly think of

their human qualities. Consider every action as dedicated to* God. You cannot avoid actions. You must transform work into worship. You have to perform work in this spirit. You cannot substitute prayer for work. You have to combine both work and worship.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi*").

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on August 31, 1992

Inauguration of Kalyana Mantapam

P.M.'s Appeal for Baba's Blessings

"We should take a vow in Baba's presence that with His blessings and His grace and inspiration we will work untiringly and unsparingly to discharge our duties to the Nation", observed Sri. P. V. Narasimha Rao, the Prime Minister, inaugurating the Sri Sathya Sai Kalyana Mantapam at Shanthinagar on August 29, in the presence of Bhagavan Baba and a distinguished gathering including the Governors of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh, the Union Home Minister, Sri S. B. Chavan, and the Loksabha Speaker, Sri Shivaraj Patil.

The Prime Minister had flown from New Delhi by a special aircraft in the morning. He arrived at the Kalyana Mantapam at about 11.30 AM. In view of the rigorous security arrangements and the bundh which had been declared by the Vidyarthi Parishad, many thousands of devotees who wished to have darshan of Bhagavan at the Mantapam had to stay away, but almost all of them chose to remain at Sivam awaiting the return of Bhagavan Baba after the inauguration ceremony. Admission to the auditorium for the inaugural function was regulated by passes. The invitees were representative of people from all walks of life.

Bhagavan Baba, who went round the hall before the arrival of the Prime Minister, not only gave darshan to the invitees but exchanged a few words with quite a few of them in His own loving manner. Among the invitees were many leading personalities from Andhra including the nonagenarian leader, Prof. N. G. Ranga.

The Prime Minister was received with Poornakumbham when he arrived at the Kalyana Mantapam and was taken to the auditorium where Bhagavan received him and went up to the dais. After the other dignitaries had taken their seats on the dais, they were garlanded.

Mr. Justice P. N. Bhagavati, former Chief Justice of India, welcoming the Prime Minister and other invitees, explained the salient features of the auditorium and the varied activities of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations.

The Prime Minister said, "Bhagavan Baba, Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Seen from the stage this appears as a magnificent building. It seems unbelievable that this hall has a seating capacity of 1500. This is characteristic of whatever work Baba undertakes. Everything He does is incredible, like this mansion. No one can comprehend Him. People know fully well how government works are undertaken. But whatever programme Baba initiates is well conceived and implemented expeditiously. Wherever it may be and whatever the need, there Bhagavan meets the need with utmost expedition and makes the amenity available to all. This fact is well known all over the world.

You see an edifice before you. It is not a mere programme. This is a unique achievement of one who has made his advent for a definite purpose. Even when there were no buildings and no organisations, lakhs of people used to gather to listen to His words and His discourses. But along with His words of wisdom, He has initiated constructive service activities which have given rise to a wonderful world movement. We have to accept this mansion as a great Blessing (Maha-prasadam) and see that such institutions are replicated so that we may earn His benign grace.

A Prayer to Baba

It is my humble prayer to Baba to grant all of us in this country a respite (from agitations) of three or four years so that we may undertake social and economic programmes undisturbed with single-minded dedication and complete them without any hindrances. No one from outside is going to reconstruct this country. We have to do it ourselves. Baba should bless all to have this single minded determination. This is the prayer I am offering on behalf of all.

Even though there are trying circumstances, we should overcome them and take a firm resolve to work unitedly with wisdom. We pray to Baba to give us this determination. Despite our disabilities we should resolve to work unsparingly. There should be no harm to the country in any way. If, we do all that is expected of us and if still success eludes us, then we may perhaps blame others. But if we do not have the determination to play our part, what is the use of complaining about others?

During the past one-year we have been confronted with many difficulties. Everyone knows that these are legacies from the past. We should have the urge to do our part without any lapses in our work. We should take a vow in Baba's presence that with His blessings and grace and inspiration we will all work untiringly and unsparingly to discharge our duties. The country must be filled with one resolve. The people must have one resolve and that is to achieve the all round progress of the country. I once again pray to Baba to grant us all the necessary energy to translate these resolves into reality. I offer my humble thanks to Baba for affording me this opportunity to inaugurate the Kalyana Mantapam" (Cheers)

After the Prime Minister's address, Bhagavan Baba delivered His discourse. SWAMI also presented a megasize silver bowl to Mr. A. Ramakrishna, Chief Executive of ECC as, a memento

the entire audience, Baba materialised a gold chain and placed it around the neck of Sri. R. Chakrapani from Madras, who was the architect for the building.

The function concluded with the singing of the National Anthem.

Thereafter Bhagavan took the Prime Minister and other dignitaries to the dining hall, below the auditorium, where tables had been arranged for nearly 2000 guests for a royal Lunch in which a variety of delicacies were served. The Prime Minister and party left after the lunch.

When Bhagavan Baba returned to Sivam after the strenuous function, thousands of devotees were waiting there to have His darshan. Bhagavan blessed them all before retiring for a brief respite till the next round of darshans began at 4 PM.

In the evening, when Swami appeared before the devotees for darshan, an earnest appeal was made to Him by an old devotee that He should give His message to the devotees. Responding to the appeal, Swami spoke for over half an hour, in which He called upon all devotees to observe three precepts: Papa bheeti (fear of sin), Daiva Preeti (Love of God) and Sangha Neeti (Morality in Society). Swami said that if they all adhered to these three precepts, there would be a complete transformation in society. The large gathering of devotees was immensely happy with Bhagavan's discourse and felt that it was a unique benediction conferred on them during Bhagavan's visit.

On the 30th, when Swami was to leave for Prasanthi Nilayam around 9.30 A.M. the Nagarsankirtan was taken out by the devotees who came early in the morning to Sivam in procession and had darshan of Swami. Bhajans were held almost till the time of Swami's departure for the aerodrome.

Altogether Bhagavan's visit left memories which thousands of devotees should cherish for a long time to come.

It is no use indulging in arguments and disputations; he who clamours aloud has not grasped the truth, believe Me. Silence is the only language of the realised. Practise moderation in speech. That will help you in many ways. It will develop Prema, for most misunderstandings and factions arise out of carelessly spoken words. When the foot slips, the wound can be healed; but when the tongue slips, the wound it causes in the heart of another will fester for life. The tongue is liable to four big errors; uttering falsehood, scandalising, finding fault with others and excessive articulation. These have to be avoided if there has to be (Santhi) for the individual as well as for society.

—Baba

Love (Prema) is like a most precious diamond. It will not remain even for a single moment with selfish persons. It will not stay for even half a moment with egoistic (Ahamkara) persons. It will not remain at all with ostentatious persons. Love is alien to persons who are selfish, conceited or ostentatious.

Where, then, is this love to be found? This precious diamond can only be got in the Kingdom of Love, in the Street of Love, in the Shop of Love. It can be obtained only through a loving heart. It may be asked: Is not the whole world permeated with Love? Why, then, is not Love readily available? The love with which the world is considered to be filled is not real love. Love (Prema) cannot be associated with the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect. Anything associated with these is only attachment or affection (Anuraga). The spiritual life (Atmic life) alone is a Love-filled life. Therefore, people must lead a spiritual life, not a life subject to the body, the mind, the senses and the intellect. A life related to the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect can never be free from selfishness, conceit and ostentation.

To experience real Love (Prema) there is no need to practise any kind of meditation, worship or rituals. That is because in the practice of all these there is an element of selfishness. Prema can only be obtained by complete absorption in spirituality. It was for this reason that Sri Krishna declared in the Gita: "Sarva Dharmaan Parithyajya" (renouncing all Dharmas). Likewise, Jesus also declared: "I am the Path". Buddha, conveying the same meaning; declared "Sarvam Saranam Gachchaami" ("I am surrendering everything"). This means that the essence of all religions, the root of all scriptures, the goal of all virtues, is the experience of spiritual unity (Sarvaatmika Bhavam). The Gopikas exemplified such a spirit of surrender and oneness.

"Bhava Roga"

It may be asked whether in this mundane world it is possible to develop such a spirit of complete surrender. It may not be possible for all to be free completely from selfishness, self-interest and self-conceit. But there should be a limit to all of them. Nothing great can be achieved without restraint (Na Sreyo Niyamam vinaa). When the normal temperature of the body is exceeded, the fever is a sign of illness. Likewise, there is a limit to selfishness. When this limit is exceeded it becomes a disease. Egoism (Ahamkara) is a disease. Ostentation is a disease. Excessive self interest (swaprayojanam) is a disease. All these diseases have been described as Bhavaroga (the disease of worldliness). These are the diseases which are prevalent in the world today.

When the Divine is present in everyone it is not fitting that one should fail to recognise this. One may have the faith that God resides within him, but this is not sufficient. It is not a great thing to feel that God resides within you. You have to see yourself in God. That is the true principle of Love (Prematwam). As long as you do not see yourself in the Divine, you remain selfish and self-centered.

Man aspires for bliss (Ananda) in the world. Vedanta defines Divine Ananda as Yoga. Yoga is usually considered as some form of breathing or physical exercise. This is not the true meaning of Yoga. Yoga means Ananda or Bliss. Wherefrom can this bliss be got? Only from the One who is the embodiment of bliss. It cannot be got from possessions of any kind or from position or power. Bliss can only be got from God, who is the embodiment of Bliss.

How is this bliss to be got? Srikanth (a student who had spoken earlier) referred to the single-minded devotion of the Gopikas and Radha. The Gopikas have been misunderstood and misrepresented by commentators. Gopikas symbolise thoughts. Radha symbolises the combination of all thoughts in the mind. So, thoughts and the mind should merge in Krishna, represented by Prajna (in a human being). That is the significance of the Vedantic declaration: "Prajnanam Brahma". This Prajnanam pervades every part of the human body, the mind and the intellect. It is constant integrated awareness. All our thoughts, desires and aspirations should be merged in this Prajna.

When this Prajna (constant integrated awareness) is present in all beings as the Divine (as Brahman), what is the need, it may be asked, for the descent of Avatars? There are reasons for the advent of Avatars. There are two kinds of perceptions viz, Pratyaksham and Paroksham (direct and indirect). There are also two kinds of potencies: Internal and external. For example, there is fire within a piece of firewood. But this fire is latent and invisible. It is only when the fire latent in it is brought out that it can be used for cooking. Likewise, everybody is like a piece of firewood. The Atmic principle is latent within it. To make it manifest, some form of love has to be practised. Just as you have to strike a match-box against a coating of Sulphur on the matchbox to produce fire, Love has to merge in Love to experience the Divine.

Divine love and human love

You may consider that the love within you and that the love represented by God are the same. But there is this difference. God's love is totally selfless. It is absolutely pure. It is eternal. It is flawless. Human love is self-centered and tainted. Such a love cannot merge with God's love. It is only when one is free from egoism, pride, hatred and envy that God will abide in you. Without renunciation (Tyaga) if a person is immersed in worldly pleasures and leads a mundane life, all his devotion is only artificial and a kind of self-deception. Such devotion will not lead him to God.

The Love of God

Today the world is full of such persons. People claim that they are loving God. I have not seen a single person who really loves God. Everyone loves God for his own sake and not for the sake of God. This is pure selfishness. Man seeks all things in the world for his own reasons. Even God is sought for such a reason. God cannot be got so easily. The heart has only a single seat. There is room in it for only one person. If you install worldly desires on that chair, how can you expect God to sit on it? God will enter that seat only if you empty it of all other things.

Today in the name of Love (Prema) men are playing a game of musical chairs with their hearts. The chair of the heart is being used for occupation by different persons at different times. The Gopikas, however, dedicated their hearts to one person alone. All their thoughts were centered on Krishna. All their senses were dedicated to the Divine. They spoke only about God. Their thoughts were centered on God. They listened only to the Divine words. Their hands were engaged in Divine work: All their limbs and senses were dedicated to the Divine. They did not consider anything as their own. Krishna was their all.

(Bhagavan then related an episode from the life of Krishna to demonstrate the total devotion of the Gopikas to the Lord. Once Krishna feigned that he was suffering from a head-ache for which the cure was the application of the dust from the feet of a devotee to His head. Sage Narada sought to collect the dust from Sathyabhama, Rukmini and others, whom he regarded as great devotees of the Lord. But all of them declined to give the dust from their feet because they considered it sinful to offer their dust to be placed on the Lord's head. Ultimately Narada went to the Gopikas, who did not have the slightest hesitation to offer the dust from their feet if only it would give immediate relief to the Lord, regardless of the consequences to themselves).

Bhagavan said: The Gopikas did not consider whether it was right or wrong for them to offer the dust of their feet. They were only concerned with giving relief to their Lord by any means. They declared: "our entire life is dedicated to Krishna. His joy is ours." This was the spirit of oneness with which they offered the dust of their feet. And that very moment Krishna was rid of His ailment. By the time Narada reached Krishna, the Lord was found wreathed in smiles. Krishna told the sage: "You are boasting that you are devotees of the Lord. But none of you has the utterly selfless devotion of the Gopikas."

Love—the only means

Today there are many who claim to be devotees of the Lord and close to the Lord. But few can be described as real devotees of God. In each one there is some element of selfishness in his or her devotion. As long as there is an element of selfishness and egoism, the Lord will take no notice of such "devotees". The love of the Divine is all the time present. But like the cloud that hides the sun from a person, the selfishness and ego of the devotee comes between God's love and the devotee.

The power of grace

To proceed from the human condition to the Divine in man, the only means is the Love Principle (Prematatwa). All other means are of no avail. (Illustrating from the Mahabharata the example of the fate of Karna and the destiny of Arjuna as indicating the difference between one who does not have Divine grace and another who has the benefit of Divine grace, Bhagavan said that while Karna, who was associated with the wicked Kauravas, met with a tragic end, Arjuna, who was a firm devotee of the Lord, was blessed with victory). All Indian scriptures and Puranas demonstrate the power of the Lord's grace to transform the human to the state of the Divine. Although people have been taking birth after birth because of their attachment to worldly pleasures, they have not been able to get rid of their involvement with worldly concerns. Hence

actions which they have experienced in previous lives continue to prevent them from experiencing the Divine. It is only when one gets rid of these impure thoughts that he can experience Divine feelings.

The Love Principle is the essence of the Krishna Principle (Krishna Tatwam). It is associated with the Divine. Worldly love cannot be equated with Divine Love (Prema). The term Prema is used in ordinary parlance to describe what is really worldly attachment. People are attached more to names and forms than to the inner spirit of things. To get over this false attachment to external forms and names, it is essential to cultivate love in its purest form. There is no greater path to the Divine than this love. To manifest this love the first requisite is to get rid of selfishness and self-interest.

Dear students, dear devotees! It is not so easy to experience the Divine. You may imagine that you have comprehended the Divine. But this is a delusion. You are immersed in the affairs of the phenomenal world. This cannot lead you to the Eternal Reality. Only those who are dedicated to the realisation of the Eternal can attain it. This is illustrated by the Gopikas' total dedication of their life to Krishna. They sought the complete mergence of themselves in the Divine.

The divine and the world

People today are totally immersed in worldly concerns and do not devote any attention to the spiritual quest. It is true, involvement in worldly affairs cannot be given up totally. But all such actions can be sanctified by performing them in a spirit of dedication to the Divine. The Bhagavata demonstrates how this kind of dedicated life can be led by a devotee. It is not enough if you claim to be a devotee of the Lord. The Lord must recognise you as a devotee. Only then does one's devotion acquire value. Arjuna for a long time felt proud about his closeness to Krishna and about his devotion to Him. It was only towards the end he realised that he had to abide by the words of Krishna and completely surrender to the Lord. He then declared: "I shall carry out your words" ("Karishye Vachanam Tava").

No one should feel that it is beyond his capacity to surrender himself completely to the Lord. If there is firm determination, this can be accomplished. It is only through earnest endeavour that Divine wisdom can be got ("Shraddhaavaan Labhate Jnanam").

Today the world is afflicted with the epidemic of egoism (Ahamkara). There is really no basis for this kind of self-conceit. It is born of ignorance. It has to be totally eradicated. If every one realises that the body has been given for the pursuit of righteousness and acts on that basis, he will be able to realise the Divine.

Why avatars come

Embodiments of Divine Love! Experience the Love Principle. Thereby you will rid the world of hatred. Once hatred goes the world will be free from violence and strife. For all the cruelty and violence that we find in the world today, the root cause is selfishness. This has to be

you will experience the bliss of Love. When one is filled with Love of the Divine, all pains and troubles will be forgotten. It is to propagate this principle of Divine Love that the advent of Avatars takes place from time to time.

Although the Divine dwells in every person, this fact remains latent like oil in the til seed. To manifest the Divine within you, you have to go through certain trials and ordeals. Love of the Divine should grow as a result of such experiences of adversity, just as gold improves in brilliance the more it is heated in the crucible. Your devotion has to go through a constant purificatory process. Today all thoughts and actions are polluted in one-way or another. All one's words or looks or thoughts are polluted. Young people should realise that they have to lead ideal lives. Only then will they be true to the message of the Ramayana and other Indian epics. Every student should aim at becoming an ideal example to the world. For this purpose they should cultivate good company, the company of persons filled with Divine Love. Unlike in previous yugas, people today pretend to be what they are not. They have to get rid of their animal instincts and progress from the human to the Divine.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Prema Muditha Manase Kaho!*")

—**From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, on August 21, 1992**

Not Live in Vain

*If I can stop one heart from breaking.
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,*

*Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.*

-Emily Dickinson

The Destiny of Man

A single body

Mankind has become today not one family as the Scriptures anticipate but, what is more laudable, one single body, through the progress of Science that swallows in gigantic mouthfuls

that cascades. Through the curious working of Fate, Science that promotes belief in materialism has brought about the ' reality of the One Immanent Will that faith and hope had hitherto upheld.

We have indeed grown today into one single body nourished by earth and sky, with limbs that dig the moon and dip into the satellites of Saturn, with a nervous system that responds to the remotest bleep and with a memory that preserves the history of millions through millennia. But mankind has also grown into a maniac intent on suicide, or homicide! The beast is suffocating under the weight of its pachydermic coat, its fangs, claws and horns. It is fast sinking into its own accumulated filth. Swami has arrived to rescue mankind from perdition. He was hailed as Guru even as a toddler and who, at the mere age of fourteen announced that He had come to countermand extinction, to immobilise fratricidal fury, to cleanse its memory and motive and to feed it and foster it on a diet of Divine Love.

This role of Saviour was assumed by Swami when he responded to the anguish of helpless men caught in the inexorable march of events towards destruction. Sai has not the slightest trace of anger in His composition. His hands hold only one weapon—the weapon of Love. He is Love. He showers Love, He arouses Love, He affirms Love, He accepts Love. "If you desire to know My Nature, let Me tell you, I am Prema Swarupa," He says, "Love with Form".

Give love and get love

Love understands. Where there is understanding there is sharing and caring. "Love is self-lessness; Self is Lovelessness," Swami declares. Love involves sacrifice; it sweetens the act of sacrifice. The very first Sacrifice was performed by God who sacrificed His uniqueness and His freedom, when Maya induced the desire in Him to appear as the Many. This primal desire was the desire for love, the need to give love and get love. Love is the Law, the Truth, the perennial pattern, the Rta of the Universe, it is That to which the Universe clings; it is That which is the purpose and end of everything in existence.

The philosopher Teilhard de Chardin speaks of Love, as the property of all organised matter. "Love—that is to say, the affinity of being with being—is not peculiar to man. It is a general property of all life and as such, it embraces in its varieties and degrees, all the forms successively adopted by organised matter. In the mammals, so close to ourselves, it is easily recognised in its different modalities, sexual passion, parental instinct, social solidarity, etc. Further off, that is to say, lower down in the tree of Life analogies are more obscure until they become so faint as to be imperceptible.

"If there was no internal propensity to unite, even, at a prodigiously rudimentary level—indeed, in the molecule itself—it would be physically impossible for love to appear higher up, with us, in the 'hominised' form Driven by the forces of Love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come to being. This is no metaphor and it is much more than poetry..... Love, in all its subtleties, is, nothing more and nothing less than the more or less direct trace marked on the heart of the element by the psychic convergence of the Universe

fulfill them." The vision of Teilhard de Chardin, the mystic of modern times is much the same as that of Meister Eckhart of many centuries ago. It is also the same in its essence as the truths the Rishis of Vedic times proclaimed. When godly men speak, their words may be, many but their understanding is indivisibly ONE.

Push and pull

Our individual soul has been separated from the Supreme Soul. But the alienation has not happened due to estrangement. Fullness of Love has caused it, as it may seem. In fact, paradox lies at the very root of the Universe, its Nature and Behaviour, as Science is discovering every day. The separation is only for the sake of a Game of Love in which we run around trying to get 'back' home. There is really no 'wandering', for how can we wander away from Him, who is all-pervading? There can be no 'separation' too; for how can He who is indivisible separate us from Him, and divide into the many? But he sets each little fragment of His vast Cosmic Mind to imagine itself clothed in an amazing infinity of forms and colours and shapes and then He plays the Game of Illusion wherein they 'wander' around Time and Space, through alternating moods of agony and ecstasy.

"Who could have breathed or moved if the skies were not filled with joy and love?" asks the Upanishad. Indeed! For the need to give love and to receive it is the reason that caused Him to devise this exuberant absurdity of Maya, of the 'multitudes' that seek Him with the tribute of love, joy, the emotion with which He plays at hide-and-seek with Himself. Love is the source of joy. To love is to be joyful. We long to live because we love the world, in spite of all the contradictions it presents to us or even on account of them. Why? Because our varied moods of love and joy for the million things of the world are faint echoes of God's first Desire, to give and receive love and confer joy

It is true that agony and agitation rather than love and joy seem to be the keynote of existence in the world. But that is because we have forgotten our truth and strayed into frail falsehoods. If only we remembered that we are inseparable parts of the Vastness, that is Eternal and All-pervading, Time and Space would be as harmless to us, as the shadows that the sun casts. They leave us unscarred.

God's game

Since God's game, Maya, fosters this illusion of separation, we must strive and struggle to realise ourselves as no other than the Supreme Self. The first step in breaking through the belief in our separate identity (ego) is to help another. The association that service creates brings an understanding of the problems of the other. Understanding grows into sympathy and sympathy inevitably flowers into love. Love wishes to become one with the loved. Only in love can we realise our one-ness with all, and from that stage realise that other is one ONE, and so recover peace and quiet at last.

This stage of returning to the source of Infinite Love has been called Brahma Vihara, the Journey to God, by the Buddha who insists that he who aspires to reach this stage "shall deceive

measureless love for all creatures. Above, below and all around him, he shall extend this love." Where then, is the place for anger or hatred for there really is no 'other ' apart from ourselves? Such passions only prolong the agony of dismemberment Give Love a place in your heart, for when it is fostered there, its warmth will expand the membranes of your individuality until they fall apart and you are able to rest on the sea of Infinite Love.

Give and gain

The emotion of love however in moments of absorption is so exalting, that it is no wonder that the Bhakta resolutely declined to accept the truth that he himself is God, there being no other, and insists on trudging never endingly towards Someone who waits over the farthest horizon.

"In love, loss and gain are harmonised. In its balance sheet, credit and debit account lie in the same column and gifts are added to gains. In this wonderful festival of Creation, this great Ceremony of the self-sacrifice of God, the lover constantly gives himself to gain himself", writes Tagore in one of his essays. Since Creation dawned in a longing for love, it is love alone that fills the world, whether it is love thwarted that brings pain or love fulfilled that gives joy. Love that is selfish is love that is foolish, for then we are persisting in the belief that we are distinct entities apart and against every other in the world. But love that serves others is a ritual of great power, for it repeats that First Divine Act when the emotion of love surged in the Cosmic Being. And it is ordained that we too must sacrifice, sacrifice ourselves to regain Him.

This is the path of Seva, Swami says, "The fulfillment of man's life on earth consists in filling himself with the love of God and channelising that love into acts of service, service of all who are embodiments of God." There is really no 'other', no 'neighbour'. Everyone is oneself, for all belong to an invisible Whole. Service uplifts us, delights us, satiates our hunger, expands our horizons. Service to man is worship of God, in the one who gives and the one who gets, in the helper and the helped.

God has endowed us with this marvellous body, this unique brain, this soft supple tongue, this amazing mind, these hands that can hold the tottering and heal the trembling. These are not given to us in vain, to be neglected or to be misused for hatred, envy, lust or pride. They have been given in order that we constantly engage in a great yajna, a sacrifice of recognising and loving Him through all we do. Swami teaches us that the yearning men have to serve others is the echo of that primal desire for self-expression and self-expansion which caused the multitudes to arise; and the longing to help and care and draw close to the other is also the longing for unity that drives all beings, when tired of multiplicity. In service therefore man finds the best means of allowing his individuality to flower, his personality to be fulfilled.

Swami says that Seva, considering the served as God, is the highest spiritual sadhana, yielding fruit much quicker and more abundantly than the sadhana of japa and dhyana; for, it enables us to constantly practice in daily life that understanding, which comes only at the

saw, that vision of the divine in the donkey, as Ekanath saw.

Swami tells this story. Once Ekanath, the great mystic poet was carrying a pot of water from the sacred Ganga, as it emerged from the Himalayas to Rameshwaram, at the southernmost point of India. He had made a vow to walk the distance of fifteen hundred miles and bathe the Siva Linga at this sacred spot, at the confluence of three seas. The long pilgrimage was almost ended, he was nearing the shrine, when his eyes fell on a donkey writhing in agony as it lay dying of thirst. Ekanath ran up to it and poured the holy water, without hesitation, into that gasping parched mouth. The animal's eyes gleamed with gratitude as it looked up at its saviour but his companions were struck dumb with shock at this unorthodox breach of the vow, after so long a journey, when it was almost on the edge of fulfillment. Ekanath however exclaimed in great joy, "The purpose is realised! Shiva asked and received. Shiva came and accepted."

From 'Pathway to Peace' by Late Prof. N. Kasturi

Do not proclaim that this Name of God is superior or more efficacious than the other. To assert that Rama is superior or that Siva is superior, or even that Sai Baba is the Avatar that is the fullest of all—all this only reveals that you have not understood what Divinity is. Rama is a Name that combines the 'ra' of Narayana and the 'ma' of Namahshivaya, the mantras of the Vaishnavas and that of the. Saivites. So, Rama means, the quality of Siva and Vishnu. Or, Rama has the 'ra' of Hara (Siva) and the 'ma' of Uma (the Shakti aspect of Siva): so, Rama is the name of Sivashakti! How can faction arise when each name is so resonant with the lesson of the unity of all Names?

—Baba

Rally behind P.M. For Nation's Progress

A stirring call to the people to realise the glory of Bharat and to strive in unity for the all-round progress of the nation; was made by Bhagavan Baba, on the occasion of the inauguration of the new multi-purpose Visva Kalyana Mandapam in Secunderabad on August 29, in the presence of a large gathering in the auditorium. Bhagavan spoke after the Prime Minister Sri. P. V. Narasimha Rao had inaugurated the new edifice. Bhagavan exhorted the people to rally behind the Prime Minister and strengthen his hands in solving the country's problems. Among those present on the dais were the Governors of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan—Sri. Krishna Kant and Dr. M. Channa Reddy—the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh (Sri. N. Janardhana Reddy) and Karnataka (Sri. S. Bangarappa), the Speaker of the Lok Sabha (Sri. Shivaraj Patil), the Union Home Minister (Sri. S. B. Chavan) Union Agricultural Minister (Mr. Balram Jakhar) and the Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, Mr. Anjaneyulu.

building by the Prime Minister and described incidentally the striking architectural features of the building.

In a second poem He observed that when a child is born, no necklace of pearls or other precious gems can be seen round his neck, but every one comes into the world with a garland round his neck endowed by the Creator made up of the consequences of his good and bad deeds in previous lives.

In the course of His address, Bhagavan said:

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

Bharatiya culture is pre-eminent and unexcelled. It bears testimony to the eternal verities which are unaffected by time, place or circumstance. Sanathana Dharma is the inner core of this culture. The obverse of Sanathana Dharma is Karma (the Law of Cause and Effect).

No one can fully comprehend how Karma operates. Its operations over time, place or people defy definition. The doctrine of Karma rules over the whole world.

The law of karma

The Vedas are the primal scriptures of Bharatiyas. The Vedas have three Khandas (divisions). The first part deals with Karma-Yoga (the Yoga of Action and Reaction). The Upanishads came into existence to indicate the path of Jnana (Higher Knowledge). The Upanishads also have three divisions one of which deals with Karma-Yoga.

It is necessary to find out why the doctrine of Action (Karma) has been given primary place both in the Vedas and the Upanishads. The entire gamut of human life-birth, growth and death is governed by Karma (Actions). All the joys and sorrows man experiences, all his sins and merits, all the praise and blame he gets flow from his actions. Man is thus bound by the operation of Karma. Not realising the relationship between Cause and Effect, man indulges in actions which give pleasure for the moment. When he reaps the consequences of his bad actions, he is immersed in misery.

Hence, before undertaking any action man has to follow the Upanishadic advice and offer his salutations to the Lord of Karma. He should pray that he should be endowed with the strength and competence to perform good deeds which will produce good results.

The consequences of every action are implicit in the action itself. For instance, there is a small seed. Its entire capacity to grow into a big tree is latent within it. The seed contains within it the potentiality of growing into a tree with branches, flowers and fruits. There is an interval between the planting of a seed in the ground and its growing into a full fledged tree. Wherefrom has this tree come? Krishna has declared in the Gita "Bijam Maam Sarva Bhutanaam" ("I am the seed of all living beings"). All that you see in the world is the result of Karma. The fruit is the

beginning and an end; they are inseparable.

Role of right actions

Man has to realise the preciousness of human birth. It is highly unfortunate that people born in Bharat do not realise the greatness of Bharatiya culture. Understanding the operation of Karma is one of the essential aspects of Indian culture. Karma is not something remote. It is related to one's actions. Sin is not associated with some distant land. It is related to the actions which one does. Devotion, (Bhakti) and Wisdom (Jnana) are based on Action (Karma). Wisdom is the fruit of action.

Bharatiyas had recognised how Karma operated. Nowhere else has the secret of the Law of Cause and Effect been explored as thoroughly as in Bharat. That is the reason why Bharat was called Karma-Bhumi (the land of Karma). Having taken birth in such a sacred, sublime and great country, it is a pity Bharatiyas today are not aware of the truth about Samskaras (Right Actions).

People are making y no effort to understand the place of Right Actions in life. They should be aware of the essence of Indian culture. Everything that happens is the result of some action. Everything in creation is based upon action. Whether one believes in it or not, Karma is the cause of creation. Here is an example, you feel hungry. The hunger is appeased after you take food. But there is a chain of events like putting the food in the mouth, masticating it, sending it to the stomach, digesting it and distributing it to all parts of the body. Only after all these processes is hunger relieved. Taking food is Karma, relieving of hunger is the fruit of the action. But between the action and the fruit, a number of events take place. These events may be immediate or spread over many years, or lifetimes. But the fruits of Karma are bound to be realised some time or other. Therefore all actions have to be done in the right way. People should engage themselves in noble deeds and serve as an ideal example to the nation.

Human qualities

Fraternal feelings, ethical conduct and the sense of fellowship are the qualities which elevate human nature. People do not strive to cultivate these qualities. People should realise that bad thoughts in the mind affect every part of the human body, just as a small stone cast on a pond generates ripples which cover the entire pond. Similarly good thoughts affect the entire body. Good thoughts lead to good actions, good speech, good hearing and seeing good things. When the thoughts are bad, the consequent actions are equally bad.

The ancient history of India is full of the actions and teachings of sages who exemplified in their lives great ideals. But today, while we have considerable talk about ideals, they are not reflected in practical living.

The truth of the Law of Action and Reaction can be verified from a simple experience. If you stand before a mirror and offer a Namaskar, the image returns the Namaskar. If you assume a threatening posture before the mirror, the image reflects it back in the same manner. Reflection, reaction and resound are three aspects of how Karma operates.

For all the troubles and chaos in the world today it is our own actions that are responsible. There is no meaning in blaming others. Each person suffers from the consequences of his own actions. How can any one escape the consequences of his actions? If this fact is realised men will not find fault with others, or blame others for their troubles.

Human unity

People must, therefore, engage themselves in noble actions and strive for unity with all their fellow beings. Intellectuals today are more busy promoting divisions rather than in fostering unity. There are very few good men who seek to promote unity in diversity. The oneness of all mankind has to be realised. Names and forms are many, but the inherent divinity in everyone is the same. You see a variety of bulbs in this hall. They are different from each other. But it is the same current that flows in all of them. The same analogy applies to human beings. They may vary from each other in several respects, but the divine spark in all of them is one and the same. The Divine is common to all. There is no separate God for each country or each religion. God is one.

The people must realise the importance of unity for promoting the welfare and progress of the country. Selfishness is the cause of disunity. Only when selfishness (Swartha) is given up will people realise the Supreme (Parartha).

It is essential to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice (Tyaga). People do not realise what all can be achieved by sacrifice. When every action is done in a spirit of dedication to others, it becomes a form of sacrifice and a source of joy. When egoism is shed in the performance of actions and the desire for fruits is renounced, then sacrifice itself becomes a source of pleasure.

This magnificent auditorium is the result of the combined efforts of many persons, engineers, workers, electricians and many others. It is the outcome of their labour.

Every product is the result of action. Hence, the nature of action should be properly understood. What seems enjoyable at one time has consequences which are saddening later on. At the time of birth, a child cries "Koham" ("Who am I"). This cry should not last through life. Before death one should be able to say, "Soham" ("I am He"). Man must experience the divine in him. This is the goal of life.

Bharat is a sacred and glorious country. It is our good fortune to be born in this land. You should realise the truth of the saying, "As you sow, so shall you reap". Hence all your actions should be pure and noble and such as would promote the well-being of the nation and give you joy.

Strengthen the P.M.'s hands

I wish to convey to you something which should not be misconstrued. Last year, our Prime Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao, decided to seek retirement from politics and wanted to lead a quiet and peaceful life. He proceeded to make appropriate arrangements for this purpose. He did

positions in life are not secured by seeking them. (Swami sang a song in which a prayer is addressed to the Mind not to desire anything, lest there should be disappointment. God's grace may come unsought as in the case of Sabari and Jatayu who obtained the blessings of Rama even without their seeking it). Good or bad fortune in life comes in its own time. It is not easy, however, for everyone to leave things to the will of the Divine. Men are prevented from adopting such an attitude because they magnify other people's faults and forget their own defects. People should get rid of such an attitude. If one cannot be helpful to others, at least he should not do any harm to others.

Today, Bharat is faced with numerous difficult problems. From the moment Narasimha Rao assumed the Prime Ministership, he has been confronted with a series of problems. He has been considering them calmly and taking counsel with the—persons concerned before coming to any decision. He has accomplished many things. But everyone should lend support to him and strengthen his hands in the interests of the progress and stability of the nation. Problems are bound to come up. These are being faced and solved by Narasimha Rao. All should give him support and encouragement. All States should cooperate with him. All parties should also support him.

The nation belongs to all. This truth should not be forgotten. People must stand up for truth. There is nothing greater than truth. Truth knows no barriers of caste or community. It is the same for all.

Many people are undermining the reputation of Bharat by their actions. This amounts to treason to the nation. One who is not proud of his motherland and its reputation is worse than a corpse. All must protect the honour of the nation. They should be united. This is the message of the Vedas: "Let us all live and strive together in harmony". If only this spirit prevails among Bharatiyas, the nation will shine in all its glory. It is because people have forgotten the greatness of Bharat that our country is suffering from many troubles and difficulties. If people act together in concert, there is nothing they cannot achieve in Bharat. Determination and unity are essential.

Eschew all differences

Bharatiyas should give no room for differences of caste, religion or language. They should recognise the unity of the human family. Remember: "Caste of Humanity, Religion of Love, and Language of the Heart". If you base your actions on these three concepts, the country can make any amount of progress. Cherish these ideals in your hearts and discharge your duties.

No danger to Bharat

Bharat is faced with many grave problems and people are worried about what may happen, on seeing reports in the Press. There is no danger for Bharat (Cheers), because what are happening are only the birth pangs of changes to come. The changes will be for the good.

There must be, however, a transformation in the minds of the people. There is no use in changes in external forms. Qualities must change. There must be a change in the way of

animal qualities. The qualities which every human being should have are peace, compassion, forbearance, love and sacrifice. These are the qualities that should be developed in all people, not vices like hatred, greed, envy, pride and others. Cultivate the feeling of love. Get rid of old prejudices and differences. Foster divine feelings. Only then the nation can make all-round progress.

Faith in God

Today our Prime Minister is courageously tackling many difficult national problems with faith in God. But he needs the support of all in this task. He has the grace of the Divine but equally he needs the support of the people. The Divine is like the thread which runs through a garland. The garland needs flowers. All of you should be like the flowers in the garland. Bharat is assured of a bright future if the people of all states and the authorities everywhere lend full support to the Prime Minister in his endeavours.

Vishwa kalyana bhavanam

Embodiments of Divine Love! You must regard the construction of this magnificent mansion as a symbol of universal good (Vishwa Kalyanam). Vishwa Kalyanam means the well-being of all. There should be unity of hearts so that anything that is desirable can be accomplished. People should cooperate with each other. From today resolve to give up selfishness and achieve unity among yourselves to serve the nation.

Before I conclude I call upon all of you to regard yourselves as the children of one mother. Develop genuine fraternal feelings and eschew separatist tendencies. Concentrate on the well being of society as a whole. It is fortunate for South India and Andhra Pradesh in particular; that we have a Prime Minister from the South. You must be proud of this fact and see that he continues in office and serves the nation for a long period. Nothing should be done to weaken his position. Your only concern should be how to promote the progress of Bharat. No personal differences should come in the way of the welfare of the country. Few people know how much he is trying to make the best use of the opportunity given to him. He is worried about the nation's problems even when he is sleeping. Everyone should, therefore, lend his full support to the Prime Minister. He has God's grace to the fullest extent. But he needs also the support of the people. Only when the two come together can the results be good for the nation. Forget all your differences and come together to uphold the reputation of the nation. Bharat, which was once known for its moral and spiritual greatness, has been going down in moral stature. Every effort should be made to raise the reputation of the country. Consider today's function as an auspicious beginning for transformation of the nation. I bless you all.

(The function concluded with the singing of the National Anthem after a vote of thanks proposed by Mr. Justice Eradi).

Greed Leads to Death

So he went in all directions seeking regions where he could get vast areas of uncultivated but cultivable land. At last, he came to a Himalayan kingdom and the King gladly offered to give him of the land he hungered for; the only limit he paced was his endurance. He said the man should start walking without tarrying; he should return to the starting point before the sun sets; of the land enclosed by his route traced by his steps from start to finish would be his. That was the generous offer the King made. The greedy migrant waited anxiously for the first rays of the rising sun and he started off on the circumference of a very wide circle, running in fact until evening fell; he was so exhausted when he neared the starting point that within three yards of the starting spot he dropped dead! His heart stopped beating. He had overworked in his mad race to appropriate as many acres as he possibly could, before sunset

—Baba

"Sai Sandesh"

Bhagavan Baba inaugurated on Sept. 3rd an exhibition entitled "SAI SANDESH", got up by the students of Sri. Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam.

The exhibition was housed in the spacious halls of the Secondary School. It was designed to depict the teachings of Bhagavan Baba through charts, models, sketches, paintings, etc. A unique feature of the exhibition was the involvement of all the students from the VIII standard to the XII standard. The exhibits sought to present graphically the different human values and show how they should be observed in daily life.

An interesting feature of the exhibition was the depiction of some of Bhagavan's teachings through sophisticated electronic devices.

Some of the highlights of the exhibition were a huge "Buddhi Bird", with its wings, Sathyam and Ritam, the tail symbolising Yoga, the head representing Shraddha, and the body representing Mahatatwa. Some of the morals sought to depict abstract concepts like Vikshepa and Avarana.

Bhagavan showed keen interest in almost all the charts and models made by the students. He pointed out instances of mistakes in presentation and gave suggestions for the improvement of the exhibits.

At the end of the visit, a student of VIII standard expressed, on behalf of the students and staff, the deep sense of gratitude felt by one and all for Bhagavan's benediction on the exhibition. Bhagavan released a souvenir that had been got up for the occasion.

I am always emphasising the value of Service as a Sadhana for realising the Oneness of all in God and the oneness of one's self with God. I do not recommend the giving up of Karma; for it is

prescribed by the Scriptures. I call upon you to adhere to a new rite, Seva, a new Yagna, Sacrifice of the Ego, a new ritual of worship, Sharanagati, dedication of all thoughts, words and deeds at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and acceptance of all that happens as Gifts of Grace from Him.

—Baba

Seeing with the Sai-lens

Simply see. Quietly—with attention, continue. (sigh!) Everything arrives in its time. It cannot be forced. The Breath of Life. It arrives. Stop! This is not only a mind experience. Know it in the physical body. Take your attention—total attention to your breath. Breathe deeply—in out.

S L O W L Y ... In-hale: ex-hale through both nostrils together. Repeat, three times; breathe deeply with closed eyes.... Read on.... and give attention to the experience of breathing as you read in a contemplative way. Attend. Be aware. Who is breathing now? Is it that you are breathing... or is it that you are being breathed? Acceptance of it. Let it happen the way it is meant to happen. Enjoy it. No resistance. Breath in... Breath out Rhythm The breath's own rhythm.

Whose rhythm? Is it mine? Whose breath, this Breath of Life? Acceptance; attention; awareness; and attitude. The attitude, "not I, but the Father that dwelleth within He doeth the work." The attitude "Not my will, but Thy will be done," through me, the physical vehicle.

Whose breath is it? Can I possess it, bottle it, preserve it? Store it up beyond its moment, its momentum? Now, with the ever-present-breath-with awareness I must let go of memory of the past; let go of thoughts of the future, knowing that breath contains the Prana, the Life Force nourishment potent in every very breath. Herein lies the Cosmic healing essence. Surrender to this activity of aware breathing. In ...slowly, deeply ...let it in and ...out...let it.

Let ...allow...create the space. The potter makes the container, the cup. It is the space within the cup that makes the cup useful. Grail cup. Any cup for capacity; holds. Man invented the wheel. It is the space between the spokes that makes the wheel useful. Water-wheel; spinning-wheel. Any wheel moving. Space for velocity. Circles, spirals.

Space. Create space for aware, relaxed full yogic breath within the being that you know yourself to be. Human being! Ujjayi pranayama-healing, soothing, complete breathing and so come to know the Source of it. Whose breath? Wherever you are-I AM. Do you desire another plane ticket for example? Sigh! Ah! So ...Hum! So ...Ham... Ham ...So. Hamsa. Be where you are. Aware. Experience sigh, sigh, sigh...SAI,SAI,SAI.

still, in silence. Go within. See with ever present Sai-lens. Yoga work! Vibhuti works. SO BE IT. Hari Om, Hari Krishhna, Sai Ram.

- Margaret
(From Sai News, Australia)

"The Painting"

*Will the "road" I painted lead me to You?
The garden is white with spring blossoms and jasmines.
I watered all Your flowers with my tears.
I painted a "bench" in the garden.
A separate "chair" for You! A "swing"!
O' You have so many choices my Lord.
I invited a group of musicians into the picture.
The silent swans on my pond are thirsting for You.
The velvet rung of the red roses in my picture
Are still waiting for the caress of Your feet.*

—Guity Khoshdel, Tehran

Gokulashtami at Prasanthi Nilayam

Nowhere in the country is Gokulashtami celebrated with such charm and sacredness as in Prasanthi Nilayam.

It is a great day for the cows of the Gokulam. They look forward eagerly to the one day in the year when Bhagavan Baba, Sai Krishna, caresses them and feeds them with bananas from His own hands.

This year, the day began with the greeting of Bhagavan by the students of the Institute with the recitation of the "Gopika Githam" from the Bhagavatam, as Bhagavan came out of His sanctum precisely at 7 a.m.

The recitation in chorus of the "Gopika Githam" slokas reminded the devotees of the Raasa Leela dance in which Krishna blessed the Gopikas with His Divine company on the banks of the Yamuna.

of the Institute orchestra.

Then began the entry of the cows from the Gokulam into the Mandir compound in a procession, headed by Sai Geeta, caparisoned in all its glory, and preceded by a group of Nadaswaram players.

As the cows were lined up in front of the Mandir, Bhagavan went to each cow and fed it with bananas. Bhagavan patted each cow and tenderly caressed Sai Gita, which could not conceal her love for her Lord.

The morning's function ended with Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of prasadam to all the devotees.

In the evening, there was a large gathering in and outside the Mandir to listen to Bhagavan's Gokulashtami message.

Bhagavan's discourse was preceded by two short speeches by two students, Sri Kanth (XII standard) and Vijaya Sai (M.A. II year).

Through me O Lord! I Pray

Thoughts

They race chase clown, jump and stray
Monkey thoughts need peace at bay
Chaos, conflict cloud our skies
Thoughts seem safe beyond our eyes
Grant Sweet Sai, Good Thoughts this day
Think, through me now O Lord. I pray

Words

Words of anger, words fear
I and Mine are loud and clear
Words, like parrots, sounds that crow
Winds of words do come and go
Grant, Dear Sai, Sweet words this day
Speak through me now, O Lord I pray.

Ego desires darken deeds
Acts uncaring of others needs
Wasteful lives where demons dwell
Peace is lost in loveless hell
Grant Sweet Sai, Good Deeds this day
Act through me now, O Lord I pray.

—**Hal Honig**

The power of affluence, of riches or physical prowess cannot serve to promote devotion or lead to liberation. Nor will education be of any avail. It is only the power of God, the Divine strength, which can confer devotion and liberation and make one achieve the goal.

Free from qualities (gunas), unattached to actions, effulgent, without delusions, ever-blissful, unchanging and formless, I am the eternally liberated One.

Dear students!

In order to foster one's individual personality, everyone has to acquire knowledge of ethics and morality. Personality is not an ordinary term. It expresses the essential quality of a human being. For the Sanskrit word 'vyaktitvam' the equivalent term in English is personality. Personality is acquired only on the basis of adherence to moral principles. The term 'neeti' in Sanskrit is associated with manners and good conduct. When a man exercises discrimination in daily activity, then he is said to observe morality. A life without morality is utterly useless. The prestige of any community depends upon its morals. If morality is absent, the community comes to grief. Whether it is a nation, a society, or an individual, when they conduct themselves contrary to morality, the civilization which they might have fostered for a long time will come to ruin. One may have plenty of wealth, position, authority and much else, but all these are meretricious; morality alone enhances the worth of a human being.

Kings and emperors in Bharat from quite ancient times based their lives on morality and acquired honour and glory. It is on account of them that Bharat was called a Divine Land, a land of Karma (Right Action), a land of Yoga, and a land of Tyaga (sacrifice). The name and fame of Emperor Ashoka have survived for millennia because he practised in his day to day life the great virtues. Akbar, among Moghul emperors, has been esteemed as a great ruler because of his conduct as an emperor.

Only a moral life can be called sacred. Man is a sacred being. But when he indulges in selfishness, his sacred, divine life is undermined. The sacred Atma is fundamental for every human being. This is also called Antaratma. God as the indweller guides and directs human life as Antar-atma, the inner conscience of every human being.

In human life today selfishness and self-interest have assumed prodigious proportions. Whatever he does, whatever he sees, whatever he studies, man makes it sub-serve selfish interests. Human life has become a plaything in the hands of selfishness.

Only when selfishness is totally destroyed in the human heart, will man develop a broad-mindedness that will promote unity and sacredness among mankind.

Kama: Ravana's ruin

and greed (Lobha). These three vices are demonic in nature. When these three demonic vices grow in them, human beings lose faith in God. Besides losing faith in God, they develop also enmity towards God. Worldly desires increase. The Divine quality declines. You can find proofs of this in the Ramayana, the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata. The story of Ramayana shows how one who began his career with lust, developed hatred and enmity towards God and ruined himself. Ravana was a great scholar. He had mastered 64 types of knowledge (vidyas). He was the first one who invented an aeroplane called Pushpaka Vimana. He had mastered the languages of animals, birds and insects. There was nothing wanting by way of knowledge in Ravana. In terms of wealth and prosperity his kingdom excelled heaven itself. He did lot of penance to acquire mastery over the physical world. In spite of all these, he had faith only in the phenomenal world and not in the Divine. He did not choose to enquire who was behind all creation. The universe is the property of the Creator. Rama was verily the Over-Soul itself. Sita was Rama's Shakti. She was the daughter of Mother Earth. She was the embodiment of Nature. Ravana developed enmity towards Rama and wanted to abduct Sita. What was the result of all this? Hating God and going after Nature, how did he end? At the end of it all, not only himself, his kingdom, his entire brood were destroyed. In spite of all his knowledge and powers, he ruined himself because of his moral lapses. He did not recognise the divinity within him.

What is the lesson to be learnt from Ravana's fate? It is this: However much of worldly knowledge you may have, you should seek Atma Vidya, knowledge of the Atma. Your parents or relations may be distant from you. But God is not distant from you. God is always with you, in you, behind you and around you and He will protect you. Giving up the Divine, which is so close to you, and going after worldly happiness, is fraught with danger. Ravana made all efforts to satisfy his own desires, became an enemy of God and was ultimately destroyed.

Lesson from the Bhagavatam

Next, you have the Bhagavatam. The Bhagavata teaches the lesson that anger destroys people. In the Bhagavata, Hiranyakasipu looked upon God as his enemy. He deemed himself the supreme Lord. He felt that there was no power greater than himself. Hiranyakasipu was a great scientist. He plumbed the depths of the ocean. He had control over the five elements. Despite all these accomplishments he developed enmity towards God. He subjected his son, Prahlada, to innumerable ordeals because he was a devotee of Narayana. He tried to drown Prahlada in the ocean and hurl him from the top of a mountain. He got Prahlada bitten by snakes. But Prahlada survived all the ordeals. Prahlada was always chanting the name of Lord Narayana, whom Hiranyakasipu hated. Anger causes destruction of wisdom. And when wisdom is lost, everything is lost—honour, wealth, position and life itself. Scientific knowledge without wisdom is of no use. Along with science there should be discrimination.

The Ramayana teaches how a person suffers on account of evil desires. The Bhagavata teaches lessons as to how a person suffers on account of anger and hatred. All their knowledge and powers could not save Ravana or Hiranyakasipu. It is only God who can give protection. Developing enmity towards God Ravana, and Hiranyakasipu courted disaster.

Duryodhana signifies one who has wicked thoughts. His minister was Dussasana. Dussasana means one who promulgates bad laws. A combination of these two led to the growth of greed. On account of their greed (lobha) the Kauravas were totally destroyed. On one occasion Krishna said: "Arjuna means a person whose heart is pure immaculately". Krishna told Arjuna (on the battlefield): "Arjuna! Get up, get up Dhananjaya. Destiny is all powerful. Justice always wins. Selfishness will end in ruin. This is the nature of Yuga-dharma. Know the truth (of what is to come). Dhritarashtra may be the father of a hundred children. But, there will not be even one to perform the last rites for him. That is how fate works." Krishna thus revealed to Arjuna the fate of the Kauravas in the beginning itself. Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons. Of what use were they? At the end not even one son remained to perform his obsequies. The reason is greed. The Kauravas were not prepared to give to the Pandavas their rightful share. Duryodhana wanted to keep everything to himself, including what belonged to others. This kind of selfishness is called Lobha or greed.

In the Ramayana because of desire (Kama) Ravana was destroyed. In the Bhagavata Hiranyakasipu, despite his prodigious knowledge and power, was destroyed on account of his anger against God.

Ravana, Hiranyakasipu and Duryodhana hated God and were utterly destroyed. The basic difference between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was in their attitude towards God. The Pandavas had full faith in God. They thought God was their all. The Kauravas were indifferent to God. All they wanted was only the kingdom. Before the Kurukshetra war, Arjuna went to Krishna to seek His help and Duryodhana also went to Krishna. Krishna saw both of them coming. He closed his eyes and acted as if He was sleeping. He wanted to teach the world the difference between the two. When he was awakened he found Arjuna sitting at his feet. Duryodhana was full of ego. He thought: "I am a king. How can I sit at the feet of Krishna?" He took his seat behind the head of Krishna. On opening His eyes, Krishna saw Arjuna, who was sitting at his feet. Krishna asked: "Brother-in-law, why have you come?" Duryodhana was filled with jealousy. He reflected: "As soon as He got up Krishna is talking to Arjuna and not to me." He did not realise that it was only natural for Krishna to see Arjuna first because he was sitting at Krishna's feet. Arjuna got up and offered namaskar. Krishna knew that Duryodhana was sitting behind. He asked Arjuna, "What do you want?" Duryodhana came closer and said: "Krishna I have also come." Krishna said: "So, both of you have come. I have two things to offer. On one side I am alone. On the other side there is my entire army. Do you want my army and kingdom or Myself?" Being apprehensive that Arjuna might ask for the Army, Duryodhana came forward and said: "Krishna, I want your army." He said: "Duryodhana, I give you my army, You can go." Arjuna told Krishna: "Swami, I do not want anything except you. I will be happy if I have you alone."

Right from the beginning, the Pandavas believed in "God first, the world next and finally the I." The belief of the Kauravas was: "I first, the world next and God last." So, for them God was lost. In order to prevent a war between the Kauravas and Pandavas, Krishna played the role of an envoy. Duryodhana felt that the Pandavas were successful because of the support of

came to Hastinapura. Vidura was aware of these plans. Krishna entered the Assembly of the Kauravas along with Vidura. The blind king Dhritarashtra addressed Krishna and said: "The Pandavas and the Kauravas are cousins. When they are children of two brothers, you should have the same attitude towards them. Why are you prejudiced against the Kauravas? Why do you love the Pandavas?" Krishna replied. "Dhritarashtra: You are not merely suffering from physical blindness; mentally also you are blind. I shower my grace on those who take refuge in me. The one who is close to a fire gets both warmth and light. The Pandavas have been close to the fire. They are getting the wisdom and the grace in the form of light and fire. The Kauravas are staying far from the fire." Here fire refers to Jnanagni, the fire of wisdom. The Pandavas were near and dear to Krishna. To whom can you compare them? In our body the head is very important: Next the shoulder, the stomach, and the legs. The body consists of these four parts, but it is useless without the heart. Krishna told Dhritarashtra: "Oh blind king, I am giving the analogy of a body with reference to the Pandavas. In this body, Dharmaja may be compared to the head, Arjuna to the shoulders, Bhima to the stomach and Nakula and Sahadeva to the legs. In it, Krishna is the heart. Without Krishna, there are no Pandavas. Without the Pandavas there is no Krishna. That is the kind of mutual relationship between them. They are mutually inter-dependent."

Krishna made this declaration in the open court. So dear were the Pandavas to the Lord. As there was protection for the Pandavas from Krishna, though they lost the kingdom and everything else, Krishna was able to get back the kingdom and everything else and confer joy on them. Success comes to those who have the protection of God: When Dhritarashtra asked Sanjaya who would win the war, Sanjaya answered: "Where there is Krishna, the Yogeshwara, and Partha with bow and arrow, there justice will prevail and there will be victory. This is my firm conviction." Pandavas firmly believed in dharma and God.

The Kauravas went and prostrated at the feet of their mother, Gandhari, before the start of the war. She had blind-folded her eyes and was not able to see them. She caressed Duryodhana and blessed him. She observed: "Yatho Dharma thatho jayah." "Where there is Dharma, there is victory." But they had no righteousness on their side. Even the mother blessed them in that manner. Their wickedness was responsible for this. They went to their preceptor Dronacharya, and offered namaskar. Dronacharya declared: "Where there is Dharma, there is Krishna; where there is Krishna, there is victory." Thus both mother and their preceptor blessed in these terms. Neither the mother nor the preceptor blessed them with success. The Kauravas relied on their wealth and the power of their arms. But, there is need for God's grace. Along with God's grace, there could be wealth, position, power and knowledge.

Dear students! Pursue your studies. But, together with education, earn the blessings of your parents. In addition, earn the grace of God. Despite all his knowledge, authority, power and prowess, what happened to a warrior like Karna. He lacked God's grace.

Earn God's grace. That is true spiritual education. Along with spiritual education, you may pursue worldly education. A basic requirement for all this is good character. Morality alone helps one in a number of ways. If your conduct is not good, society will not respect you. As long as

derision. You may not have any power, but morality will confer honour and respect.

To recognise the power of the Divine, here is an illustration from the Ramayana: Rama and Lakshmana went to protect the yaga performed by the sage Vishwamitra. There were demons who wanted to undo the yaga performed by Vishwamitra. Mareecha was one of them. He was the son of the ogress Thataka.

As soon as Rama espied Mareecha, with one arrow he dispatched him far away. Mareecha recognised then the power of Rama. He firmly believed that Rama had the power of Divinity. From that moment he gave up his demonic quality. When he was in this state Ravana came to him to seek his help for kidnapping Sita. Ravana said: "I want to kidnap Sita. Rama and Lakshmana are there. Become a gold deer and divert their attention." Folding his palms, Mareecha told Ravana: "Oh King of Demons! You are having so much confidence in your physical power. Rama is not an ordinary man. I have experienced his prowess. You have lost your senses. Do not embark on this enterprise. You can never achieve victory over Rama." In a number of ways Mareecha, sought to advise Ravana. There is a saying: When destruction is impending one's intelligence will be perverted. Ravana was in rage. He said: "Mareecha will you obey my command or shall I sever your head?" Mareecha thought within himself: "When I become a golden deer Rama may kill me. If I go against Ravana, he will kill me. Death is certain either way. Instead of meeting with death at the hands of Ravana, it is better I die at the hands of Rama." Mareecha did not like to be killed by the wicked King Ravana. That is why Mareecha took the form of the golden deer.

Dear Students! The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata teach the lesson that desire, anger and creed cause destruction. Fix your faith on God and not on the things of the world. When you have faith in God, your discrimination will be perfect. You will be guided by your conscience, which will always lead you properly. In Vedantic parlance, this conscience is called Chit. God is Sat-Chit-Ananda. Sat means Being, Chit means Awareness. Where the two are combined there is bliss. That is the meaning of BABA = Being+Awareness+Bliss=Atma.

Dear students! You are all aspirants of Bliss. You should enjoy bliss. You have to combine Sat and Chit to realise Ananda. Without purity (Sat), there can be no divinity. Without divinity there is no bliss. Always think of God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi Nahi.*"

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute Hostel at Prasanthi Nilayam on September 17, 1992

The Avatar as Liberator

*Nishkriyo Nithyo Nirvikalpo Niranjanah
Nirvikaaro Niraakaaro Nithyamukthosmi
Nirmalah*

*"Actionless, ever abiding, free from delusions, ever blissful unchanging, formless,
ever liberated and untainted am I"*

God transcends the Gunas (attributes). He is without cause. He is without form and is unchanging. He is beyond all thoughts and fancies. He is eternal, pure, omniscient and infinite. The cosmos is the embodiment of the Divine. There is nothing, not even an atom, in the world without the Divine.

Embodiments of love! Inside us and outside and all around there is air. But it cannot be seen, nor can it be grasped by the hand. Can you deny the existence of air for this reason? How can one exist if there is no air? To deny the existence of air is to deny one's own existence.

God is all-pervading. He is omnipresent. He transcends time, space and circumstances. According to one's level of understanding of the Divine, God exists at that level. The mind is the means of comprehending everything in the world. In the world, which is a projection of the mind, the Lord exists as Universal Consciousness (Chittaswarupa).

All the animate and inanimate objects in the world are manifestations of the Divine (Vishnu swarupa). It is foolish to look at the cosmos and deny the principle that pervades the cosmos. Equally is it not foolish to look at the universe, which is the embodiment of the Divine, and deny the existence of the Divine? That is the reason why the scriptures declared: "Pasyannapi na pasyathi Mudho" (The foolish one, even though he beholds the Lord of the cosmos, does not recognise Him.)

What is the reason for this failure? Man is looking at the cosmos as a physical phenomenon (Vishwabhavamu). He does not look at it from the point of view of divinity. It is only when the attitude changes that the Eternal will also be seen differently. The external world is a reflection, a resound and reaction of the inner feelings. The outer world has been described as a reflection of the inner being. What is felt within appears as a phenomenon outside. Therefore, it is only when every man renounces the worldly point of view (Prakriti) and adopts a divine point of view that he can comprehend divinity in the cosmos.

For man to acquire peace, he has to cultivate sacrifice (Tyaga) and get rid of the sense of dualism. The highest wisdom consists in seeing the One alone (Advaita Darshanam Jnanam). The shedding of all attachment is sacrifice (Tyaga). The Gita declares that supreme peace is obtained only through Tyaga.

Once Suka, the son of Sage Vyasa, renouncing all attachments left his home. Unable to endure his departure, Vyasa followed Suka. Vyasa appealed to him: "Dear son you should not leave your home." Suka told him: "You are not a father nor am I a son. Both of us are embodiments of Bliss. Because of the forms which we bear, you consider yourself as the father and me as the son. The world consists of forms. You cannot comprehend the Divine without giving up attachment to forms. You cannot be the Seer without giving up the seen. You are carried away by your attachment to the external world."

As soon as he heard this, Vyasa experienced a mental transformation and started considering himself as an embodiment of bliss.

It is asked: Is it possible to sacrifice (worldly things)? The answer is: It is not impossible if you make a determined effort. Unfortunately, man today is unable to give up addiction to even the most trivial things. Many are unable to give up cigarettes or bidis, tea or coffee. If one cannot give up such acquired tastes, how is he going to give up qualities like attachment and hatred (raga and dwesha)?

Worldly love and true love

Man is in essence the embodiment of complete love. (poornaprema) But this love is constantly changing because of attachment to forms. When he is born, he depends on the mother and is deeply attached to her. As he grows, giving up attachment to the mother, he develops attachment to friends in the outside world. He regards his friends as his life itself. As the years pass, he gets married. Deeming his wife as the breath of his life, he gives up his friends. As children are born, he wearies of his wife. He gets more attached to the children and interests himself in their education. After some time differences arise between the children and the father. At that stage the father attaches great value to wealth. This becomes the source of discord between father and sons. The affection which started with love of the mother ends in love of wealth. And then, he becomes a prey to greed. It is evident from this that changes in the objects of one's affection bring about changes which cause grief. This kind of love is not proper love. Love which arises at one moment and fades the next moment is not love at all. True love shines like a pure divine flame in the heart of the man whose soul has no birth and death. True love is not subject to growth and decay. Whatever grows or declines is related to the ego. True love should be regarded as an effulgent flame.

Janaka's Raja Yoga

Once, Emperor Janaka approached the Sage Yagnavalkya and asked him: "O! Sage! Please let me know the facts about my previous life." The Sage replied: "What is past is past. There is no use in recalling it. You have completed a journey along a road. Do not bother about the road that has been traversed. It does not redound to your glory." (Although the sage used many arguments to dissuade Janaka from persisting in his request, Janaka was insistent on knowing about his previous birth. Yagnavalkya then resorted to his divine insight and told the Emperor: "Janaka, your wife in the present birth was your mother in your previous life." On hearing this, Janaka was shocked. He reflected: "What a wicked person have I been to treat my former mother

his mother, and giving up all attachments to worldly things, began to pursue spiritual wisdom. (The spiritual discipline he practised is known as Raja Yoga).

When, while performing one's duties, one cherishes divine aspirations and contemplates on God, leading a purposeful life, it is called Raja Yoga. This kind of devotion to duty, while pursuing one's spiritual Sadhana, was exemplified by Emperor Janaka, who attained liberation in this way. Every person has to discharge his duties in this spirit. Then, duty is God.

Krishna and Shishupala

Once a great assemblage of kings and sages had gathered at a yajna performed by Yudhishtira. In that assemblage Shishupala and Dantavakra levelled abuses at Krishna recklessly. They rebuked Dharmaja (Yudhishtira) for giving precedence to Krishna by offering him the first honours (Agrathaambula) at the assembly. They asked: "Are there not more eminent and worthy preceptors in this assembly than Krishna? There are, in this assembly, yogis, Rishis and eminent ascetics. There are Acharyas (preceptors) like Dronacharya, Krupacharya and others. Bhishmacharya is preeminent among them. When such preceptors are present, why give the place of honour to Krishna?" Shishupala referred sneeringly to the boyhood pranks of Krishna to suggest that he was unworthy of such high honours.

Dharmaja could not bear listening to the abuses of Shishupala. His mind was racked with anguish. At that moment Krishna took the plate on which the offerings had been made to him, and hurled it at Shishupala's throat. Krishna did not wield his Sudarshana Chakra (discus). He only threw the plate at Shishupala. That plate severed Shishupala's head. Dharmaja was happy. The very next moment, the blood coming out of Shishupala's body flowed towards Krishna's feet while a flame from Shishupala's body merged in Sri Krishna.

How moksha is got

Dharmaja was even more astonished at this phenomenon. Dharmaja wondered, "Should the soul of a wicked person like Shishupala get merged in the Divine? Should his blood touch the Lord's feet?" Dharmaja's mind was filled with such doubts. Unable to contain himself, he went to the sage Narada and sought from him an explanation of the inner significance of what had happened. Narada said: "Praise and blame, abuse and appreciation are all related to the body and not to the Atma. You imagine that Krishna is merely the physical form in which you see Him. Because of this misconception, you interpret praise and blame in worldly terms. But the Divine is not confined to the body. He is eternally pure. He is ever pure and omniscient and omnipresent. For such a Lord, both abuse and praise have no meaning. However, in the world many persons secure liberation Moksha by abusing the Lord, many others achieve salvation by adoring God. Others achieve liberation by friendship with the divine. Some achieve the same through Love. But wicked persons achieve liberation more easily than those who love the Divine. The wicked person achieves merger in the divine very quickly. The devotee goes through many trials and tribulations before attaining liberation. What is the difference between the two types of merger? The devotee who merges in the Divine after experiencing many trials and

momentary merger. It is not an experience of bliss.

Bali and Vamana

This means that all persons may attain merger with the divine. But the devotee who surrenders himself to the Lord attains everlasting merger. The manner in which the Atmic Principle operates has to be properly understood. It appears as if many bad, sinful and unrighteous persons in the world secure liberation while many good devotees appear to be suffering from many difficulties and troubles. These things, however, should not be viewed purely from the external point of view. The inner secret of the spiritual process should be understood. It was to give such an inner spiritual experience to Emperor Bali that the Lord assumed the form of Vamana and came to him.

Bali was the grandson of Prahlada, who was the son of Hiranyakasipu. No one mentions the name of Bali's father Virochana, who was a wicked asura. While Prahlada's father, Hiranyakasipu was a hater of Hari, Bali worshipped Hari. Bali was ruling over his realm righteously. He loved his subjects as his own children. The land enjoyed plenty and peace. "As is the king, so are the subjects" is an old saying. The ancients always prayed for righteous rulers. Emperor Manu laid down three prescriptions. They are: "Bhadram Pashyanthu" (See what is good). "Bhadram Shrunvanthu" (Listen to what is good). "Bhadram Kurvanthu" (Do what is good.) These are the life-breath of righteous conduct (Dharma). It is not enough for us merely to say "See good, hear what is good and do what is good". These injunctions have to be observed. If these are not observed, righteousness will cease to exist. Emperor Bali practised these three precepts and inspired his people to observe them.

HIRANYAKSHA AND HIRANYAKASIPU

On one occasion Prahlada's father, Hiranyakasipu went to his mother to console her on the death of Hiranyaksha (Hiranyakasipu's elder brother). The mother was wailing over the corpse of her son. Hiranyakasipu told his mother: "Mother, this whole world is transient. Every being is a traveller in this world of Karma and after completing one's pilgrimage, one returns to the place from which he came. Such being the case, why do you grieve? Moreover, my elder brother, who hated Hari, was slain by him. That is his good fortune. He did not die at the hands of some ordinary person. The Creator became his destroyer. The one who created him also punished him. How fortunate was my brother! I am praying for a similar end for myself." On hearing these words, the mother was happy and declared, "Be it so".

Hiranyakasipu was killed by Hari and thereby his wish was fulfilled. This episode indicates how God is realised even through hatred and abuse of the Divine.

Bali's gift to Vamana

Vamana sought from Emperor Bali three-foot steps of land. What is the reason for the Lord appearing as a dwarf before Bali? When the Lord could measure the earth and the heavens with two steps (after Bali had made the offering that Vamana wanted), why did He appear at first as a dwarf? This shows that however mighty a person may be, when he appears as a supplicant he

giver of gifts acquires a high stature. Bali realised the greatness of his status as a giver. He rejoiced over his good fortune. When Bali agreed to make the gift which Vamana sought, Shukracharya intervened to tell the Emperor: "Don't give Him what He asks. He is not a mere Brahmin lad. He is Lord Vishnu Himself." Bali replied: "O Guru, I esteem no one higher than God. I will rather give up the preceptor than renounce God".

There are any number of people in the world who are willing to make gifts of wealth, education and many other things, but there are few who offer themselves as a gift. Considering the gift which he was making to Vamana as a total offering of himself, Bali made the gift. Bali declared: "I am offering my wealth, my family and everything else and surrendering myself totally to you. O Lord: Save me." Bali offered his all to the Lord.

After the Lord had used two footsteps to measure, the earth and the firmament, Bali prayed to the Lord to place his foot upon his head for the third foot-step. What is the inner meaning of this action? As the Lord had measured the entire earth with one foot-step it meant that the place occupied by Bali was also covered by the first step. What separate claim could he make regarding his head? The inner significance of this should be understood. By measuring the earth the Lord had covered the earthly realm. By His second step He had covered the heavenly realm. By placing his foot on the head of Bali, the Lord covered the realm of the mind (Manorajyam). This indicates that the Lord accepted and received from Bali the kingdom of his mind.

Moksha for Bali

The mind is at the root of this phenomenal world. The mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation for men. It is only when one is free from the trammels of the mind that he obtains true liberation (Moksha). Vamana conferred liberation on Bali by freeing him from his bondage to the mind. It should be realised that Vamana did not come to Bali just to seek a gift. He came to Bali to liberate him. He came to Bali as a protector. He sought to make Bali an ideal example to the world. For what reason? Bali was the very embodiment of righteousness. He was a just ruler. In looking after the welfare of his subjects, he was exemplary. He excelled also in his generosity and his adoration of the Divine. He was steadfast in his faith. The advent of Vamana was intended to glorify Bali and make him an ideal example to the world.

Emperor Bali made one request to Vamana: "O Lord, my virtues are, not very important. The devotion of my people is of great importance. I could be a great ruler because of the good qualities of my subjects. It is only when the goodness of the subjects and righteousness of the ruler are both present that there is real fulfillment. Lord Harayana, it is not enough if you give salvation to me alone. My subjects are responsible for making me what I am. You must bless my people also." Bali appealed to the Lord to permit him to visit his people once a year. Bali prayed that in the month of Shravana, when the Moon is in the constellation of Shravana and on a Saturday he should be allowed to appear among his subjects. Unfortunately, this year, the Shravana month is over. Only the Shravana constellation is present today. Vamana granted Bali's prayer. The Kerala people observe this day as a festival day in the belief that on this day Bali visits their homes and blesses them.

Significance of Onam

There is, however, another significance for the Onam festival. Onam means wearing new clothes. But is it enough to wear new clothes? The word 'Vastra' not only means cloth but also means the heart. Therefore, the significance of wearing new clothes (vastra) is that one should make the heart new by getting rid of all bad thoughts and feelings.

Today in Kerala every home is cleaned and a festoon of green leaves is hung over the front door and the trunks of plantain trees are put up in front of each house. The significance of this observance is that both the external dwelling and the internal heart should be kept clean and pure, because God dwells both inside and outside of everything in the world. The real purpose of our festivals is that they should be an occasion for purifying our heart and getting rid of selfishness. (Swami pointed out the scientific significance of having festoons of green leaves at the entrance of houses and the use of cow-dung for cleaning the floors inside and outside houses. Swami also pointed out that the sweet preparations made from bananas by Keralites on festive occasions had special dietetic properties, besides being tasty.)

The offering of sweets to the Lord on festive occasions has a spiritual significance. The Lord is the very embodiment of sweetness (Madhura). Krishna took birth in Madhura itself. The inner purpose of partaking sweets on festive days is to cultivate sweet thoughts and feelings. Bad thoughts and bad feelings should be given no room.

Purity of heart

Although Emperor Bali was of Rakshasa lineage, he exemplified great virtues and sought to promote among his people noble feelings and Godly qualities. Though born in a family of Rakshasas, he was a devotee of God. What matters is not the lineage or caste of a person. What matters is the way one feels and thinks. Everything is transformed by the nature of one's thoughts. Therefore, everyone should give up worldly feelings and develop devotion to God. This is the means to the realisation of oneness with the Divine. One should not make a distinction between the phenomenal world and the Divine. The cosmos is permeated by the Divine, and there is nothing in the world apart from the Divine. But, because of attachment to the body and out of egoistic feelings, men react to praise or blame as affecting them. They ought to be indifferent to them. If one abuses loudly, it will be lost in the air. If the abuse is uttered in a low voice, it remains with him. Why should one be concerned about accusations or get agitated over them? Because there are few who express this point of view, people today are making themselves victims of praise or blame.

People are lost in the observance of external rituals. The Lord is not concerned with formal observances. The Lord cares only for the purity of the heart. The saint Thiruthondar expresses this feeling in one of his hymns. He exclaimed: "O Rama: I am worshipping you with a pure heart." Purity of heart is essential. Without such purity all forms of worship and all pious acts are of no avail. True spirituality consists in getting rid of the demonic and animal qualities in one and cultivating godly qualities.

times, it signifies the desire for peace of body, peace of mind and peace of the Atma. Men should aspire for this triple peace. People go on building rest houses. But they do not build 'peace houses'. Peace of mind is most important. It can be got only by renunciation. Egoism and possessiveness have to be utterly eradicated.

Emperor Bali was a supreme example of one who had completely given up the ego and attachment. It is not enough to offer worship to Bali or praise him. People must practise the qualities which Bali represented. People must develop Bali's spirit of generosity. They must be prepared to offer themselves totally to God as Emperor Bali did. Many people go on reciting the name of Rama, but how many follow his example either in the matter of obeying their parents' commands or cherishing love for their brothers? The real devotee of Rama should develop Rama's qualities. A devotee of Krishna should at least follow one or two precepts of Krishna. The birthdays of great men are celebrated mainly by feasting and not by following their example. This is not the way to observe their birthdays. You must give birth to the qualities of the great men within you when you celebrate their birthdays.

Keralites' devotion

Embodiments of the Divine Atma: From ancient times the people of Kerala have been adhering by and large to their old traditions. It used to be said that Kerala is a communist area and atheism is rampant there. The truth is that Kerala is a theistic country. Other things are only part of the game of politics. At heart the people of Kerala are filled with devotion. Nambudiripad was a communist leader and was for some time Chief Minister of Kerala. But he translated the Upanishads. The spiritual urge is present in all Keralites. Political changes may come and go, but the inner feelings remain unchanged. The

Kerala people are fortunate in having been blessed with the advent of three Avatars in their country. I desire that you should develop your devotional tendencies and sanctify your lives. The people of Kerala are specially devoted to the worship of Krishna. It is Krishna as a child that is worshipped in Guruvayur. I desire that they should experience the bliss of the worship of Krishna and share it with all others in the world.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Govinda Krishna Jai*".

From Bhagavan's discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 9-9-92

Why a Hospital, Where the Avatar is

...Some of you may ask why there should be a hospital at all, here! Why should not Baba cure diseases by an exercise of His Will, that is the question. Well, for one thing, this hospital is not My only Hospital. 'X' has a hospital in Madras where disabled children are treated and trained to

everywhere are mine. I visit them all. Why, all those who call out from their hearts for succour, in whatever language, from whatever clime, whether from hospitals or homes, are Mine. Do not confine Me to these few acres around the Prasanthi Nilayam. Wherever a person craving for Prasanthi lives and prays, there a Prasanthi Nilayam exists.

You should remember another point. The hospital serves to increase faith, to demonstrate Divinity and to remove doubt. That is also necessary. Besides you have to mark time, in consonance with the song that is sung. There are many who are hungry for medical treatment and they are satisfied only if drugs are given and injections administered. Their faith in Grace is not yet strong. So, a hospital is required for such.

—Baba, SSS Vol. III

GURUDEV VANI

SUMMER SHOWERS IN BRINDAVAN

“Aham Brahmasmi”

Students!

You are neither sinners nor meritorious. You are not pleasure-seekers, nor are you yogis. You are neither Mantra nor Yantra nor Tantra. You are not committed to action or to enjoyment. Who, then, are you? "Satchindananda swarupam Sivoham, Sivoham." You are ever the embodiments of auspiciousness. Sai Leela (who had spoken earlier) had reminded you of all deities appearing in one form (Sarvadevata swarupam). There are no such deities. The combined form of all human beings represents the unified form of all deities. The Vedas declare "Sahasra Sirshaa Purushah Sahasraaksha Sahasrapaad" ("the Lord has a myriad heads, a myriad eyes and a myriad feet").

You are what you are, not somebody else. Whether it be a pauper or a millionaire, a pandit or an ignoramus, a child or an old man, a man or a woman, when they introduce themselves everyone uses the word, "I", "I", "I", (Nenu in Telugu). If birds and animals could speak, they would describe themselves as "I am a cat, I am a monkey, I am a dog" and so on. Thus "I" is found everywhere. The cosmos is based on the consciousness of "I". "I" is not only the basis, it is the very form of the cosmos. Wherefrom has this "I" originated? In fact, it has no origin. It is a principle which exists in all beings at all times.

What is the "I"?

If we examine the phenomenal world, we can see that terms like "you" and "he" and "we" came into existence only after the term "I". What is this "I"? Who is this "I"? It is the embodiment of the Atma. Where does the Atma dwell? It is all-pervading. The Shrutis have

That which is the embodiment of compassion is Hridaya. Therefore, the term "I" refers to that which is filled with compassion.

If a student is asked "Who are you"? He may reply, "I am Rangayya or Ramayya". If you ask him "When did you come?" he will reply, "I came on May 20 for the Summer Course." What is it that has come? It is the body. It is in relation to the body that the student says that he came on the 20th. Here the reply is based on identification of himself with the body. The next day the same student says, "My stomach is upset". When he says, "My stomach", there is an obvious distinction between him and the stomach. When one refers to "my hand", "my head", "my belly", "my leg" and so on, obviously he is different from these organs. When one says, "This is my towel", the towel is separate from the owner.

The seer and the seen

The question naturally arises, "Who are you"? This question has to be fully explored. One makes himself separate from all physical objects. The entire cosmos is thus made up of two elements. "This" and "I". "This" refers to what is seen (drishyam). "I" is the seer. We use the terms, "This is a table", "This is an auditorium". We cannot refer to any object without first using the word "This". By the use of the term "This", the particular object that is referred to is made clear.

That which is seen is perceived only because there is a Seer. When there is no Seer, there is no Seen. People say that the eyes see. But on what basis do the eyes see. It is not the eyes that see. There is something more basic. For instance, when a bulb sheds light, it is not the bulb that illumines. It is the current that makes the bulb shed light. Likewise all the objects in the world that are present are perceptible and made manifest by the perceiver.

"Aham Brahmasmi"

Thus the principle of "I" is all pervasive. People may call themselves by different names. But the one thing that is common to all of them is the concept of "I". The very first word in the universe was "I". I (Aham) is the first name of the Lord. "Aham Brahmasmi". Aham comes first and Brahma comes afterwards. This means that "Aham" is the name of the Lord. For everyone, therefore, the term "I" is always present.

Creation proclaims the will of the Divine. All beings in creation are images of the divine. The advent of man is for the purpose of proclaiming to the world the glory of the Creator. Man is the image of the Creator. The "I" indicates the oneness of man and the Creator. Hence, the nature of the "I" has to be explored. Physical desires become barriers to the discovery of the true nature of "I". Clouds which have been caused by the sun hide the sun from view. How, then, are we to see the sun? We know that the sun is there, but is not visible because it is covered by clouds. When the wind blows, the clouds are scattered and the sun is visible again. The fire in a burning piece of charcoal is not visible when it is covered by ashes. The reason is that the ashes, which came out of the fire, have covered the fire. To see the fire, we have to remove the ashes.

Man today performs various spiritual exercises. These are of nine kinds: listening to the praise of God, singing the glories of God, remembering the name of the Lord, adoring the Lord's feet, service to the Lord, prostration, worshipping the idol of the Lord, cultivating friendship towards the Lord, complete surrender of the self to the Lord. People think that these nine forms of devotion are for the purpose of realising the Atma. This is a mistake. These forms of worship are intended to shed the Anatma (that which is not the Atma). When the Anatma is cast off, the Atma shines of its own accord, just as the burning charcoal is perceived when the ashes are removed and the sun is perceived when the clouds move away.

The Atma is omnipresent. Only if it is confined to one place, will you have to search for it. But Atma is present everywhere. When you want to experience it you have to get rid of the Anaatma that envelops it.

What are Atma and Anatma? In reality there is no such thing as Anatma. Anatma is merely the inability to perceive the Atma. For instance, here is a light that is burning. As long as the light is burning, you cannot have darkness. When you switch off the light, there is darkness. Wherefrom did this darkness come? It did not come from anywhere. The mere absence of light produced the darkness. When there is light darkness goes. So, darkness is simply the absence of light. As long as one does not experience the Atmabhava, he will be immersed in the Anatma. When the Atma is experienced the Anatma feeling disappears.

The mind and the atma

It is because one has lost the vision of the Atma that he is caught up in the vagaries of the mind (Anatma Bhava). This is like depending on the light of the moon when the sun is not shining. Forgetting the effulgence of the Sun (the Atma), man relies on the mind, which is like the moon that sheds the reflected light from the sun. All spiritual practices in which people are engaged today are related to the mind only. This is totally wrong. By blindly adhering to certain traditional practices people have fallen a prey to peacelessness.

Spiritual exercises should not be performed mentally. The mind is like the thief who cannot be expected to catch a thief. The mind instead of seeking the Atma, interests itself in other things. It turns man away from the Atma and involves him in illusory pleasures of the world. Hence, spiritual exercises based on the mind cannot lead man out of the darkness of ignorance. When the Atma is experienced, the mind will cease to exist.

When the mind is absent, there is no need for control of the mind. Once the Atma is experienced, the mind control becomes superfluous. It is like the light of the moon fading in the presence of the sunlight.

Hence, what men have to seek and acquire is the bliss of the Atma (Atmanandam) not the pleasure of the mind, the body or the senses. All the latter forms of happiness are transient.

of the Atma. This may be illustrated by an episode from the Bhagavata. It was one of the sports of Krishna to go stealthily into the houses of the Gopikas and upset pots containing milk and curds. The Gopikas, who were worried about Krishna's pranks, were keen to catch him red handed. Krishna was an elusive thief. So, one Gopika suggested that the only way to catch Him was to pray to him. The Gopikas started praying to Krishna. "O Krishna, is it possible for us to get at you? You are subtler than the atom, and vaster than the vastest thing in the world. You pervade every being in creation. How can we comprehend you?" As a result of the prayer, the Gopikas were shown the means of catching Him. Krishna poured out the milk from the pot, washed His feet in the milk and ran out of the house. The Gopikas followed Krishna's footprints and caught hold of Him. The symbolic significance of this episode is that the Divine can be experienced only when the devotee clings to the feet of the Lord. This is the teaching of the Bhagavata.

When the enquiry into the nature of "I" is pursued, it will, be found that the "I" is the omnipresent entity present in every living being. This is the truth of the Vedic declaration: "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am Brahman"). Some people may ask whether it is enough to meditate on the declaration, "Aham Brahmasmi". This may be done but when one meditates on the declaration "Aham Brahmasmi", one has to start with an understanding of the "I": then you will understand Brahman.

There is a prayer addressed to God in which God is described as mother, father, brother, friend and everything else. This is not the right way to worship God. This kind of prayer binds man to worldly relationships. Instead of these multiple relationships, a simpler way of describing the relationship between man and God is to say: "I am you and you are me."

The divinity inherent in man should be considered as one only, and not many. All the variety of names and forms one perceives are creations of the mind and are bound to pass away. When you and the Divine are one, where is the need for seeking the Divine? Only a fool goes in search of himself. Instead of resorting to all forms of meditation it is simpler and easier to proceed on the single idea that you and the Divine are one. But this process of identification should not be an artificial exercise. It should come from the heart. In declaring, "I am the Divine" you should express a genuine and deep experience. You should feel that the Divine is not separate from you. Instead of that, if you merely repeat, "I am God, I am God" on the basis that Swami has told you so, you will be indulging in a foolish exercise.

The Divine should be comprehended by earnest enquiry and a profound inner experience. It should, however, be realised that as long as you live in this phenomenal world and have to perform worldly duties, it is not easy to express this oneness in the Divine. It has to be, a gradual process by which the divinisation of life is achieved

The atma and the anatma

You have to realise that there are two elements in a human being. One is the Atma and the other is Anatma (one is the body and the other is the Indweller in the body), One is the Kshetra

and unmoving while the other is movable, it is only when both combine that you can achieve fulfillment. The body should be considered as an instrument. Only then gradually the identification with the body can be got rid of. Man is perpetually enhancing the attachments relating to the body. Because of these attachments and infatuation, the Ego principle gets inflated. As the ego sense grows, the spiritual aspiration becomes weaker. But there can be no decay of the Spirit. What happens is the fading out of the Spirit (the Atma) from one's vision. This implies that a constant effort must be made to control the impulses of the body.

The Divine is only one. The names given to God like Rama and Krishna are incidental. Birth is an incident, like giving a name to one that is born. Life itself is an interlude. But in this artificial interlude of life there is an eternal Atmic principle. That should be made the basis of life. Only then the Reality can be understood.

Whatever books you may read, whatever discourses you may listen to, all these are merely mental lumber without application in practice. What sweetness will you experience if you merely read the description of various sweet preparations? But when you eat them you experience their sweetness immediately. There is a vast difference between the bliss that is directly experienced and the bliss which is intellectually comprehended by the study of books. Therefore, the first step is to begin practising what you learn. Your faith must be translated into action.

Students, you may pass examinations by studying books. After that you may get a job in which there is no use for all that you have studied. You must see that there is a close link between what you have studied and the life which you lead. There must be harmony between the knowledge you acquire and your speech and actions. It is only when there is this three-fold unity that you can live the life of a human being.

Today this unity in thought, word and deed is rarely to be found among men. Students! you have to realise the supreme sacredness of human life. It is better to lead a brief but glorious life of a swan than live for long like a crow. Do not give way to the ever-changing promptings of the mind. Use your discrimination in deciding what you should do. You must examine whether what one wants to do is right or wrong and you should be guided by your intellect. Never act on the impulses of the moment.

You must recognise the divine that is present in all beings. The Upanishad declares: "Isavasyam Idam Sarvam" (All this is pervaded by the divine). The divine is one, although described by different names. There is some basis for the differences in names. The same person may be described in different terms according to the functions he discharges.

People tend to blame God for their troubles and say that even though they have surrendered to God their troubles have not ceased. This is misuse of the idea of surrender. If one has really surrendered to God, one should not be worried about what happens to him. The sense of separation between oneself and God should go. As long as the sense of separation exists, the

experienced in all forms.

In whatever form the divine is worshipped, the offering goes to the divine. In the deep sleep state one is not aware of the names or form or position or anything else. This state is described as Sushupti. It is also described as the state of Samadhi. In that state names and forms do not exist. There is no consciousness of differences. There is no feeling of love or hatred. No likes and dislikes. Samadhi is not a state of unconsciousness. It is a transcendental state, in which all differences have ceased. This state is attained when the mind merges with the Atma.

Students! In the different forms and names, you are like different actors on the stage. As long as you have to play your part, you have to act according to the role assigned to you. But you should not forget your true Atmic self. Whatever role you play your Atmic self remains unchanged. You should never forget your inherent divinity.

Many parents today are responsible for allowing their children to go astray. Students should remember that even if the parents advise them against their pursuing the spiritual path, they are entitled to act against their parents' advice. When a father comes between a son and his devotion to God, the son is free to disobey the father. In worldly matters the son may follow the father's advice. But with regard to relationship with the divine you must follow your own way. At the time of marriage, the bride and the bridegroom are enjoined to act together in matters relating to righteous conduct, material interests, and worldly desires. (Dharmecha, Arthecha, Kaamecha). But with regard to Moksha, attainment of salvation, each must follow his or her path. This means that in the spiritual field you need not have to be afraid of anyone.

(Swami related the story of Meera, how she was locked out of Krishna Mandir by the Rana and how she was advised by Tulsidas that in the quest for God she was not bound to obey her husband's orders. Swami related the case of Vibhishana who chose to renounce his elder brother Ravana when Ravana was opposed to Vibhishana's devotion to Rama. Swami cited the example of Bharata who did not allow his mother's wishes to come in the way of his devotion and loyalty to Rama. The Emperor Bali disregarded the advice of his preceptor Shukracharya, when he came in the way of Bali carrying out his promise to the Lord.)

The lesson to be drawn from all these episodes is that God is above all others. Father, Mother, Brother, teacher and all others rank far below God. All such relations are temporary and transient. Only the relationship between man and God is permanent and unchanging. The faith in God must be firm and unwavering.

You must acquire steadiness of mind. When a person has a vacillating mind, he is worse than a monkey.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Chittachora, Yashoda Ke Bal.*")

From Bhagavan's discourse at Brindavan on 27.5.92

Two Worlds: Two Lives

Night and day, two worlds apart, that is the existing polarity I find regarding my life in America and the present life, studying under the loving eye of Lord Sai. Bhagavan has conferred a great blessing upon me a knowledge of both sides of life. Because I have had the experience of living and studying in America for nearly sixteen years, the horizon of my outlook has been broadened tremendously. For, now I believe I am in a position to appreciate better the rare and golden opportunity of living with and studying under the Lord.

Where can I begin in contrasting the two phases of my life? The distinct change in the atmosphere may have been the first thing which struck me. At my former school in a suburb of Chicago, as is generally the case in America, sacredness is not a constituent of the surroundings. God's name is rarely mentioned and many students fall into the trap of being sanctimonious. This is what is generally the case apart from the exceptions.

Here (in Prasanthi Nilayam) studying in close proximity to Bhagavan, we are accustomed to surroundings of a divine nature. The air of Sai is what we breathe, the words of Sai are what we follow, the work of Sai is what we do. We are sheltered from potential obstructions to our growth, just as the young sapling is shielded from stunting conditions. When we develop into strong and sturdy trees in this uncontaminated manner, anything which life may throw at us can easily be handled.

Leaving my family in Chicago behind, I have discovered a new one. A brotherly love pervades here. Lending a hand, sparing a moment—these are common occurrences.

The American scene

In America, this quality of bond among students rarely exists. The students are usually stratified into groups. The only thing in common which everyone possesses, is that of belonging to the same grade-level. Selfishness is not a rare trait among students. Rarely can one find a loving, caring, and morally sound friend.

Bhagavan once told me that 75 percent of life is discipline. The word discipline carries almost no meaning in America. Students have few rules to obey. The youth of today needs a firmly built fence which ensures that the seed of character in them grows properly. There, this fence is not constructed properly. Students are not alone to blame. The system of education must be revolutionized so that it can produce students of a disciplined nature.

In Bhagavan's educational institutions, discipline is the key. Students have a defined code of conduct to follow. One illustration of this discipline is the required white uniform. This white dress leads to external and internal unity.

Perhaps, the time when this unity is felt most is at 3.30 every afternoon. At this moment, when 650 white-clad students march triumphantly to the Mandir for darshan, a sense of oneness permeates the scene. Bhagavan often stresses the link between unity, purity, and divinity. The wearing of white uniform serves as the spark which can elevate us to divinity.

Calibre of teachers

The key to the world's future lies in the hands of the young. And those hands are steered by teachers. The kind of teachers who can masterfully chip and chisel the young of today are personified in Bhagavan's institutions. The uniqueness of these teachers is due to their constant instruction, inside the classroom and out. They ensure that the students develop in spirituality as well as in studies, book-knowledge and knowledge of God. Bhagavan has handpicked these guiding stars to aid us in becoming worthy of the title "Sai student".

In my former school and throughout most of America, the teacher's job finishes as soon as the bell sounds. Swami has explained that the end of education is character. Only teachers who possess noble character themselves can show students how to develop the same. Most of the teachers outside just don't view education in the same light. They restrict themselves to enhancing a student's academic calibre and that is all. Lessons in life are not imparted. After all, true education can't be found in any book, it can't be found on the blackboard—it can only be found through a heart-to-heart-student relationship.

Learning from Bhagavan

One more thing exists here and nowhere else—the physical form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It is He who reveals the necessary lessons in life. His teaching methods are distinguished and indirect. Only by keeping a close eye on His every movement and carefully listening to every divine word coming from His sweet lips can we students pick up the heavenly education His very being has to offer.

He is ever busy and active and has not a moment to spare. Yet, He never neglects to enquire about the welfare of His students, His children. Sometime back one of the students was suffering from a blood clot in his brain. During darshan, the Lord approached His son. He then materialized a lingam for the boy which symbolised his brain. He instructed the boy to perform abhishekam to the lingam and assured him the return of his normal health. This is just one miniscule page from the infinite chapters of Swami's love for His students.

There is no student as blessed as he who belongs to Bhagavan's institutions. If we desire, we can have Swami in our hands, provided we strive for that end. That is why, with pride I can say, "I am a student of Sai."

From the talk given by Avinash Alimchandani, XI class, Sri. Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam, during Bhagavan's visit to the Institute Hostel on September 17, 1992

What Do You Want?

*"What do you want, my dears?"
-while clasping the Lotus Feet
"Is there more than this?"
-While merged in Love Divine
"Can there be more?"
-While gazing into the Lotus Byes
"What is left to desire?"
Drawn irresistibly to merge with
The Absolute, and yet NOT YET
Form gazing at the Form Divine
.....Bliss unending!
"Can there be more?"
Human form. How then Divine?
DIVINE!
O Wondrous wonder, Formless Divine
as form
"Can there be more than this?"*

*The Seeker and the Sought are One,
Endlessly seeking each other
Through Blissful Eternity.
I seek to know the Knower
As the Known itself!
Expanding over a minute abyss
Eye seeking Eye, hand seeking Hand;
Unreal seeking the Real in Realisation.
Expectation outreaching itself
Into a limitless possibility.
Ebb, flow, merge and re-emerge;
Limiting Itself only to urge to merge;*

*Longing and finding fulfillment in Bliss
Only to begin the journey again.
Vision of Love, through Eyes of Love.
Unending desire dissolving;
Never existing, white-Existence
Itself is insistent inquiry.*

*Dancers dancing the Dance
And yet the Dance Itself.
Players playing the Play as Life Itself.
Actionless action, while acting.
In the time of the Timelessness;
In the space of the Spacelessness;
All-knowing mind of the Mindlessness.
Thinking, looking, breathing, feeling,
And yet none of these.
Form is Formless, garland is Garlander,
Gift is Giver, comfort is Comforter.
Desiring none, all is One.
Love is the Lover, Love the Loved,
Finding fulfillment in that recognition.
Lost again in Love as Love Itself*

*.....Bliss unending!.....
"Ever near and ever dear to Me,
What do you want My dears?"
-While clasping the Lotus Feet
"Can there be more than this?"
Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma
Sai Baba Madhuram, Madhuram
Anandam.*

—Dheera-Neeraja, Murwillumbah, Australia

The Beacon Burns Brighter in Brisbane

Fifteen years ago, two old ladies, twin sisters, Dorothy and Moyia O'Brien, who had been working in an institution for treating handicapped patients, came to Bhagavan Baba to seek His

on the good work by running a Centre for rehabilitating the handicapped and enabling them to lead meaningful lives.

Dorothy and Moyia returned to Brisbane from Prasanthi Nilayam profoundly inspired. They started "SWARA", an organisation to help disabled people. "Swara" is run by the O'Brien twins with the help of other voluntary workers, most of whom are Sai devotees. Baba once said: "SWARA" is a very good place, because you give the people meaningful work which is so important as I give a helping hand." Swami held his hands up in a gesture of blessing and protection.

Now, after fifteen years, a remarkable incident occurred in the Prasanthi Mandir (on September 10) when an Australian group, including the O'Brien twins, had an interview with Bhagavan. A devotee who was in the group has sent the following account of the loving concern which Bhagavan Baba showed for the twins who are making the beacon of Sai love burn brighter than ever in Brisbane:

We arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam with high hopes that we would all receive Baba's blessings and with the longing that He would talk to us and help us with our various needs.

Dorothy and Moyia had physical problems, Moyia was using a stick following a high fracture and Dorothy was in a wheel chair with severe arthritic knee problems. Dorothy had not walked without great assistance for several years and had recently been confined to the wheel chair.

Baba called us for the long prayed for interview. On the verandah He looked at Dorothy with compassion and in the Interview Room He asked her if her problem was arthritis. He manifested Vibhuti, which He distributed among the ladies, and then invited us all into the inner Interview Room.

There He picked up Moyia's hand and looked at her "Little Feet ring" that He had given her on a previous occasion and asked her about her new book which she had called, "Little Brown Feet". Moyia said to Him: "Baba, will you please heal me?" He said. "You are not as bad as your sister. No comparison. But you worry about your future because you wish to help disabled people. Do not worry, I will help you and you will be all right".

Then He turned to Dorothy and said: "I will help you."

Dorothy said: "Baba! You said last year that you would operate on my knee." Then He stood up and placed one hand on each of her knees and rubbed them firmly in a circular movement. He then raised His hand a little above her knees and circled them in the air. He said: "Stand up" and took her hands and assisted her to rise from the chair. Holding her hand He led her through the two Interview rooms onto the verandah. He then showed Dorothy and the empty

"Now, you walk!" which she did, holding lightly Moyia's arm.

Change your vision, and the world will appear accordingly. Let the eye be charged with 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. Your work as Seva Dal members and as volunteer helpers must 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.

—Baba

Out of the Mouths of Babes

Jesus told us to come to him as little children. In Professor Kasturi's autobiography, Loving God, he refers to Swami as the divine child. Although Swami was in his 30's when Professor Kasturi first came to him, he still refers to him as the divine child.

Swami teaches us to "Be happy" always. "Be happy. Be happy." Bearing these thoughts in mind, following are three stories which bring home the above message. All are true stories, all involve children, and all show an open trust, in a sense, an acceptance of God.

Leaving a satsang, a mother and her six-year-old son were waiting in the car for the motor to warm up. Still humming and singing the songs which everyone sang together during the satsang earlier in the afternoon, the mother started singing out loud, "He's got the whole world in his hands; he's got the whole world in his hands; he's got the whole world in his hands; he's got the whole world in his hands."

When the car had sufficiently warmed up, mother and son joined the lazy Saturday afternoon flow of traffic. While the mother was still singing the same tune over and over, "He's got the whole world in his hands," to herself, her son pensively interrupted her.

"Mom," he asked, "Does God really have the whole world in his hands?"

"Yes, son." his mother answered positively, "He does. He holds everything in his hands."

"Well", replied her son, "Then we're driving on his fingers."

"That is God"

were welcomed by uninterrupted singing. I was enjoying the wait for Swami to appear when a lovely Indian woman and her three-year old daughter gently sat down beside me. Tucking her sari in around her, the mother immediately was taken in by the singing. Closing her eyes, she began to sing and sway, a blissful look playing on her face. Clapping rhythmically, she was lost in her worship of Sai. Sometime later, I noticed her daughter stand up, look around, her large brown eyes gleefully darting here and there. With drums pounding, cymbals clapping, and incense swirling, the crowd seemed to become one in love and anticipation of seeing the Lord. Uninhibited, as only a child could be, the young girl began to dance and swirl. Soon, she was dancing where Swami was to walk, up in front of the massive crowd. Elderly women with bright saris nudged one another and nodded towards this daring beauty. Her mother had not noticed the child leave. Eventually, pulling herself back to the world, the blissful mom searched feverishly for the child, never looking forward to where Swami would stand, but behind towards the crowd which had gathered and grown. Finally, in desperation she turned towards the dais area and gasped out loud as she saw her daughter in Swami's place dancing and playing. Shyly, she approached her daughter and tenderly guided her back to her place among the crowds.

The mother knew that her daughter was tired of waiting and took the perfect pink rose she was carefully holding to offer to her Lord and gave it to her young daughter. "Sit still and hold this rose," she said. "Then when Swami comes out, if you are sitting quietly, he may take it from you," suggested the mother, to occupy her daughter for the wait.

Taking the rose from her mother the child replied with assurance, "That is not Baba, mother, that is God."

Each night before bedtime Russ and his mother would kneel beside his bed to pray. Like a Bhajan, they would pray in response and repeat. The mother would say a sentence and her seven-year-old son would repeat it. The mother had chosen as the prayer Swami's teaching, "There is only one caste—the caste of humanity. There is only one religion—the religion of love. There is only one language—the language of the heart. There is only one God and He is omnipresent."

The mother would recite each line, and Russ would repeat the same line in prayer. One evening as they were getting ready to close the day with their prayer, Russ turned toward his mother and said, "Mom, I think I can pray this by myself tonight."

"Oh, son," replied his mother proudly, "That would be wonderful."

Kneeling, Russ began to pray with confidence. "There is only one caste—the caste of humanity. There is only one religion—the religion of Love. There is only one language—the language of the heart. There is only one God and He is our new president!"

Lord. May we all see the funny side of living and may we all trust in God as children. Baba for president? Not a bad idea, do you think?

—Joy Ziegler

Bhagavan's visit to Institute Hostel

September 17, 1992, was a great day of rejoicing and thankfulness for the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute Hostel at Prasanthi Nilayam, when Bhagavan visited the hostel and conferred His benediction on them by delivering an inspiring discourse.

Bhagavan was escorted by students in smart uniform on motor cycles all the way from the Mandir to the Hostel, where the Warden and a few senior members of the Hostel received Bhagavan. A traditional welcome was accorded by the students, complete with 'Poorna-kumbham' and Vedic hymns.

As Bhagavan entered the quadrangle of the hostel along a pathway that was very attractively decorated with flowers, the Institute Band struck up a romping tune. Bhagavan proceeded to inaugurate the beautiful 'Rock Garden' made by the students. Bhajans were being sung with great gusto as Bhagavan made His way through the rows of students to the artistically decorated dais. As Bhagavan took His seat, all the students broke into the song, 'Tum Aaye...' ('O Lord Sai! You have come and with You has come this blissful and joyful atmosphere!')

Welcoming Bhagavan on behalf of all the students and staff of the Hostel, Sri Sanjay Sahni, the Warden, observed that for all Sathya Sai Hostels, it was Bhagavan himself who is really the Warden, lavishing a mother's protecting and loving care on all the students. The welcome address was followed by talks by two students, Avinash Alimchandani, a student of the XI class, and Sainath Seshappa of the II year MBA.

Then came the most eagerly awaited part of the evening's programme: Bhagavan's discourse. Illustrating with incidents from the Ramayana, the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata, Bhagavan explained lucidly how Kama (Lust), Krodha (hatred) and Lobha (Greed) alienate man from God and cause his ruin (Details of the discourse are published separately).

Immediately after the discourse the music programme followed. Bhagavan then responded to the prayers of the students and visited the various service wings of the hostel and also the prayer room of the Secondary School students. This was followed by a dinner, which Bhagavan graced by His presence. Bhagavan then visited the card exhibition put up by the students, which had on display the cards made by them for several festive occasions.

Sathya Sai Mandir, again escorted all the way by students on motorcycles.

—M. S.

Desire

*Desires dance dreams of delight
Banish contentment out of sight
Set us on an elusive chase
Exhaust us by running the race.*

*Sorrow stalks unsatisfied desires
jealousy and anger feed the fires
The longest pain comes, and cannot hide,
From desires that are satisfied*

—Hal Honig, New York

The Shirdi Sai Saga: Mystery and Message

For the endless stream of devotees who started pouring into Prasanthi Nilayam, uncertain whether there would be the Dasara Celebrations this year or not, Bhagavan conferred a double blessing. On the first day of Navaratri, September 27th, there was a welcome announcement that Bhagavan would deliver the inaugural discourse on Navaratri that afternoon. This was followed by three subsequent discourses on the last three days of the Dasara festival, culminating in Vijayadashami on October 6th.

The most memorable aspect of this year's discourses was that, besides giving new insights into the inner significance of the Dasara festival, Bhagavan gave graphic accounts of incidents from the life of Shirdi Sai which were revelations of the role of the Avatar in rescuing mankind from time to time from a moral and spiritual crisis. Bhagavan devoted the best part of two of His discourses—on September 27 and October 6—to illuminating accounts of the miracles and message of Shirdi Sai. He emphasised the fact that Shirdi Baba often sought to convey His message more by actions than by discourses.

In His discourse on September 27, Bhagavan said: All festivals have been designed to teach men how to lead a godly life while carrying on worldly activities. It was to teach this truth to mankind that Avatars and saints made their advent on earth from time to time.

This day (the first day of Navaratri) has another special significance. Shirdi Sai Baba was born on September 27, 1838. He was born in a poor Brahmin family in the village of Pathri in Aurangabad District. For various reasons the parents left the child. A fakir found him. As he was a foundling, the fakir had no natural affection for him. After some tear, the boy was handed over to one Gopal Rao Deshmukh, who was also called Venkusa by the people on account of his scholarship and wisdom. The boy grew up in Venkusa's hunk for some time. However, he was not inclined to stay there for long. In 1854 he went to Shirdi. At Shirdi Mhalaspathi saw him entering the local temple. Looking at his appearance as a Muslim, Mhalaspathi turned him out of the temple. The boy went back and sat under a neem tree. He was 16 years old at that time. No one knew then what his name was. If any one asked for his name, he would give no answer. He would sometimes retort saying: "Why do you want to know my name?" Because of this, nobody could find out his name.

Baba the healer

Some villagers from nearby places used to visit him under the tree and get relief for their ailments. He would take out some leaves, crush them and give them to the ailing person as a medicine. In this manner he cured many persons of their illnesses. News of the healing powers spread to all the surrounding villages. As a result a large number of persons used to come to him, receive the crushed leaves from him and get cured of their ailments.

Suddenly, one morning he disappeared. A futile search was made in the nearby areas to trace him. Later, in 1858, he came to Shirdi again after three years. There was a village called Dhoop in Aurangabad. One Chandubhai Patel, belonging to a middle class family, lived in Dhoop. As no other form of transport was available in those days, people used to go on horseback.

Chandubhai went on his horse to Aurangabad on some urgent business. When he had finished his business there at the end of three days, he found that the horse was missing.

Chandubhai's First Encounters

Disappointed over the missing horse, Chandubhai was returning to Dhoop passing through dense forests on the way. At one place, he saw fakir sitting under a tree in a forest. The fakir appeared to be lost in his own thoughts. Suddenly, the fakir hailed Chandubhai with the words. "Hey, Patel! Come here." The fakir liked to smoke Chilim (hookah). As there was no water nearby, the fakir hit the ground with a stick and water gushed forth from the place. He hit, again another place with a stick and there was a fire. Using the water and the fire, he started smoking his hookah and offered it to Chandubhai also. Chandubhai declined the offer. The fakir asked Chandubhai: "What is worrying you, Patel?" Patel asked: "How did you know I am Patel?" "I know everything," replied the fakir: "You are worried about your horse." You are keeping your eyes on the top of your head! You must lower them to trace the horse. Your horse is grazing under the tree there." Chandubhai saw his horse there. He had made the search for the horse in the same place with some workers, but could not find it. Now he saw it under a tree close to him. Chandubhai was astonished that the fakir had produced water and fire out of the earth and had located his missing horse. He appealed to the fakir: "Swami! You have rendered great help to me. Please come with me and share my hospitality." "All right, let us go," he said.

About this time, the marriage of Chandubhai's niece, who was residing in Shirdi, was settled. Chandubhai had to go to Shirdi for the wedding. He requested the "fakir" to come along with him. They went in carts to Shirdi. Mhalaspathi saw the fakir getting down from a cart and went to him and said: "Aayiye, Baba! Aayiye Sai!" Come, Baba! Come Sai!" The name "Sai" was given by Mhalaspathi. Till then, no one had conferred a name on him.

Sometime later, Baba was involved in a criminal case. He had to give evidence in a case which related to the theft of some valuables from a rich man's house by a gang of thieves. The police caught the thieves and questioned them about the stolen articles. The thieves said that the valuables had been given to them by a fakir.

Searching for the fakir, they came to Baba. They asked him: "Fakir, did you give these articles to them?" "Yes," he said. "Wherefrom did you get them?" was the next question. Baba replied: "They have come from the same place from which all things come." "Who gave them to you?" "I gave them to myself."

Baba's "evidence"

Baba gave such intriguing answers, which the police could not understand. "I am the giver of everything. How can anyone get anything without my sanction?" declared Baba. Feeling that it was futile to question him further, the police prepared a report. Baba received a summons from the magistrate to give evidence in the case. Chandubhai Patel did not want Baba to go to the Magistrate and so arranged for Baba being examined on commission (in Shirdi itself). During the examination on commission, Baba was asked: "What is your father's name," He replied: "Baba." (Baba means "father" and the reply meant that the father's name was "father.")

Q. "What is your religion?"

A. "The religion of God".
Q. "Wherefrom did you come?"
A. "I have come from the Atma."
Q. "What is your caste?"
A. "The caste of the Divine."

Baba answered all the questions in this manner. Earlier he had been hailed as "Sai." In his examination, he had given his father's name as Baba. By the combination of these two names, he was therefore called "Sai Baba." No one knew when and where Sai Baba was born and who gave him that name.

Baba as Dattatreya

Later, many persons began to have doubts about his transcendental powers. One day, the birth anniversary of Dattatreya was to be celebrated (in the month of Margasirsha on Panchami day.) Several devotees had assembled in Shirdi. Among them was a wealthy man, a great scholar called Kaijack. He is not to be confused with Hijack!" His name was Balwant Kaijck. As he was approaching the masjid, Baba took his stick and waved it at the devotees, asking them to get away. He even beat some of them, shouting, "Saitan! Saitan!" No one could understand why Baba was behaving like this. "I am suffering labour pains. Get away, all of you!" he shouted. In those days, Baba not only used to shout at people, but also wield the stick on them on occasions. He used even to throw the stick at fleeing persons. Every one used to be afraid of him. They all fled from the place.

Some time later, he called all of them to come. "Balwant Kaijack, come!" he said. When Balwant came, Baba went inside the masjid. Balwant went in and found that Baba was not there. He found a three-headed baby on the floor. Baba had declared that was suffering from labour pains and there was a baby there. The three headed child appeared to represent Dattatreya. It was a small baby with a number of hands. Balwant recognised the child as Dattatreya and called other devotees to come inside. They went in and on seeing the child closed their eyes. At that instant Baba reappeared there. From that time onwards, people started looking upon Baba as the incarnation of Dattatreya.

Baba's lesson to Muslims

A controversy arose among the local people as to whether Baba was a Muslim or a Hindu. At one time he used to say: "Allah Malik! Allah Malik!" At other times, He would say "Dattatreya Malik!" Whenever he shouted "Allah Malik!" Muslims used to come to him in the Masjid. His appearance was very much like that of a Muslim. Hence, many Muslims used to come to him. Hindus also used to come and offer incense to him. The Muslims did not approve of what the Hindus were doing. The Hindus did not like the way Muslims revered Baba. Consequently, bitterness developed between the two communities.

One day, Mhalaspathi was sitting near Baba and doing some service to him. Mhalaspathi was the priest in the Kandoba temple. The Muslims who were opposed to the presence of a Hindu priest near Baba, came with sticks and beat up Mhalaspathi. At every stroke, Mhalaspathi cried out "Baba!" "Baba!" Each time he shouted, the name of Baba, the blow was borne by Baba. Mhalaspathi fell to the ground. Baba came out. Muslims had great reverence for Baba. Baba

roared at the Muslim crowd: "Saitan! On the one side you worship me and on the other you beat me. Is this your devotion?" Baba was bleeding all over the body. The Muslims saw it and asked Baba who had beaten him. "Did *you* not beat me? Did *you* not beat me?" said Baba pointing to several men in the crowd. They said: "We did not come near you at all. We only beat Mhalaspathi." "Who is in Mhalaspathi? I am in him," declared Baba. "He has surrendered to me and hence all his troubles are mine."

On hearing this, the Muslims fell at Baba's feet and craved his forgiveness. Baba then summoned the Hindus and Muslims and told them: "Dear Children: You are all the progeny of one mother." Thereby Baba demonstrated the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. He wanted all differences of caste and creed to be eschewed. What mattered for mankind was the heart. One who is only concerned about his creed (matham) will never discover the Divine (Madhava). You must seek the Divine within you. Baba pointed out that all caste and creed distinctions related only to the body. Therefore, you should seek the Supreme in your inner consciousness.

Baba and Hemadpant

Baba, who came to Shirdi with Chandubhai Patel in 1858, did not leave the place till his passing in 1918. Baba lived for 80 years.

One day, a pundit came to Baba and said that his biography should be written. His name was Hemadpant. He is the author of "Sai Sat Charita" He entreated Baba to disclose facts about the place of his birth, his parentage, his name and his early life. He could not get any information. Baba did not reveal anything to anyone. But, on one occasion, when he was alone with Mhalaspathi Baba disclosed its date of birth to him. Mhalaspathi was no scholar. He had learnt only a few mantras to conduct the puja in the temple. He noted down the date of birth on a piece of paper. This came into the hands of Hemadpant. With this, he began to write the life of Baba.

No one knows the real truth about Baba. The world knows some facts about his life after his 16th year. He was born on September 27, 1838, and attained Samadhi on Vijayadashami day in 1918. During his lifetime he taught many sacred things to the people and performed many remarkable deeds. He was worshipped by many devotees. Dada, Nana, Shama, Abdul Baba, Mhalaspathi, Chandarkar and Das Ganu were always with him. Abdul Baba was active till recently. He was a fervent devotee of Baba. In his view it did not matter to what religion one belonged. All were one in their devotion to God.

Kaka Dixit was a Judge whose son stayed in Brindavan (Whitefield) for twenty years. The latter's wife is now in Brindavan. Kaka Dixit maintained a diary in which many facts about Baba have been recorded including his statement about when he would pass away.

No one can make any affirmations about the nature of the Divine. One's relationship with the Divine is spiritual—Atma to Atma. In this Kali age, however, many become a prey to doubts because of their preoccupation with the physical form. This is because of their being immersed in worldly attitudes derived from their perception of the physical elements. The phenomenal world (Prakriti) is replete with sensory experiences. The spiritual life is based on detachment (Tyaga.) Enduring bliss is experienced only when there is sacrifice or detachment. Man today is not prepared for sacrifice. On the contrary, his desires are insatiable and he is losing all human

qualities. The mind is polluted and truth has become a rarity. At every step, man is indulging in wrong doing. Noble thoughts have taken flight. Envy and hatred are rampant. Men should learn to follow the dictates of their heart and act according to the promptings of their conscience. This conscience is related to the Universal consciousness.

How Devotees are tested and found wanting?

In the course of His discourse on Vijayadashami day (October 6), Bhagavan referred again to the Shirdi Sai manifestation and said:

In my previous body (as Shirdi Baba) everyone was taught through actions. For example, Damu and Nana were rendering service to the Lord (Shirdi Baba). Baba collected a few copper coins and was playing with them, by tossing them from one hand to another and also testing them in various ways. He appeared to examine them individually. He did not exchange a word with Damu and Nana. He went on playing with the coins for half an hour in this manner.

Curious to know what Baba was doing, Nana asked him why he was scrutinising the same coins again and again. Baba replied, "Beta (Dear son) it is true I am repeating the same action again and again, repeating the same words. Look at that mango tree in front of you. It is in full bloom. The leaves are hardly visible. If all flowers in the tree were to become fruits, will the branches be able to bear the weight? But it does not happen that way. Most of the flowers are swept away by the wind. Many others drop of their own accord. Only some of them become fruits. Of these some are eaten by squirrels, birds or monkeys. In this way ninety percent of the flowers do not result in fruits.. Only ten percent remain in the tree, is it not so?" They agreed, that it was so.

Baba continued, "in the same manner thousands of devotees are coming to me. Are they all ripening into good devotees? Many drop away in the middle. Some come for getting their desires fulfilled. Some seek wealth. Many are coming either for study or in connection with jobs or marriage or other personal desires of their own. In each of them there is some defect or other. No one comes for my sake. I have a precious thing to offer in my coffers. But no one seeks it. It is for this reason that I am examining them (coins). Among these coins there are some which are worn out, some which are debased and some which are twisted and worthless. Just as I am examining the defects in these coins, I am also looking for the defects among the devotees who come to me. I am trying to find out what defects are there in these people and whether, with those defects, they can really comprehend my Truth. They want me, but all their desires are related to mundane objects. How can they attain me with this attitude? How can you reach your destination if you get into a wrong train going in some other direction? They want me, but they don't make efforts for realising me. Among the many who come to me, it is only one in a thousand who really makes the efforts to realise Me.

The Doubters

"The minds of the so-called devotees are turned in the wrong direction. If their desires are fulfilled, they praise Me. But, once a desire is not realised they go to the extent of even reviling Me. Even while they are attempting to understand Me, they harbour doubts from head to foot. Some even leave Me, when their worldly desires are not fulfilled. "These are not sincere devotees at all. They are in fact worst sinners. How can they reach Me?" said Baba.

At one time a wealthy man came with a lot of money to Shirdi Baba with the object of gaining 'Brahmajnana', the Supreme Wisdom. He boasted about his wealth. Baba asked him: "How long will you be here?" He replied that he had come by a taxi fixing to and fro charges and had to return in a day or two. Baba said: "When you have greed for wealth, how can you realise God? it is not a goal that can be accomplished in a fixed time. Get away." Baba noticed that he was still sitting and became furious. He chased him out, wielding a stick.

Mataji Krishna Priya's Experience

To one who sought His grace with purity of heart and selfless devotion, Baba conferred His grace abundantly. Mataji Krishna Priya was one such devotee. Living in Nagpur, she used to worship Krishna and considered Baba also as another form of Krishna. She frequently visited Shirdi to seek Baba's blessings with genuine devotion. Once she went to Simla. She was offering worship with unstinted devotion to Krishna considering Him as Baba.

She came to know that Baba had left his mortal coil at 2.30 p.m. on Vijayadashami day in 1918. Immediately after this Ekadasi followed. Baba had told his close devotee, Kakaji, in the year 1916, that Dada would be shedding his mortal coil in 1918. Kakaji thought that Baba was mentioning only about Dada Sahib, another devotee, and never thought the reference was to Baba himself.

On September 28, 1918, Baba developed high temperature. Two days earlier he had collected food by seeking alms in some houses. He took that food and at noon, He expressed His wish to his devotees that he should be taken from the choultry to Bootywada. He hoped to have a quiet time there. In that ward, a Muralidhar temple had been built by a devotee by name Booty. He wanted Baba to install the idol of Krishna in the temple. But Baba was putting off the installation on one pretext or other. Booty did not want to install the idol without the blessings of Baba. Till his end Baba did not say anything about installation of the idol. He directed Booty and Kakaji to go and take their lunch. Feeling that Baba was better, they went out. Baba had nine rupee coins under His pillow. He took them out and gave them to Lakshmibai. Then Baba summoned Shyam to come near Him. Shyam sat close to Baba. Baba reclined on Shyam's shoulders and passed away.

Baba's Appearance in Simla

Krishna Priya came to know of this and felt very sad the whole day. The next day she closed all the doors and windows in her house because of the severe cold in Simla. While she was resting in the house, a tall and well-built monk arrived at the next door, and enquired about Mataji's house. He made enquiry not because He did not know where Mataji lived, but only to make others know that He was physically present in Simla. The neighbour sent a servant with an umbrella as it was snowing, to show the stranger Mataji's house. He knocked at the door. Mataji opened the door and could not believe the evidence of her eyes. She wondered how Baba, who had passed away the previous day, could come to Simla. She asked: "How did you manage to come so soon. It takes at least three days to come from Shirdi to Simla." Baba said: "Beti (dear daughter), I am everywhere. You have worshipped me in the form of Krishna. Is this all that you know about me? I am feeling the cold, first get me hot tea." She prepared tea and offered it to Baba. After taking the tea, Baba said that He was hungry after his long journey. Krishna Priya brought Him chapatis and brinjal curry which Baba used to like very much. After taking the food

Baba washed His hands and wiped them in a towel. He then told her: "The purpose for which I came is over and I am going away."

In those days nobody dared to exchange words with Baba. If anybody opposed or said anything to the contrary, Baba would wield the stick against them. He never brooked any contradiction. Hence Krishna Priya could not tell Him anything. He gave her a jasmine garland.

Krishna Priya watched Him as He went out walking through the bazaar. In Simla, on the road side, there are usually deep valleys. As Baba was walking along, some workmen were engaged in some road work. Noticing that Baba had fallen down from the road, they ran to rescue Him. But they could find nobody there. Baba had just disappeared.

A promise kept

Before taking leave of Krishna Priya, Baba whispered in her ears: "See me in 1926." She did not know where to see Him, how to see Him. When I went to Simla about 15 years ago Krishna Priya came to see Me. She was shivering on account of age and the cold weather. She asked: "Baba, have you forgotten the promise that you made to me long ago?" I told her: "It is you who have forgotten, not I. I never forget what I promised."

These are some of the aspects of the Shirdi manifestation. When Shirdi Sai sought to impart wisdom, it was not through discourses. Everything was taught by stern methods. It was because of the conditions prevailing in those days.

Baba takes on a child's illness

Once, Dada's wife brought her child to Baba with the intention of staying for some time in Shirdi. She got her husband's reluctant approval for the visit. At that time plague was rampant in Shirdi. On the second day of her arrival the child developed fever and had boils all over the body. The mother felt sorry that she had not acted on her husband's advice and lamented who would protect her child from the affliction. She immediately rushed to Baba and cried aloud: "Baba! Baba!" Baba asked her what for she had come. "Is your child having fever? Are there boils on his body? Not only the child but I am also having boils. You look at them." So saying, he lifted his Kafni and showed the boils on his body. Mhalaspathi, who was standing near, exclaimed: "Swami! What large boils are these?" He touched Baba's body and found that he was having high fever. The temperature might be as high as 105 or 106 F. The mother cried: "Oh Baba! Has the disease affected not only my son, but you also? Who will protect you?" She was in deep distress. Baba said: "Is there any other to protect the one who is the protector of all?" The mother immediately begged for Baba's forgiveness. A short while thereafter, Baba's fever came down.

The mother returned home feeling happy. She saw that the fever and the boils had vanished from the child. She exclaimed: "Baba! Did you take on my child's illness!"

Total faith

In this manner, Shirdi Baba used to demonstrate His powers as and when the occasion arose. What was the reason for this? It was solely due to the total faith (Paripoorna Vishwasam) which people had in Baba. The devotees followed implicitly whatever Baba directed them to do.

It is not so these days. Whenever anything is said (by Swami) ten questions are raised. Besides the questions, they are racked by doubts from head to foot. This is traceable to the influence of modern education. This system is undermining faith in human values. Whatever help a man may receive, he is utterly ungrateful. He forgets all the good done to him and remembers only the harm done to him. Consequently, the demonic nature has grown in human beings.

In the old days, human beings retained at least human qualities. Today, men have only the human form but behave like animals. All their impulses are selfish. When their desires are fulfilled, they come smiling and uttering: "Baba! Baba!" If their desires are not fulfilled they have a different attitude. In such beastly beings, how can devotion to Baba exist. Only when men shed their animal natures, can they become human.

This is the anniversary of the day (Shirdi) Baba gave up his mortal body. The facts relating to his passing need to be understood. On ember 28, 1918, Baba developed fever. For 17 days thereafter he was quite well. On October 15, Baba was not to be found anywhere. Nana, Kaka, Das and Lakshman Rao made a search for him all over the place. There was a small well nearby and they went to see whether he had fallen there. When they returned to Baba's abode, they found him standing near the door. Baba told them: "Where are you searching for Me? I am in one place and you search for Me elsewhere. I am in all pure hearts. You are searching for Me in all polluted places. How can you find Me?" He then sat down.

Baba left his body only on October 15. (He developed high temperature on September 28. He was keeping well for the next 17 days.)

Dispute over last rites

After Baba left his body, several controversies arose. Mohammedans came there and clarified that the body belonged to them. The Hindus claimed that the body belonged to them. Baba used to declare from time to time, "Allah Malik! Allah Malik!" On account of this, Mohammedans claimed that Baba was a Muslim. At other times, Baba used to say: "Rama Malik! Krishna Malik!" For this reason the Hindus claimed he was a Hindu. Because of these rival claims, the body was kept for 36 hours as no decision could be arrived at regarding the manner of disposal of the body. To prevent clashes between the Hindus and the Muslims, the Collector, the Police Superintendent and other officials arrived there. They asked all the residents of Shirdi to assemble there. They decided to take the vote of the people to find out how the majority of the local population wanted the last rites to be done for Baba. Everybody favoured the Hindu way of disposal of the body. When this decision was arrived at, a pit was being dug in the Booty Mandir. Some persons opposed the digging. The dispute went on and ultimately the Collector and the police; arranged for the Samadhi to be consecrated in the Muralidhar temple. That temple is the present Samadhi shrine of Baba.

A miracle in Simla

At this time a remarkable incident occurred in Simla. The garland given to Mathaji Krishna Priya was placed on the idol of Krishna by her in the presence of all in her residence. Many wondered why she was garlanding the Krishna idol when she was "a devotee of Sai Baba and there was a picture of Baba there. Bhajans were going on at that time. The garland placed on the Krishna

figure dropped on the picture of Baba. The garland placed on Baba's picture moved to the figure of Krishna. Everyone in Simla rejoiced in the discovery that Krishna and Sai Baba were one.

When all the people came there the next morning, they found that the garland given by Baba was no longer on the figure of Krishna. That garland was found on the Samadhi of Baba in the Booty Mandir.

Miracles and the message

Why did Baba manifest such miracles? In those days there were bitter differences between Hindus and Muslims? With a view to ending such communal differences, Baba wanted to show through his miracles the truth that Baba is the Supreme Master of all beings. He has no differences of caste or community. His religion is common to people of all faiths. It is good for everyone. It is observed by all godly persons. This is the creed for all mankind.

Spiritual wisdom is not something received from others. It has to blossom from within. Each one has to develop the faith by his own efforts. Those lacking such faith make themselves remote from God. Their own past actions account for such lack of faith.

Many spend years here (in Prasanthi Nilayam). But for some reason or other, they go away. This is due to the effect of their Karma. No man can escape the consequences of his actions. "Whether one is a scholar or an ascetic, whether one is in a forest or a temple, can anyone avoid the consequences of his Karma?" (Poem)

Many who claim to be great devotees, fall away some time or other. The truth is that they were not true devotees even earlier. It is all a make-believe. Whatever devotion existed will not go away; nor will devotion come where it was absent. This means that devotion was absent from the outset. Those who used to proclaim their devotion by saying, "Swami is everything for us," really had no devotion at all.

It was all a show. No true devotee will ever leave Swami. The one who leaves was never a real devotee.

In this context, it must be realised that the true nature of devotion cannot be comprehended by anyone. "Can one remember the name of God in his last moments, when the messengers of Death are waiting and all one's relations are weeping, if he has not been devoted to God all his life?" (poem)

Unwavering devotion

Only when there is dedicated devotion from early in life can it remain steady and unchanging. The devotion of selfish and self-centred persons will be vacillating. Those with total love for God will never change. That is unwavering devotion. Where there is such yearning for God, the heart melts. God is moved by such firm devotion. That is the kind of devotion everyone should cherish.

During festivals like Navaratri, devotees should develop such divine feelings and strive to secure a direct vision of God in their hearts. God is in and around us. But no effort is made to

experience this. People are immersed in dualism, separating God from themselves. Through love, this sense of separation can be ended. Love is the binding force between the Jivatma (the individual) and the Paramatma (the Omni-Self). It is this feeling of total love (Paripoorna Prema) that has to be cultivated today.

“Do your part”

Embodiments of Divine Love! Do not give room for the doubts which arise on account of the food you consume, the company you keep or the environment in which you live. Meet the doubts with courage and faith. Don't pray to Baba for changing your mind. It is your duty to change your mind. If you expect Baba to do everything, what is it you are doing? God has no use for such indolent persons. You must do your sadhana and go ahead. God's help will come when you do your part. Do your duty and leave the results to God. Praying to God to do this or that is a sign of weakness. If you have full faith in God, your mind is bound to change. Baba's role is not to change your minds, but to redeem you from the consequences of your actions. Everyone should realise and act up to this truth. To start with, get rid of the blemishes in you, strengthen your devotion and make it firm and unshakable. That is "Purusha prayatna" (the effort which everyone should make.) Then you will earn God's grace (Daiva-anugraha).

Entering on this path of truth traversing the road of Jnana (spiritual wisdom), merge yourself in the Divine.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam-Brahma!"

A Lesson for Alexander

There is a story about Alexander the Great, which illustrates the glory of Indian Culture. It seems Alexander used to go incognito to the villages around his camp, in India, in order to study the habits and manners of the strange new land into which fate had brought him. One day, he found a man pleading with another to accept a pot of gold, which the other was refusing even to look at. He came to know that the pot of gold was discovered under the soil of the field purchased by the man. from the man who refused to accept it. The buyer argued that he had bought only the land and was therefore not entitled to own the pot of gold. The seller said he had no right to anything found on or in the plot that he had sold.

Alexander watched this scene for some time. Both did not yield. At last, the village elders were called in to decide the issue. And, even as Alexander watched, the elders found a happy way out: the buyer's son shall marry the seller's daughter, and the pot of gold shall be given to the bride as dowry! Alexander felt elated at the heights to which human virtue could rise, he was also ashamed at his own adventurous ambition to conquer another's property by force of arms. The ideals underlying the ancient culture of India have to be studied and practised by every Indian at least, so that the world might have the benefit of the great example this can provide.

Baba ("Chinna Katha")

Inner Significance of Navaratri Festival

The inner meaning of the Navaratri festival was explained by Bhagavan Baba in His discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir on September 27. In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

Navaratri means nine nights. Darkness is associated with night. What is this darkness? It is the darkness of ignorance. The purpose of the Navaratri celebration is to enable man to get rid of nine types of darkness which have taken hold of him. When a reference is made to Devi, it signifies the unified form of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. The three together represent Shakti. Shakti is the energy that accounts for all the phenomena of nature (Prakriti). Nature is energy and the controller of that energy is the Lord.

Nature (Prakriti) is made up of the three qualities, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. Saraswati represents the Satwa guna, Lakshmi represents the Rajo guna and Parvati represents the Tamo guna. As Prakriti (nature) is made up of these three qualities (Satwa, Rajas and Tamas); to get control over Nature, man has been offering worship to Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. These are not goddesses but deified symbols of the three qualities.

God, Man and Prakriti

To acquire the grace of the Lord, man has to offer worship at the outset to Prakriti. On the one hand you need human effort and on the other you have to acquire the grace of the Divine. Prakriti (Nature) and Paramatma (the Omni-Self) are like the negative and positive poles in electricity. However powerful the Lord may be (as positive pole), there can be no creation without Prakriti (representing the negative pole). The basis for creation is Prakriti. For instance, how-ever good the seeds you may have with you, without planting them in the ground you cannot reap the fruit. The role of Nature in the creative process is similar.

The triple purity

When man forgets God and desires to enjoy the benefits of Nature, he becomes ultimately a demon like Ravana who brought about his own destruction. To secure the grace of the Lord, one has to have purity of the heart, purity in speech and purity in action. This triple purity is described in Vedantic parlance as Tripurasundari. Lakshmi, who is the embodiment of all prosperity, is represented by the heart. The mouth represents Saraswati. Purity in action (Kriya Shuddhi) is represented by Durga. The observance of the Navaratri celebration is to get rid of the darkness in which man is enveloped, by cultivating the triple purity of thought, word and deed.

The human body emerged from nature. Nature has two forms: Apra Prakriti and Para Prakriti. Apra Prakriti includes eight forms of wealth (Ashta Aishwaryas), and Kama, Krodha, Moha, Lobha, Mada, Matsarya and the three mental faculties in man: Manas, Chitta and Ahamkara. Para Prakriti (the higher Nature) represents the consciousness in man. Without the life force (prana) and consciousness (Chaitanyam) man is only a corpse. True humanness consists in

controlling the five elements which make up the lower Nature (Apara Prakriti) and merge in the higher Nature represented by the life force and consciousness (Chaitanyam.)

The Navaratri has been divided into three parts: the first three days being dedicated to the worship of Durga, the next three days to the worship of Lakshmi and the last three to the worship of Saraswati. All Hindu festivals have a sacred purpose. Unfortunately, now-a-days the festivals are observed only with external rituals, without understanding their inner meaning. In the performance of all forms of worship there should be steadiness of mind and body. Only then concentration can be achieved. Today men are unable to maintain steadiness of body and mind. (At this stage Swami referred to the advent of Shirdi Sai and described incidents from his early life. This part of Swami's discourse is published separately. Towards the end of His discourse, Swami again reverted to an exposition of the inner significance of the Dasara festival.)

Adoration of nature

The basic significance of Devi Navaratri is the adoration of Nature (Prakriti). Devi refers to Bhudevi (Mother Earth). All the vital requirements of man can be found in the earth. Those who travel to the moon have to carry with them the oxygen, water and food they need from the earth. None of these can be found on the moon.

Students! The progress of modern technology, by polluting the atmosphere with Carbon dioxide smoke, is causing threat to life on earth. This smoke has already created a hole in the ozone ring above the earth which has been serving as a protecting cover against harmful radiation from the sun.

If the Ozone layer is destroyed the effect of the sun's rays may be disastrous. All nations are now worried about this threat. All that needs to be done to avert this danger is to reduce the pollution of the atmosphere caused by automobiles and industrial effluents. The uncontrolled development of industries has to be checked. Development should be in the common interest, to promote the welfare of all.

Revering nature

The Navaratri celebration is an occasion for revering Nature and considering how natural resources can be used properly in the best interests of mankind. Resources like water, air, power and minerals should be used properly and not misused or wasted. Economy in the use of every natural resource is vital. Pollution of the air has many evil consequences. The inner significance of observances like Nagarsankirtan and bhajans is to fill the atmosphere with sacred vibrations and holy thoughts.

Today we know how radio and television broadcasts are transmitted to all parts of the world by radio waves. Is it unbelievable that Krishna was able similarly to appear in the homes of Gopikas simultaneously? If a yantra (machine) could achieve such a result, how much more power should be attributed to mantra? The power of the divine name and form is all pervading. The electro-magnetic waves in the atmosphere can preserve sounds and forms for all time.

When Swami was recently in Hyderabad, His activities there were seen on the TV in various parts of the country. If a mechanical contrivance could achieve this, is it incredible that much

more could be done by the divine power of mantras? What is needed is the power to tune in to the Spirit just as appropriate tuning is needed to receive a radio or TV broadcast. Regard your heart as a radio receiver. Your concentration is the tuning device. You will experience the Divine when you tune your heart properly. This calls for firm, unwavering concentration.

The inauguration of the Navaratri celebrations means that you should use this occasion for offering worship to Nature and resolving to make sacred use of all natural resources. Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi"

Spiritual Basis of Dasara Festival

In the course of His discourse on Vijayadashami day (October 6), Bhagavan called for the observance of festivals like Navaratri as a spiritual exercise rather than as a formal ritual. Bhagavan said:

The Lord created everything from Truth and everything is permeated by Truth. Realise that there is nothing in the world that is not based on Truth and everything is composed of Shuddha Satwa (the divine essence). Man has forgotten this fact.

Man has emerged from the Divine (Madhava). Forgetting this truth is the delusion (Maya) from which man suffers. A true human being cannot suffer from this delusion.

Embodiments of Divine Love! Humanness is inextricably linked to Divinity and is not separate from it. The same Atma resides in all beings.

There are various limbs and organs in the body such as hands, legs, eyes, nose, mouth, ears etc. All of them are integral parts of the body. There is an intimate connection between these different limbs and the indweller (Sariri) in the body. The Jivatma is the Indweller. The limbs constitute the body. The relationship between the Indweller and the body is integral. All limbs belong to the individual. Hence the Indweller will not hate any limb. The Indweller (Sariri) will not feel happy if any limb suffers because all limbs belong to him and their experiences are also his.

Likewise, Vishnu pervades the cosmos as His body. All things in the cosmos are limbs of the body of Vishnu. Hence no one should have any aversion to anything in the universe. He should not hate any one, because the same Divine is present in you and in everything in the universe.

The cosmos has three forms: the gross, the subtle and the causal. The physical universe represents the gross form. The subtle form is the mind and subtler than the mind is the Atma.

The five kosas

A human being has five sheaths. These five sheaths have been grouped into three. The gross sheath is the Annamaya (Kosa). The three Kosas, Pranamaya (vital breath), Mano (the mental sheath) and the Vijñanamaya (the intellectual sheath) together constitute the subtle sheath. The

causal sheath is the Anandamaya Kosa (the Bliss sheath). Even the last sheath does not represent total bliss, because there is a higher entity above the Anandamaya kosa. This is known as Mahakarana or supracausal entity. This is the Atmic principle.

Because every individual has these three bodies, he is called Tripurasundari. Every human being has, these "Tripuras" (three cities). The three puras are the body, the mind and the heart. Since the Prakriti element, which is feminine in nature, is present in greater measure in the body, it is termed as Sundari (a beautiful damsel).

During the Navaratri festival Tripurasundari is worshipped. Unfortunately, from ancient times people have been observing only the external forms of worship without understanding the inner significance of these festivals. The entire cosmos is a temple. The Lord pervades the cosmos. Nature (Prakriti) teaches the spiritual truth about Navaratri. Realise the love of Sai through spiritual practice. The Lord has to be realised through Sadhana. Sadhana does not mean adoring God in a particular place or in a particular form. It means thinking of God in all that you do wherever you may be. It may be asked whether this is possible. The answer is that it is possible by dedicating every action to God.

Self-deception in worship

During Navaratri there is a form of worship called Angarpana pooja. In this form of worship, all the limbs of the body are offered to the Divine in a spirit of surrender (Sharanagati). Surrender means offering everything to the Divine and giving up the idea of separation between oneself and the Divine. There can be no true surrender if there is a sense of separation. There must be the conviction that it is the same Divine who dwells in all beings (Ekam Vasi Sarvabhuta-antaratma).

In the performance of Angaarpana pooja, there is a form of self-deception. When a devotee says, "Netram Samarpayaami" ("I offer my eyes to the Lord") and offers only a flower to the Lord, he is indulging in a kind of deception. The proper thing would be to say that he is offering a flower. Actually mantras like "Netram Samarpayaami" are intended to indicate that one is using his eyes only to see God. The real significance of the mantra is that you think of the divine in whatever you see or do. Therefore, the true meaning of the Angarpana pooja is to declare that you offer all your limbs in the service of the Lord. This means that whatever work you do should be done as an offering to God. Now-a-days selfishness is rampant among devotees and they love God not for God's sake but only to get their selfish desires fulfilled. As long as selfishness prevail, the Divine cannot be understood.

The Navaratri festival should be used as an occasion to examine one's own nature whether it is human, animal or demonic, and strive to transform the animal nature to the human and divinise the human nature. Wisdom cannot be acquired from outside. It has to be got through inward Sadhana

When the Lord comes

Like many coloured autumn leaves
Still and silent, they sit and wait.
Air, Suspended holds its breath.
The orange Sun of Love appears
Resplendent rays embracing all
Each movement, look and gesture
Stirs the heart, soothes the mind.

Heavens Holiness inhabits human form
And souls silent song is sweetly sung.
He has finely tuned our hearts
And quietly quickened the beat.

Black crowned majesty kindles
Joy-filled wonder and awe
May this never end

As dry leaves, light and motionless,
Are quickly raised by a strong, sudden wind
So fast are we lifted by His One Word: 'Go'
We fly to His fabled room of bliss
The song of His Love full in our ears.
May this never end

—Hal Honig
Prasanthi Mandir, 1.9.92

Avatar Vani

Deepavali Sandesh

Purify the Heart to Realise God

Even as bats breed in an uninhabited house enveloped in darkness, bad qualities such as anger, lust and greed haunt the human heart that is impure (Poem).

Though, at the time of birth, man has no good or bad qualities, changes occur in his nature due to the food he consumes, and the influence of associates around him. One develops ego and attachment used on the company he keeps. As a person gets educated, he or she develops pride and entertains vainglorious thoughts about one's superiority over others. This conceit pollutes the heart.

When dirty water gets mixed with milk, the milk has to be boiled to make it pure. Likewise man has to undertake various types of Sadhana to purge his heart of impurities. Exercises such as meditation, yajna or tapas can only provide mental satisfaction. It is only when the heart is

melted in the heat of Divine love that one can succeed in getting rid of bad qualities and make the heart shine in its pristine effulgence. Just as the sun's rays can burn a heap of cotton if the rays are concentrated by passing through a lens, the rays of the intellect will destroy one's bad qualities only when they are passed through the lens of Divine love.

Although man has come from Madhava (God), he is enveloped in a delusion (bhrama) which obscures the Brahma (Divinity) within him. So long one is in the grip of this delusion one cannot understand God. Because of this delusion one gets attached to the body and develops limitless desires. This leads to the growth of the demonic (Asura) nature in him.

In the word 'nara', meaning man, 'na' means 'no' and 'ra' means 'destruction'. So, the term 'nara' describes man as one without destruction (that is, one who is eternal). When the letter 'ka' is added to 'Nara' it becomes 'Naraka', hell, which is the opposite of heaven. When one descends to the demonic level, he forgets divinity and follows the path to hell. The Divine is realised by pursuing the spiritual path (the Atmic path).

According to the Puranic story, Narakasura is said to have been destroyed on this day of Deepavali. (Naraka Chaturdasi). Narakasura was a demon filled with attachment to bodily pleasures. He was full of bad qualities like lust, anger and greed. He was a terror to women and perpetrated many evil deeds, inviting his own destruction at the hands of a woman, Sathyabhama, the consort of Sri Krishna.

It is worthy of note that the Lord gave this opportunity to Sathyabhama only after subjecting her to a cleansing process to rid her of her pride and jealousy as revealed in the Tulabharam episode. (Bhagavan related at length the story of how Sathyabhama was advised by Narada to make a gift of Krishna to him and win Krishna back by offering an equivalent weight of gold and jewellery. When Sathyabhama offered all the valuables she possessed, it had no effect. Ultimately a Tulsi leaf offered by Rukmini with a prayer to Krishna tilted the balance. Thereby Sathyabhama was cured of her pride and jealousy.)

Apart from this Puranic version, there is a cosmic explanation for the observance of Deepavali. Naraka was a planet moving in orbit with the moon round the earth. Once it appeared to be heading towards the earth. People prayed to Lord Krishna to avert the impending catastrophe. The Lord had to take action to destroy this planet and save the world from disaster. From that day, the Deepavali was being observed as a joyous day of deliverance from evil.

(Bhagavan concluded his Discourse with the Bhajan, "Prema muditha Manase Kaho.")

—From Bhagavan's discourse given on Deepavali eve on 24-10-92 at the Prasanthi Nilayam Mandir

Reductio ad absurdum

There was a pundit who taught grammar and rhetoric to a group of pupils. After finishing a course of lessons, he gave them an assignment: to compose four lines of poetry. One young man, who struggled with himself to produce an appropriate rhyme, had the first two lines.

*The Full Moon is shining bright;
The tree has fruits at height.*

and in his despair, he completed the quatrain with two more lines more absurd than the first two:

*The food is cooked aright!
Ganganna's face is a horrid sight!*

The assignment of course was completed: but how futile. how pathetic, how worthless the result! Most of you fulfill life's assignments as absurdly as this!

—**Baba** ("Chinna Katha")

A leaf from the past

The Devotee's Doubt and the Lord's Grace

Prof. Kasturi, in his autobiography, "Loving God"; describes many occasions on which he had to experience the travail of translating Bhagavan's discourses. On one occasion, more than the problem of translation, he had to go through a difficult ordeal when he had assured the audience that there would be no rain at a time when dark clouds were covering the entire sky. Narrating what happened on this occasion Prof. Kasturi writes:

It was an open air gathering in the spacious quadrangle of a bungalow at Madikeri, in the Coorg District. There were more than three thousand men and women eager for Darshan and anxious to listen to Bhagavan's Message and the bhajan songs He invariably rendered for their benefit. Baba asked me to speak for a few minutes, presumably to raise the curtain. When I stood facing the mike, my eyes discovered on the horizon of hills a heavy phalanx of dark monsoon clouds, emitting ominous grim grunts presaging an attack. The hills were already cowering in fear at the prospect of a terrific aquatic fusillade. I could see many among the audience turn pale at the prospect of being drenched by the downpour. I resolved to narrate a story which could assuage their anxiety

"Vaana Raadu"

It was about an incident that happened at Puttaparthi. Baba was a thirteen-year old boy. Indra, the God; of the Skies, desired to send tons of rain hurtling on the village where Baba, the Sai Krishna, was tending cows and calves and children. People ran helter-skelter seeking shelter from the oncoming disaster. Venkamma the elder sister, was struck with panic. She had planned to build a house and the bricks though piled in the kiln were still wet, awaiting the baking process. The rain would certainly ruin the kiln and reduce the bricks into mass of misshaped clay. Some one advised her to cover the bricks with bundles of dry sugarcane leaves, available at

Karnmtanagapalli, the hamlet facing Puttaparthi from the right bank of the Chitravati. About fifteen men volunteered to help. They followed Venkamma as she hurried across the sands of the river bed to the cluster of houses. Baba too ran behind them. But He stopped suddenly when He had trekked half the distance. Lifting His flat little right palm up in the air He shouted, "Venkamma! Vaana raadu!" (*d* as soft as *th* in the). "Vaana (rain) raadu (won't come.)" It couldn't. He had willed the clouds away.

I watched the faces shine with faith and courage and sat down well pleased with myself, only to rise soon. For, Baba began his Discourse.

As I was talking into the mike, I was frightened to see the clouds descending on the range which shuddered at the thunderous impact. The storm, in a fit of wild frolic, drove the rain down into the foothills. My mind went pit-a-pat with confusion.

Baba to the rescue

Part of me proceeded with the translation while all of me blamed my effrontery at having chosen that story of "Vaana raadu". The 'Vaana' was advancing fast, enveloping the valley, lashing the jungle hiding there. It drenched the hillocks and blitzed the heights on which Madikeri was built. It overwhelmed the bazaar and the bus station, half a kilometre away.

But, Baba spoke on as sweet and serene as ever. Concluding His Discourse with a shower of blessings, He sang three bhajan songs and bidding Ravindra Punja, who came forward with the Arati Plate, to wait and keep the camphor flame aside, He spoke about my duel with a dilemma. I had to render those slow deliberate sentences, too, into Kannada for the benefit of the huge audience.

"You were assured by Kasturi before I began to talk that the rain would be driven off by me. He was not firm in that faith, though he tried to instill that faith in you. Poor fellow! All the time, he was fearing, worrying, praying, pleading with .tile. The rain is now pouring in Mahadevpet. It will reach this place only after twenty minutes."

I had therefore to make those devotees realise that I was like most others they have known—a pendulum swinging between acceptance and apprehension.

The teacher of truth

Bhagavan has declared that in this Avatar He has taken on the role of Teacher, the Teacher of Truth. Hence, He is both Rama and Krishna, His story is both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. When Baba tells us that His Life is His Message. He is Rama. When He tells us, "Do as Rama did; but don't do as Krishna did," He is warning us against attempting to use mountains as umbrellas! He advises us to "Act as Krishna taught." "I can," He declares, "lift on My little finger a whole range of peaks. For you, practising one single line of the Gita is enough adventure."

Baba teaches a special Gita to every seeker and to every caste, class, age, group, profession or community. I have listened to His Discourses addressed to children, women and the aged, the blind, the handicapped, students of Vedic Pathashalas, High schools, Colleges, Technological

Institutes, Institutes of Science, Women's Colleges, Agricultural Universities, Medical Colleges; inmates of Remand Homes, Orphanages, Rescue Homes, Borstal Schools, Reformatories and jails; gatherings of teachers (Kindergarten, Primary and High Schools), Headmasters, Professors, Psychiatrists, Doctors; Lions and Rotarians; Businessmen, Executives, Heads of Religious Orders, workers in factories, labourers on dam sites, miners and farmers, nurses and social service personnel; technicians, researchers in atomic energy; Sappers and Miners; Sainik school boys; Jawans of the Army; Air Force personnel; poets, Pundits, Literati; farmers; fishermen; policemen, pilgrims and monks, journalists and tribals; students of colleges for Men and Women. I have verified the impressions I gathered while watching the faces of these diverse groups during hundreds of discourses Baba has delivered in villages, towns and cities.

Impact of Baba's Discourses

The impact of Baba's discourses on the listeners is profoundly positive.

*His talk, they find, is cooling, not freezing,
Warming, not scorching; raining, not raging;
Healing the ailing and the hearts bewailing;
Soothing, not searing, totally tonic;
Balming and calming; bettering, not frittering,
Impelling inquiry, compelling ascent,
Dispelling dejection, repulsing reluctance,
Infusing faith, fusing fissions, defusing revenge,
Imposing no doctrine, composing dogma feuds,
Informing, so charming, never harming, disarming,
Sifting the responding, lifting the despondent,
Sound waves spreading Love, speedier than Light.*

*As you hear His words you quietly resolve
To take a step forward on the pilgrim road...
Unfold your wings, explore the sky
And seek the regions beyond your ken.*

*He is welcoming all who are thirsting and starving
Or limping and groaning or climbing and sliding,
Raising the stooping, bracing the dropping!
He opens the eye and strengthens the limb.
Awakening the sleeping, the sitting to stand,
The standing to walk, the walking to march,
The marching to reach, the reaching to merge.*

A Global Festival of Light and Love

Deepavali is a joyous festival that is celebrated throughout Bharat by young and old. It is truly one of our great national festivals, taking its place with celebrations like Sri Ramanavami and Krishna Janmashtami.

For many years now, Bhagavan Baba has given to devotees all over the world another festival, which is global in its scope and which combines light with love and is saturated with holiness. This is the Akhanda Bhajan, which is observed in November. This year the Akhanda Bhajan will be celebrated by Sai devotees in all the continents from 6 p.m. of November 7th (Saturday) to 6 p.m. of November 8th.

The Akhanda Bhajan is inaugurated by the lighting of an Akhanda Jyoti, which is kept burning for 24 hours continuously together with the non-stop bhajans.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, it is always a thrilling moment when Bhagavan lights the Akhanda Jyoti and it is followed by the soul stirring bhajan "Akhanda Jyoti jalao, Saayee Man mandirme." "Oh Lord Sai, Light the eternal flame in the temple of my mind.")

As the lamp is lit at each Sai centre, starting from the farthest eastern longitude in Japan or Fiji,—and ending with Vancouver in the "far west", by the time the bhajan is over at all centres, the Jyoti and bhajan would have provided a girdle round the globe conveying Bhagavan's message of light and love.

The Akhanda Bhajan may verily be regarded as Bhagavan's offer of a new Deepavali festival which is global in scope and which promotes love and unity among all people, transcending the barriers of nationality, race, language and religion.

Glimpses of the Avatar

When Tulsi Bloomed at the Lotus Feet

*When my servants
Ask thee concerning Me
I am indeed
Close: I listen
To the prayer of every
suppliant when he calleth on Me.*

(THE QURAN: II : 186)

Karim Sab, (67) shriveled and taciturn, sits every evening on the Cuddapah black-stone bench in front of his dormitory. His posture denotes uncertainty, even loneliness, like an autumn-leaf about to be wind-blown; and he waits there till the sunlight turns yellow and makes dull the hills around him. The mid-November mist fills the somnolent air in Anantapur with a chilled invisibility.

As an inmate of the Home for the Aged in this Andhra town, Karim Sab's life is uneventful. Nothing remarkable has come his way except that he has been a classmate of the one whom he calls "Sathya"— and whom the world now knows as SATHYA SAI BABA.

Karim Sab informs this author that he has known BABA in the primary school, six decades ago. Delight ripples over his tired features as he recalls those happy days. His simple faith in Allah rules out questions about the ways of divinity. Calling these experiences as "jewels in the heart" he feels grateful and is content for the chance he has had.

"Even as children," he tells the visitor, "we were certain that Baba was not like all of us, though He moved and played with us. Hazrat Mohammad Sahib must have been like this. And Lord Jesus Christ—Hazrat Ibraheem."

When shown the photo of Baba he grows reminiscent: "As a child He was tiny for His age—yes, the same generous mouth and those large black eyes too were there. They sparkled like pools at sunset. Once we were free—a drill period it was—and Baba led us to play in the open space in front of the school building. We refused, of course."

"Why?" enquires the visitor.

"The ground was hard with sharp stones and gravel. We were poor, no shoes for us. We said so, but He wouldn't listen. "Come" He insisted, "See, see, I can run." He started running over the crushed earth as if it was velvet. We hesitated looking suspiciously. And ah! wonder of wonders! Before our wide eyes it changed. Wherever His feet touched, a Tulsi plant sprang up immediately, just like that."

Karim Sab stops, breathing heavily as if he has been reliving the moment.

"Yes, we looked on," he mused, "as He ran lightly on the ground patch by patch, it turned to glowing green. The whole place was covered with Tulsi that sent a faint welcome smell! No, not the plant, but a low dense bushy type of growth. We ran to this carpet, rolled on it, stamped and wallowed till we were exhausted, and then we lay there, flat on our backs, panting for breath. The fresh aroma rose and covered us too, soothing like the touch of a warm blanket. Through its haziness we saw Him stand above us, hands folded behind, an unspeakable tenderness playing on lips."

Karim Sab suddenly stops, over-whelmed by the intensity of his recollections. When questioned further he admits that he recalls that incredible event often. Now that the world has forgotten him, each evening he comes, sits on this bench and waits. Sometimes the newly sprouted Tulsi's smell rises with the mists of the evening and enfolds him as an assurance, fervid yet cordial.

"How often it happens?" comes the skeptical question.

He is reluctant. Not everything can be demanded by an intruder. Yet he remains polite. "Yes not very often," he says softly, "but yes Tulsi comes from nowhere and fills the whole air. Then I am not, only Tulsi Is."

—Dr. Zeba Bashiruddin

I did not insist that a person should have faith in God I refuse to call any person a nastika, an atheist. Beings exist as a result of his will, in accordance with his plan; so no one is beyond His Grace. Besides, every one has love towards some one thing or other, and that love is a spark of the Divine. Everyone has ultimately to base his life on some one Truth; that Truth is God. No life can be lived out in complete defiance of Truth. One has to pay heed to truth and speak the Truth to some one in order to make life worth living. Now, that moment is God's Moment and at that moment when he utters the truth, or loves, or serves or bends, he is a theist.

—Baba

A Particle Physicist's Perception of God: I

There is a commonly held view that scientists are generally atheistic or at best agnostic. They are taught all through their scientific careers not to accept anything on faith. They are ordained to subject all their ideas to objective experiments. They are told that the resulting observations will be the final arbiter as to whether their ideas are correct or not. This rationalistic philosophy stands in the way of many scientists accepting God on faith.

For scientists in India faith in God does not pose a serious problem because they are nurtured in a culture which is quite spiritual. It is more of a problem for scientists in the highly industrialised nations of the western world. There is somehow a belief there that the culture of science does not allow for a framework in which the concept of God could be formulated by using anything other than faith and acceptance of anything based on faith is alien to their scientific culture. By examining certain recent developments in cosmology and the physics of subatomic particles, the purpose of this article is to show that a framework does exist in which we can understand what we mean by God.

Let me briefly review in a very non-technical way some of the latest developments in particle physics and cosmology. From time immemorial man has always wondered about the ultimate constituents of matter and how it all got there. The view that all matter consists of atoms is usually attributed to the Greeks, notably Democritus. It is not as well known that ancient scientists in India also enunciated the atomic hypothesis about the same time as the Greeks or even earlier. In the last two hundred years the atomic hypothesis has been put on a quantitative basis through the work of many western scientists, notably by Dalton among many others, and the sciences of modern physics and chemistry were born.

The sub atomic world

Atoms are invisible to the naked eye. Through various numerous ingenious experiments, details of which we do not wish to go into here, the objective reality of atoms was established. But man was not satisfied with this level of knowledge. Curiosity drove him, to investigate what is inside the atoms. Such investigations needed the development of the so called "atom-smashers" and the

development of suitable detectors to catch what comes from the smashed atoms and to identify them. In the last sixty years progressively higher and higher energy atom-smashers have been built in many countries of the world and scientists have been very busy conducting experiments to unravel the mysteries of the sub-atomic world. At some of these highest energy atom-smashers, the energies deposited at the atomic particles are, for a fleeting moment, equivalent to what must have existed at the time of the creation of the Universe!

At the time as these experiments are being done, theoretical models are designed based on logic and mathematics to describe the results of these experiments and to make new predictions which could be tested in future experiments. The natural laws which hold in the sub-atomic world are thus discovered. To indicate how exciting the progress in this field has been, we may mention that in the last fifty years, twenty one Nobel prizes have been awarded for discoveries in this field!

There are two types of questions these activities must answer. (a) What are the ultimate constituents in the sub-atomic world, and, (b) what are the forces that hold these constituents together? Answers to both these questions, at our present level of understanding of these matters, are: (a) all matter is made up of fundamental sub-atomic constituents called “quarks” and “leptons;” (b) There are four basic forces which influence these constituents, the gravitational force, the electromagnetic force, the strong nuclear force (responsible for holding nuclei of atoms together), and the weak nuclear force (responsible for radioactivity.) The mathematical theory is based upon quantum mechanics and relativity developed by a number of famous persons, Heisenberg, Schrodinger, Dirac, Pauli, Einstein, Fermi and many others.

Although a number of issues have been clarified in this existing field by all this work, a number of new questions have come to the surface. Prominent among these is the question of whether all the four forces mentioned above are fundamental. Maybe there is one “unified force” from which all the four forces mentioned above originate. The reason for thinking along this line has the following origin. In the last century electric and magnetic forces were considered distinct forces. Then along came Maxwell who showed that these forces are really unified onto what we now call the electromagnetic force. More recently, in the early seventies, Salam, Weinberg and Glashow, showed that the weak nuclear force could be unified with the electromagnetic force into what is now called the “electro-weak” force. With these examples at hand, physicists were naturally left wondering whether the two other forces might also be unified with the electro-weak force into a Beyond Four Dimensions “grand unified force.”

(To be continued)

How to Use the Avatar

The way in which the Avatar has to be used for one's liberation and uplift is: watch His every step, observe His actions and activities, follow the guiding principles of which His life is an elaboration. Mark His love, His compassion, His Wisdom, try to bring them into your own life.

Man has become artificial, crooked, twisted out of his normal shape. He has left behind the simple natural ways and made his mind a lumber-room for ideas, worries, anxieties and terrors. He can live on very much less, with much greater joy for himself and others. If only he remembers that he is a treasure-chest with the Divine Spark in it, he will be more loving and more useful.

God incarnates for the revival of Dharma (Righteousness) which includes morality, truth, virtue, love and a host of other qualities that uphold the communities of man as well as the individual. The other purposes usually given, such as serving the devoted, destroying the wicked, re-establishing the sacred tradition—these are all secondary. For, he who is righteous will be guarded from harm by righteousness itself, he who is unrighteous will fall into disaster through the evil that he perpetrates. The one task includes all else.

—Baba

The entire Cosmos is a manifestation of the myriad forms of Vishnu, at all times and in every form. The Lord's Divine potency protects all. Man's life is based on Divine Grace.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

For all living beings on earth, the earth is the basis of life. The Life Force for the earth is water. Out of water come food grains (sasyam). Food grains sustain man (Purusha). Speech is the highest expression of man. Ritham (or the Cosmic order) is based on "Vaak" (the Divine word). Ritham is cognised in Riks (Vedic hymns). The beauty of Riks is found in Sama (one of the four Vedas). Omkara (the primal Pranava) is the essence of Sama. Human existence arises from the Divine, is sustained by the Divine and finally merges in the Divine.

Omkara has three constituents Akara, Ukara and Makara (the three syllables—A, U, M). Akara represents the vital principle Pranatatwa. Ukara represents the Mind. Makara represents the Body. Omkara is thus the unified expression of the Atma, the Mind and the Body.

The cosmos emerged from Akara. It is the Life-Force (Prana). The Mind principle came from Ukara. The Body emerged from Makara. The Atma, the Mind and the Body, which emanated from the three syllables "A", "U" and "M", permeate the sun, the firmament and the entire universe. Omkara is the essential basis for the entire creation.

Nada, Bindu and Kala

The Omkara principle has three forms: Nada, Bindu and Kala. "Nada" is the sound that comes from the life-breath. This means that Omkara is associated with the sound coming from the life-breath. The five kinds of life breath—Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vyana—are expressions of the Life-Principle. These five represent the five basic elements (Pancha bhutas).

"Bindu" is the unified form of the Atma, the Mind and the Body. "Kala" is the reflected image of the Omni-Self (Paramatma) through the intellect (Buddhi). The triple principle—Nada, Bindu, Kala—permeate the entire universe.

What is the purpose served by these three? All three are forms of Maya (deceptive appearances). Even the sounds "A", "U" and "M", are deluding. Prana, Mind and Body are also forms of Maya (delusion). Hence, the ancient sages declared: "Tasmai namah". Salutations to the One that transcends all forms. The yogis prayed to the One who is beyond "Nada" "Bindu" and "Kala" (Naadabindukalaatheetha)

The cosmos, thus, is made up of "Nada", "Bindu" and "Kala". How is man to recognise this fact? The sages declared that "Satsang" is essential for this purpose. "Satsang" is commonly understood as referring to good company. This is not the proper meaning. "Sat" refers to that

with "Sat" in this sense.

"Sat" refers therefore to the Cosmic Consciousness which is present in all beings. The consciousness present in an individual cannot be called "Sat". "Sat" applies to that collective Cosmic Consciousness which is present in all beings. "Satsang" means the cultivation of association with this Cosmic Consciousness by the individual. Most people consider that coming together with other individuals for the purpose of prayer and other devotional acts is "Satsang". This is not so. "Satsang" represents the striving by man to establish union with the all-pervading, omnipotent, Universal Consciousness.

There is, however, an impediment in the way of achieving this, known as "Moha". "Moha" does not refer to attachment to wealth, property or children. Man can get rid of "Moha" only when he understands its inner meaning. "Moha" is derived from the words "Maa", meaning "finite", and "Doha", meaning, imagining that which does not exist. "Moha" means, "finite conception of the unreal as real". This is divorced from any concept of divinity. "Moha" is totally related to the phenomenal world (Prakritam). It is associated with "Kama" or desire. "Kama" signifies transient pleasure based on worldly desires.

Sat-Chit-Ananda

Lasting happiness can only be got from Divine feelings related to the Cosmic Consciousness (Chaitanya). This Consciousness itself is based on the transcendental "Sat-Chit-Ananda". "Sat" is that which is eternal, the Being that is permanent. "Chit" signifies "total awareness or knowledge (Paripoorna Jnana)". "Chit" is total awareness of what "Sat" represents. Both these transcend the phenomenal world. But these transcendental entities are present in the phenomenal objects. How are the two to be distinguished from each other? The transcendental element in the phenomenal world must be recognised as reflected images, like the reflections of the sun in a pot of water. The body is like a vessel in which the Divine is present as a reflection like the reflection of the sun, who is permanent, in a vessel, which is impermanent. The Divine is present inside and outside everything in the Cosmos. In the body, that may be compared to a vessel, the reflection of the Life Principle or the Atma can be seen in the mind, which corresponds to water in the vessel. While the body and the mind are finite, the Atma is infinite.

All the prayers, japas, yagas and yajnas performed by men today are confined to the achievement of temporary pleasures and rewards. They are related to a life which is itself impermanent. The mind and the phenomenal world are equally impermanent.

Unity in diversity

The Universe is called "prapancha" a manifestation of the "panchabhutas"—the five basic elements, ether, air, fire, water and earth. As these elements are impermanent and subject to change, all human life is related to impermanent objects and pleasures. How is one to achieve that which is lasting within the framework of the impermanent? This should be done by breaking down the separation between the permanent and the impermanent and recognising the permanent in the impermanent—the One in the many, unity in diversity.

multiplicity of names, forms, speech and feelings. But in all of them there are the five elements common to all. But these are gross elements. Besides these, there is the spiritual element, Consciousness ("Chinmaya"). The Vedantins described the body as a doll of clay. Because of its predominant earthy nature, the body by itself is unable to raise itself to a higher level of existence. For this purpose, it needs the power of "mantra" or "yantra". An aeroplane is a "yantra" (a machine) which is able to lift man far above the earth.

Develop life-principle

The predominant earth element in man is constantly pulling him downwards. To lift himself above the mundane level man has to reduce the earthy element in him and increase the other four elements, air, fire, water and ether. The fire element that has to be increased is the "Jnana-Agni" the Fire of Wisdom. Similarly, man has to reduce the "Apana vayu" in him and increase the "Samana vayu". This is the development of the Life-Principle in man.

Purpose of Navaratri celebrations

What is the purpose of the Navaratri celebrations? It is to acquire mastery over the forces of Nature and use it for obtaining mental satisfaction. Contentment in the mind is not easily secured. As soon as one desire is satisfied, another crops up. There is no limit to desires (Kama). Even the aspiration for Moksha (liberation from mundane existence) is a desire. As long as desires remain, man is bound to the mundane existence.

Prema is love of God

"Moksha" means the disappearance of "Moha" (attachment). Liberation signifies freedom from fleeting pleasures. What is it that man should aspire for? There is a Divinity that is permanent and unchanging. That is known as Prema (Divine Love). This Prema is not related to the physical. Men experience this love in its worldly form as affection or attachment. All love in human relationships today is not 'Prema' but 'Anuraga' (attachment). It is inherently of a passing nature interludes in the human journey. All attachment arises at one stage between mother and son, husband and wife, and so on and drops away at another stage. As against these transient attachments, the love of God (Prema) is something totally different. God is eternal, existing before man's birth and continuing after his death. The Divine is without a beginning or an end. True love means the Love of God. When a man and woman wed, we call it "marriage". But when the Jivatma (the individual self) unites with the Paramatma (the Omni-Self), it is called merger.

A day of victory

During the Dasara festival, the three Goddesses—Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi—are worshipped according to certain traditional practices. The tenth day of the festival is celebrated as the Day of Victory. The celebration has its roots deep in the ancient history of Bharat. In the Dwapara yuga, when the Pandavas had to spend one year incognito, they hid all their weapons (astras), on the advice of Krishna, in a Jammi tree which is thick in foliage and whose branches are filled with latent fire. Vijayadashami was the day on which they retrieved the weapons from the tree and used them to win victory over the Kauravas.

Earlier, in the Treta yuga, Sri Rama's coronation, after his victorious return to Ayodhya from Lanka, was performed on Vijayadashami day.

Durga represents the prodigious power of Nature (Prakriti-shakti). As against this power of Nature is the Para-Shakti (the power of the Spirit). When spiritual power is predominant, the power of Nature is kept under control. When spiritual power is weak, the power of Nature becomes predominant. This is illustrated by the example of smoke and fire. When smoke is predominant, the fire is suppressed. When the fire is blazing, the smoke vanishes. Hence, to enhance the power of the Spirit and limit the power of Nature, man has to cultivate Vairagya (detachment). To the extent the power of Nature is under control, to that extent spiritual power grows.

Control over nature

“Iccha-Shakti” (the potency of Will) arises from thoughts. This “Iccha-Shakti” is the source of several other potencies like intellectual power, the discriminating capacity and others. To develop this “Iccha-Shakti” (Will power), one has to worship Devi. This calls for the cultivation of Tyaga (renunciation or detachment). For instance, if one has a desire for various drinks, he can bring the desires under control by giving up, to begin with, the desire for some of them. Thereby the Will power (“Iccha-Shakti”) is developed and in due course it becomes easier to give up other desires. In Vedantic parlance this is described as “Vairagya” (renouncing all attachments? Vairagya is not abandonment of hearth and home and retiring to a forest. It means developing Godly thoughts and reducing worldly feelings. It is when this balanced development takes place that one acquires control over the powers of Nature (Prakriti-Shakti). When these powers are met, the mental power in a person increases. Durga represents the Prakriti-Shakti and Lakshmi represents the Thought-power (Sankalpa-Shakti). “Vaak-Shakti”, the power of speech, is represented by Saraswati. It is to acquire these three powers that the various forms of worship are performed during the Navaratri festival. But prayers alone are not enough. Prayers issue from the lips. They should emanate from the heart. The heart (Hridaya) symbolises the Ocean of Milk (Ksheerasagara). Lakshmi emerged from the Ocean of Milk. When Lakshmi emerges, purity of speech follows. Whatever you speak conforms to truth.

Sathya and Ritha

There are two concepts: Sathya (truth) and Ritha (Conduct based on unity of thought, word and deed). The triple purity of mind, speech and body is Ritha. To adhere to Ritha and speak and act accordingly is Truth. What is uttered with this triple purity is alone Truth, not other words.

The ancients have declared that adherence to this truth is Dharma (Righteousness). There is no higher Dharma than Truth (“Sathyannasthi paro Dharmah”). Without the firm foundation of Truth, the mansion of Dharma cannot stand.

A life built upon desires (sankalpa) cannot last. The mansion of desires must be converted into a Mansion of Divine Will (“Iccha-Bhavanam”). When the Will Power (“Iccha-Shakti”) is

Wisdom). It is through this Divine Wisdom that spiritual liberation "Kaivalyam" is secured.

Divine potencies

The Navaratri festival should not be observed as a festival for worshipping the consorts of Vishnu, Siva and Brahma. These Goddesses symbolise Divine potencies. All these potencies are derived from Vishnu. The entire cosmos is a manifestation of the myriad forms of Vishnu. People must recognise this oneness underlying the different forms. All beings breathe the same air as their life-breath. Likewise all the five basic elements are common to all. These elements are the stuff of Nature. But in the Paratatwa (the Supreme Principle, the Divine), these do not exist. The elements are mortal. The Divine is immortal. To proceed from the mortal to the immortal the easiest means is the cultivation of Divine Love (Prema).

The heart is like a sky wherein the clouds in the form of thoughts hide the Buddhi (the intellect) and the Mind representing the sun and the moon. Vairagya is the means to get rid of thoughts and the desires arising from them. The Devi Puja performed during Navaratri is intended to get rid of worldly attachments and divert the mind towards God.

There are four different qualities in man: humanness, the animal nature, the demonic nature and the Divine nature. When man follows the dictates of the body, he is a prey to his animal nature. When he is subject to the vagaries of the mind, he becomes demonic. When he is following the Atma, he is manifesting his Divinity. When he is governed by all the three—the body, the mind and the Atma—he is human.

When Ravana fell a victim to the promptings of the mind, his demonic nature predominated over his other good qualities as a worshipper of Siva and a master of many sciences. Whenever a desire arises in the mind, one should exercise the power of discrimination and decide whether it is good or bad. This is the way to enter on the spiritual path.

Each person has to decide for himself in which of these four states he is placed. The Atmic principle is fundamental and everyone should strive to fortify the heart for spiritual ends. This heart is not the physical heart. It is the abode of the Spirit and is located in the spinal column between the ninth and twelfth vertebrae. It shines like lightning in the core of a dark cloud. This is called Sushumna. Sushumna refers to the state in which all the sensory organs are subdued and the mind and desires are under control. It is not the state of deep sleep, as is interpreted by some. The terms used by the Vedantins should be understood in their deeper sense. This is a difficult exercise. The easier path is to love God with a pure and unwavering mind. Tukaram confessed that he was unacquainted with the techniques of meditation or the rules for performing sacrifices. "Oh Rama! The only method I know to attain you is to love you with a pure heart! Let me have your grace for cherishing this love", he declared.

(Bhagavan referred to the danger to the Ozone layer above the earth owing to atmospheric pollution and said that intensive afforestation is essential for controlling this pollution and safeguarding the Ozone layer).

Victory of the spirit

The Navaratri festival was celebrated by kings in olden days for propitiating Nature before embarking on wars of conquest. The Navaratri festival has another significance also. It is intended to secure victory over the nine planets (Navagrahas). Saint Thyagaraja, however, declared that if only he had Rama's Grace (anugraha), the Navagrahas would be utterly powerless.

Men today should not seek the earthly victories sought by the ancient rulers. They should seek the sovereignty of the Kingdom of the Spirit within them (Atmasamrajyam). This calls for control over the senses and the eschewing of bad qualities like anger, greed and jealousy. This sadhana must begin from now itself when you are young. Do not put it off for your old age.

The students are well behaved while they are here. But they should carry their good conduct wherever they may be. Only then they will serve to reform the world. Just as people of all faiths live in harmony here, you should live in harmony with people of other faiths in whatever country you may live. It is only when you set the example to the world will you be serving your Motherland well.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*").

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir

XITH CONVOCATION OF SAI INSTITUTE

Sai Education: A Blessing to the Nation

“I recall the deep impression made on me on seeing the infra-structure, atmosphere, equipment and human resources organized for imparting education at Vidyagiri. That was five years ago, on 22nd November 1987, and in this period the further development of the Institute, in every respect, is a matter of great satisfaction. All this has been possible under the guidance of the Revered Chancellor. Today the Campuses at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur are invaluable assets in the crucial task of imparting Integral Education. Indeed these constitute a blessing of far-reaching significance, observed Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, the President of India, in the course of his address to the XIth Convocation of the Institute held in the vast Vidyagiri Stadium, on 22nd November 92.

Punctually at 3.30 P.M., Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor of the Institute, and the President of India arrived at the Stadium and went in ceremonial procession to the Santhi Vedika, followed by Sri Krishna Kant, Governor of A. P., Sri S. B. Chavan, Home Minister, Prof. S. Sampath, Vice-Chancellor, Members of the Governing Body of the Institute, the Deans of

white and red uniforms, marched in front, playing fine marching tunes. The Registrar, carrying the silver mace, led the academic procession.

The stage had been beautifully decorated with floral draperies of attractive designs, providing an artistic backdrop.

After the Chancellor, the Chief Guest and others had taken their seats on the dais, the proceedings started with the chanting of Vedic hymns by the students of the Institute.

Vice-Chancellor's Address

Offering his salutations to Bhagavan and welcoming the Chief Guest and others, Prof. Sampath, the Vice-Chancellor said: "It is our duty to express our gratitude to the Revered Chancellor for His bounty in creating this Centre of Learning, sustaining it, ensuring its growth from strength to strength and making it shine magnificently as a beacon-light in the field of education.

On the day of the inauguration of this University eleven years ago, the Revered Chancellor spoke to the gathering on the purpose for which He had created this Institute of Higher Learning.

In this Institute, the imparting of Spiritual Education will be blended harmoniously with the teaching of the physical metaphysical and ethical components. This institution will equip the learners with courage and confidence as well as knowledge and skills, to enable them to shape their careers by their own efforts, relying on their inner strength. The chief goal of human existence is the realization of 'Ananda', which is Bliss for all mankind, and the Unity of all human beings in a world of Love. I want this University to impart this Higher Learning".

Pace-setting role

The Vice-Chancellor recalled with gratitude the words of appreciation of the Prime Minister of India, Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao, who was the Chief Guest at the Tenth Convocation on 22nd November 91. "The task before the Nation is to transform the massive structure of our Higher Education from one in which Values are totally lost to one in which they are fully cherished. This task is a stupendous one. If there is a glimmer of hope, it comes from this Institution. We would like to take it from here."

"This was a candid appreciation of the pace-setting role of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in the national context," stated the Vice-Chancellor. He also recalled Bhagavan Baba's concern for the welfare of the nation in His Convocation Message: The learned person's life must shine as his message to mankind. Every atom of strength, every moment of living, every expression of virtue and every manifestation of intelligence must be directed to the fulfillment of this purpose. The Nation can prosper and be happy only when Education is developed in an atmosphere of Truth, Reverence and Love".

While extending a welcome to the Chief Guest Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma. Prof. Sampath recalled Dr. Sharma's address to the Sixth Convocation in 1987 and stated that "all are thrilled at the Divine Grace showered on this illustrious son of India". He described Dr. Sharma's academic attainments, commencing from his Degree in Law of the Lucknow University, to his acquisition of Degrees with high honours in English Literature, Hindi and Sanskrit and the Doctorate in Law of Cambridge University. He referred to Dr. Sharma's practice as Barrister-at-Law in Lincoln's Inn, and his becoming a Fellow of the prestigious Law School of Harvard University. "His academic accolades and erudition can be described as awesome." The Vice-Chancellor then referred to Dr. Sharma's distinction in the political field, his participation in the 'Quit India' Movement, his becoming Chief Minister of the erstwhile Bhopal State in 1952, when he was just 33 (the youngest Chief Minister of the country) and then becoming a Member of Parliament, a Central Cabinet Minister, his election as Vice-President of India by national consensus and finally as the President of India.

The Institute's record

Tracing the academic activities of the Institute, he said 172 students in Undergraduate Courses and 105 students in P.G. Courses will receive their degrees at the Convocation. There are 2 Ph. D. scholars from the Mathematics Department of the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus and one in Telugu from the Anantapur Campus. Total enrolment of students in the current year rose to 1066 from 959 in the previous year.

He spoke about the Computer Center assisting the Super-Speciality Hospital in establishing a Computerized Hospital Management and Patient Care System. Research work in Science was directed to practical problems useful to the fields of Agriculture, Natural Products, Optics, Nuclear Spectroscopy, etc. A technique known as 'Prasanthi Technique' for removing excess fluoride in drinking water has been developed. At the instance of the Prime Minister, a team of experts was deputed by the Government of India to study the Sathya Sai Educational System as obtaining at the Prasanthi Nilayam complex to make modifications in the National System of Education.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that, "in the close proximity of Bhagavan Baba, the students and teachers undergo purification of hearts and the hearts get filled with pure, selfless, divine love, the embodiment of which is Sathya Sai, the beloved Chancellor."

He expressed gratitude to the President of India for his presence and requested the Chancellor to give His benedictory Message.

After the Chancellor had declared the Convocation open at the request of the Vice-Chancellor, the candidates admitted to various degrees were presented to the Chancellor. All the candidates got up at their places and bowed to the Chancellor, who conferred His benediction on them.

The Vice-Chancellor then administered the Institute's Pledge to the candidates.

The Registrar, Sri K. Chakravarthi, then read out the names of those who had been awarded medals for academic excellence. The recipients are: Ravi Kumar, (All-round Merit) (MBA fl), Vijay Kumar Doradla, (B. Sc.), Prasonjit Mukherjee, (B. Com), Rishi Bharadwaj, (B. Com), M. V. Jayant Sastri, (M.Sc.) (Math), C. R. Gopaiakrishnan, (M. Sc.) (Chemistry), A. Sathya Sai Krishna, (M. Sc.) (Bio-Sciences), Kanuri Ramakrishna, (M. Cam.) M. Venkatasubramaniam, (M. B. A.), Geethanjali Singh, (B. A.), B. Madhavi Latha (B. Sc.) (Home Science), Jailakshmi Raghavan, (B. Ed.), Rajambal Palanee, (M. A.), (Philosophy), K. Bharathi Laxman, (B. Sc.), (Bio-Sciences).

The following are the recipients of Ph. D. degree: S. Kumar, (Maths), P. D. N. Srinivas, (Maths), Kumari Vijayalakshmi Pandit, (Telugu).

Convocation address

The President, in his Convocation Address expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan Baba for having conferred on him the honour of addressing the Convocation of this Institute for the second time and described the Campuses at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur as invaluable assets in the crucial task of imparting Integral Education. He added that these constitute a blessing of far-reaching significance.

He said there is much to be learnt here by the student, the teacher, educationists and policy-makers. He particularly mentioned one remarkable feature of the Institute, which did not charge any fees from students for the high quality of education offered.

He declared that the students have the thoughts, words and deeds of their Chancellor for guidance towards the Truth.

He quoted profusely from the Bhagavad Gita to impress on the students how to lead their lives by controlling their senses and minds, and nurturing good qualities, discarding evil qualities. He quoted the stanzas in which Arjuna tells Krishna that the mind is like the wind that cannot be controlled, to which Lord Krishna replied that it can be controlled by practice and detachment (Abhyasenacha Vairagyena).

He quoted the slokas 60 to 63 from Chapter II in which Lord Krishna describes how attachment to sensory objects leads to desire: desire leads to anger: from anger emerges delusion: from delusion confusion of purpose; and from confusion ruin of reason, which leads to self-destruction.

He said that he had himself practised concentration as part of the discipline for developing positive work-habits. He emphasised, quoting from Gita, how moderation in food, sleep and recreation is necessary. He said he had mentioned all this to the students to help them take charge of themselves and develop with care and efficiency the capacity to address the future and the challenges that it holds out.

Gita. He quoted from Article 51-A relating to the Fundamental Duties of citizens to impress on the students their obligations as future citizens of the nation.

He exhorted the students to live up to these ideals and hailed the Sathya Sai Institute as an outstanding example of an educational institution that upheld moral values, under the guidance of the Revered Chancellor. He said: "As numerals and their inter-relationship are basic to Mathematics, as mass, energy and time are basic to Physics, or demand and supply to economics, or ideas and personalities are basic to history, so are Values basic to the human being."

He said that the individual has to think through for himself for values and it was something which he can not depend on the environment to bestow upon him or to impose on him. The inner personal exercise of identifying and determining Values is better undertaken early in life and not postponed to follow life's experiences.

He referred to the Divine qualities for a human being as described in the Gita and said all religions are agreed on these qualities. He concluded by saying that the students here are very fortunate in having the light of great spirituality from the Revered Chancellor. He quoted from Vidya Vahini, Bhagavan's definition of True Education. "True Education is that which directs and counsels the mind and intellect of man towards tire earning of Satwic Happiness which can be had not from happiness itself but only by undergoing unhappiness. When man knows the Ananda that Satwic happiness can confer, Vidya too will be found easy and palatable."

After the Chancellor's Benedictory Message (published separately) the Convocation came to a close, with the playing of the National Anthem by the Institute's Band Troupe.

PRASANTHI SAMACHAR

Another Memorable November

If there is one event in Prasanthi Nilayam to which millions of Sai devotees all over the world look forward with fervent devotion, it is the birth anniversary of Bhagavan Baba. November 23 is celebrated all over the world as the day of the advent of Bhagavan on His epochal mission. The celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam are a class apart, because they have the distinction of being a global event in the birthplace of Bhagavan. Thousands of devotees from all parts of the world, besides hundreds of thousands from different parts of India, gather in Prasanthi Nilayam to pay their homage to the Avatar and receive His benediction.

While to the newcomers, the visit to Prasanthi Nilayam in November is a thrilling and memorable experience the old timers are struck by the changes that are taking place from year to year in the landscape and hillscape of Prasanthi Nilayam. The first noticeable change this year

encroachments. The shops have received a facelift and present an “illuminating” appearance at night.

The new canteen

The most notable change inside the Nilayam is the new magnificent two storeyed canteen building which has replaced the long shed which had served its purpose for many years. The new structure, with a striking facade, 550 feet long, with a floor area of 40,000 square feet, spans the entire length from the entrance gate to West Prasanthi IV Block. The design was prepared by Sri Chakrapani, an architect from Madras. The construction was done by the E.C.C. group of Larson and Toubro. It consists of four spacious dining halls, in two separate wings for men and women. Food can be served for 1600 persons at a time. Each hall has rows of modern four-seater marble tables with independent circular seats. Equipped with special serving counters and modern service trolleys for serving meals with ease and expedition, the dining halls are provided with decorative lights and fans. A spacious kitchen with modern cooking facilities is located in the middle. There is also a cold storage room.

The canteen building was draped in multi-coloured lights on the evening of the 8th, when Bhagavan inaugurated the canteen. Nearly 1800 students and some specially invited guests participated in the dinner offered by Bhagavan as His prasad.

Akhanda bhajan

The calendar of events in Prasanthi Nilayam: In November began with the global Akhanda Bhajan, which is held by Sathya Sai Centres all over the world from the evening of November 7th (Saturday) to the evening of Nov. 8th. In Prasanthi Nilayam, the celebration was invested with special significance because of the presence of Bhagavan.

Precisely at 5.30 P. M., Bhagavan lit the Akhanda Jyoti in the Prasanthi Mandir. The Akhanda Bhajans began with the singing of the soul stirring bhajan, "Akhanda Jyoti Jalao! Sai! Mana mandir me." The non-stop bhajan programme was kept up by students from the three campuses of the Sathya Sai Institute—Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur (girls). Boys and girls alternated as lead singers. Thousands of devotees from all parts of the world participated in the programme. Bhagavan gave darshan from time to time. When the bhajans concluded at 5.30 P. M. on Sunday. Bhagavan arranged for distribution of Prasadam (tamarind rice and sweet rice) to the devotees. Bhagavan arranged a special dinner for the students in the new canteen in appreciation of their participation in the 24-hour bhajan programme.

The entire Nilayam premises had been gaily decorated, in preparation for the Birthday celebrations, with flags and festoons. The Mandir presented a pleasing and inspiring appearance with attractive flood-lighting of the balcony and the gopuram. The Vidyagiri Stadium had been given a face-lift and the two imposing edifices on the top of the northern hill—the Administrative building and the Heritage Museum—were brilliantly floodlit and stood out as gleaming mansions in the sky.

On, 18th- November, the Birthday week started with the usual Rathothsavam. After the performance of Site Kalyanam for the idols of Rama and Site in the Mandir, the idol of Venugopalaswami was carried from the Mandir and installed in the decorated chariot at the entrance to the main gopuram, to the accompaniment of Vedaparayanam by the students and the singing of bhajans by the Bhajan Group. Sai Gita, who headed the chariot procession, was blessed by Bhagavan as she came to the Mandir draped in all her glory. Bhagavan inaugurated the Rathothsavam by breaking coconuts and giving the initial pull to the ropes of the ratha.

New guest house

On 20th November, Bhagavan opened the newly built guesthouse for V.I.P.s constructed on the spot where the original hospital was located, before it was shifted to the new building further south.

'Sai Sree Nivas', the new guesthouse, is yet another colourful addition to the numerous structures that adorn the township of Prasanthi Nilayam. It contains several suites with modern amenities and commands a grand view of the Prasanthi Nilayam complex.

"Narayana seva"

On the same day, Narayana Seva was conducted at the Vidyagiri Stadium in which nearly 15,000 people (men and women, young and old) were given sumptuous food and thousands of deserving old and poor persons were given new clothes such as saris, dhotis and shawls. Bhagavan blessed all the recipients as well as the students who took part in the seva.

Urology Wing in Sai Hospital

The President of India, Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, arrived in Prasanthi Nilayam on 21st to participate in the XIth Convocation as its Chief Guest. On the morning of 22nd November, he accompanied Bhagavan to the Super-speciality Hospital at Prasanthigram, where Bhagavan inaugurated the new Nephro-Surgical Unit at 10 a.m. The President went with Bhagavan to the Out-patient Department of the Urology and Nephrology Unit. The President cut the ribbon and Bhagavan blessed all the doctors and others. Dr. Safaya, Director of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medicine, took them round the rooms and showed them the modern ultrasound equipment which could scan the internal parts of the body without any invasive procedures.

Bhagavan then inaugurated the Nephrology Unit where the latest equipment for kidney operations has been installed. Then He went round the Wards and cut the ribbon at the entrance to the Ward complex, the Intensive Care Unit, and the Operation Theatres. The computer operation for filing of all information about patients and the surgical procedures were demonstrated to the President.

It was explained that with Bhagavan's grace the Institute will have the latest satellite receiving facilities for educational purposes. These will also be used for transmitting information to other parts of India, South East Asia and rest of the world. The complex is also designed to provide Post-Graduate instruction and training to doctors in specialised fields such

institute will be conducting advanced research in these fields.

The convocation

In the afternoon of 22nd November the XIth Convocation of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was held in Vidyagiri Stadium. (Detailed report of the Convocation proceedings appears elsewhere in this issue). In the evening, the Institute students staged a Telugu drama, "Markandeya" and an English drama "Unity of Faiths" which were very much appreciated by the large gathering in the Stadium. The President, Dr. Sharma, who came with Bhagavan to witness the plays, was greatly impressed with the histrionic talents of the students and the effective manner in which they projected the message of human unity preached by Bhagavan. Shantanu Dixit, a student of the VIII standard, hailing from Bhopal, gave a sterling performance in the role of Markandeya. The English play concluded with a full-throated song by all the members of the cast hailing Bhagavan as the unifier of people of all faiths and climes. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan went up to the stage and blessed all the actors, who had been inspired and guided by Bhagavan at every stage in the production of the two plays from the script to the final rehearsal.

Birthday celebrations

On 23rd November, the entire township and the road leading to Vidyagiri Stadium were bubbling with activity even from 3 O'clock in the morning. The stream of devotees flowing from Prasanthi Nilayam and its environs to the Stadium continued unabated till 7.15 a.m., the scheduled time for the morning's function. The vast amphitheatre was filled to capacity and the galleries on the eastern side of the sacred hill were filled with women in their colourful garments. Above the galleries, there were, besides the giant statue of Hanuman at the top, the glowing figures of Siva in a yogic-pose, a benignant Christ, a towering Zoroaster and at the southern end a charming figure of Krishna with a cow. The entire stadium as well as the Santhi Vedita had been given a face-lift on the eve of the celebrations. The entire area was surcharged with devotion when the bhajans started at 7 a.m.

Bhagavan arrived at the Stadium exactly at 7.15 a.m. in a gleaming motorised silver chariot which was a worthy vehicle for the Avatar as a work of art. The ceremonial procession was headed by Sai Gita, the pet elephant of Bhagavan, draped in an exquisitely and richly embroidered blanket, studded with glittering precious stones. Behind Sai Gita came more than a hundred students clad in traditional orange dhotis and chanting Vedic hymns. Another band of students displayed the Bhangra and Radha Krishna dances, while the Institute's band troupe brought up the rear, playing melodious marching tunes.

Bhagavan stood up in the chariot and blessed the vast multitudes of devotees while arriving at the Santhi Vedita. Alighting from the chariot, He blessed all the devotees with His familiar Abhyastha before going up to the stage. The floral decorations on the stage were superbly done.

seated on either side

Sri Anil Kumar, Principal of the Institute's Brindavan Campus, offered respectful and loving greetings to Bhagavan on behalf of the multitudes of devotees and prayed to Bhagavan to bless them elf with His Birthday Message.

A hot-air balloon bearing the inscriptions, "Indra Dhanus" and "Happy Birthday to Bhagavan" was afloat in front of the rostrum at the far end of the Stadium. The person perched in the suspended seat under the balloon released a shower of flowers of golden hue from the sky. It was verily a sight for the Gods.

Bhagavan in His Divine discourse, expatiated on the greatness of motherhood and the Motherland and declared that one's mother, mother-tongue and Motherland were three vital entities to be cherished by everyone. (Details of the discourse are given separately).

After the discourse and the offer of Arati, Bhagavan distributed "Laddu" prasadam to those in and around the dais and later the prasadam was distributed to other devotees.

I n the evening, the Bal Vikas children of Tamil Nadu drawn from the Madras Metro Region, presented a dance drama on the lives of the Alwars of Tamil Nadu who were the early Divine minstrels to spread the Vaishnavite doctrine of devotional surrender. The Bal Vikas girls enacted selected scenes from the lives of all the twelve Alwars in a manner that evoked universal appreciation. The stage settings, the Choreography and the music were of a high standard. Bhagavan blessed the children and the music group and the trainers for their excellent presentation.

During the following days Bhagavan gave interviews to several foreign groups and others, blessed Seva Dal groups with prasadam and left for Brindavan on the morning of November 29th. —N.

GURUDEV VANI:

SAI INSTITUTE'S XITH CONVOCATION

Recovery of Moral Values

*Daivaadheenam Jagatsarvam
Sathyaadheenam thu Daivatam
Sathyam Uthamaadheenam
Uthamo paramo devatha.*

The Cosmos is controlled by the Divine.

*Truth is subject to the high-souled.
The high-souled are supremely Divine.*

Students! Educationists! Patrons of Education!

The entire Cosmos is under the control of the Divine. But the Divine is bound by Truth. Truth is under the control of high-souled persons. These persons are the embodiments of the Divine in the world.

The universe is infinite and marvellous. Unable to comprehend the nature of Creation, man is a prey to divisive forces. Creation proclaims the Will of the Divine. It is known as Prakriti (Nature). Every man, who is a child of Nature, should have Divine nature. Man is born in the world to proclaim the Will of the Divine. Man is a part of Creation. He is bound by all the material objects in the world. His awareness is based on his perception of the world. Man has to order his life for the purpose of furthering the creative process.

Unfortunately today, as a consequence of scientific and technological progress, humanness has declined and man considers the world as only intended for his enjoyment. As a result, the powers of Nature are being used in a manner which poses a great threat to the world. The world has not been created for mere enjoyment. Abusing the resources of Nature and forgetting his own basic human nature man is going against the purpose of Creation. Many natural catastrophes are entirely due to man's behaviour. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wars, floods and famines and other calamities are the result of grave disorders in Nature. These disorders are traceable to man's conduct. Man has not recognised the integral relationship between humanity and the world of Nature.

In the human body, all organs like eyes, ears, mouth, etc., are integrally related to each other. Just as these organs are important for man, man is equally important for society as a limb of the social organism. Man is a part of the human community. Mankind is a part of Nature. Nature is a limb of God. Man has not recognised these interrelationships.

Rights and duties

Man is a kind of stage-director of what goes on in Nature. Forgetting his responsibilities, man fights for rights. If a deep enquiry is made, it will be realised that man has no rights at all in this world. He has only duties and no rights. It is foolish to fight for rights without discharging one's duties. All the chaos and conflicts in the world are due to men forgetting their duties. If everyone discharges his duty, the world will be peaceful and prosperous.

When the master performs his duties properly, the employees will work well. When the parents discharge their duties, the children will realise their responsibilities. When the children do their duties by the parents, the latter will be honoured. Likewise, when teachers discharge their duties, the students will conduct themselves well. When the students perform their duties well, the authorities will secure due respect.

Today men are forgetting their obligations. The Cosmos is an integral organism of interrelated parts. When each one performs his duty, the benefits are available to all. Man is entitled only to perform his duties and not to the fruits thereof.

Need for ideal persons

Students! Today the educational world is immersed in multifarious problems which are baffling the authorities concerned. The educational system is contributing to the collapse of human values in society. Educational institutions, which ought to give a lead in promoting the nation's all-round welfare, are leading the country astray. Human values like sacrifice, integrity, fairness and morality have almost disappeared. Reverence and respect (for elders) are totally absent. What we need today is not a new system of education, nor a new social order, nor even a new religion. There is a good deal of speculation about how to bring about a new social order. All these are exercises in futility. What we need today are noble and high-minded men and women (Uttamapurushulu). The nation will be prosperous only when there are such persons with noble minds and hearts. Such persons will emerge in society only when there is purity of mind and morality in society. Only a society with a moral foundation can foster such noble persons.

Spirituality and progress

Morality and integrity are based upon spiritual consciousness. Spirituality alone will take man to the sacred path leading to his destiny. Spirituality alone can elevate man and raise him to higher levels. It is the means to real national progress and prosperity. World peace can be secured only through spirituality. It is the means for the redemption of mankind.

Forgetting spirituality, man is leading an artificial life based on worldly pleasures. Education should be used for promoting the nation's welfare. Knowledge gained through education should be used selflessly for promoting the welfare of humanity.

Truth is the ornament for the mouth. Charity is the adornment for the hand. Education is the ornament for the ear. Apart from these ornaments, what does anyone need? A man with these ornaments can reach great heights. He alone is a full man.

Rama and Ravana

Mere knowledge by itself is of no avail. Ravana had studied as many branches of knowledge as Rama. Educationally both were equals but Valmiki described Ravana as a "moorkha ", a self-willed fool. Rama was hailed as a perfect man. Wherein lies the difference between the two? Rama utilised all the knowledge he had gained for noble purposes and the welfare of all. He had mastery over the senses. He gave up his ruler-ship. He was pledged to the upholding of truth. Dedicating his knowledge to the cause of truth, to set an example of ideal life to mankind, he dedicated his life to the welfare of the country. Rama exemplified human perfection by his sacrifice, his adherence to truth and his spotless character. On the other hand, Ravana utilised all his knowledge for enjoying sensuous pleasures. He became a slave of his senses and brought ruin upon himself and his country.

("Sarvahi the rathah"). Only then he can be deemed rich in wisdom. ("jnana-sampannah"). Such a wise person will be endowed with all good qualities. It is for these noble purposes that the ancient system of education was devised.

Bharatiya education

All that students learn today is unrelated to the Bharatiya system of education. A system which enslaves the mind and promotes the office-hunting mentality can have no relation to Bharatiya education. It was a system which sought to combat injustice and corruption and promote truth and righteousness. It was not designed to make a student acquire a degree at great expense and then go about with a begging bowl in search of jobs. It aimed at promoting self-reliance and encouraging one to take up social service in a spirit of dedication. Bharatiya education was based on the twin mottos: "Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara" ("Speak the truth. Practise righteousness").

Love is the spiritual discipline governing human life. Truth is one's life-breath. Bharat produced any number of men in the past who were dedicated to these two ideals. Bharatiya education made the human personality shine effulgently like a multi-faceted diamond.

Bharat: then and now

Bharat is like a myriad-petalled lotus. The variety of creeds and communities, languages and customs, manners and traditions to be found in Bharat cannot be found in any other country. With its many languages, customs and cultures, Bharat is a magnificent garden blooming with flowers of many hues. Bharatiyas today are oblivious to the greatness of their country. People of many faiths lived in harmony as members of one family in ancient times. This harmony has now been lost. The love-principle has become extinct. People are unable even to recognise what is truth.

Students should enshrine in their hearts the greatness of Bharat. Their lives should not be offered as a sacrifice to selfishness and self-interest. Give up completely selfishness. Only then you will have acquired education that is Divine and holy.

In the olden days, after the students had completed their education, the teachers (gurus) used to offer them words of advice before they embarked on the life of house-holders (Grihasta-ashram). It was a kind of convocation. The advice the preceptors gave them was: "Serve the world. First of all, revere your father and mother. Develop love for the nation." What kind of patriotism do students have who, after completing their studies here, go abroad for work? Live in society and earn the esteem of your fellowmen. These are the essential lessons to be learnt by students.

The gospel of service

Today you took the Institute pledge as to how you will conduct yourselves after you go out into the world. You have pledged yourselves to lead ideal lives. This pledge should pervade

to the pledge.

Students! From now onwards you should engage yourselves in service to society and cherish Indian culture. Do not aspire for positions. Practise at least a fraction of what you have learnt. Action alone counts. Only through practical experience is wisdom gained. Money is not everything. Acquiring good qualities is vital. Education without character is utterly worthless.

Go to the villages and serve the poor and the downtrodden. The essence of education is service to one's fellowmen. There is no greater occupation than service to society. Become leaders through service. Only when you lead such exemplary lives can you be deemed truly educated.

Live in God

Whatever may be the situation in other universities, the students from the Sathya Sai Institute should behave in an exemplary and ideal manner. Foster moral, spiritual and social values. Dedicate your lives to the upholding of morality. Officials without morality can never serve society properly. They can never protect the greatness of Bharat.

Dear students! Uphold the ideals of education. Cultivate the love of God and inspire in everyone devotion to God. Live in God! Make others live in God!

(After the conclusion of Bhagavan's discourse, the Institute band troupe played the National Anthem and the Convocation came to a close).

**From Bhagavan's benedictory message to the XIth Convocation at the Vidyagiri Stadium,
on 22-11-1992**

AVATAR VANI:

NAVARATRI SANDESH

Let Your Buddhi Shine

Harmony in thought, word and deed is the hall-mark of humanness. When this triple Unity is absent, the human being becomes demonic.

"Sukham aathyanthikam Buddhigraahyam atheendriyam". The Gita declares that everlasting bliss can be secured by the Buddhi by transcending the senses. Sukham (happiness) cannot be derived through the senses. Sensory pleasures are deceptive and transient. True happiness is permanent and real. Man can realise this only through the intellect (Buddhi). The intellect is characterised by earnestness and steadiness.

pleasure (vishayasukham) is verily poisonous (visha) and not eternal (Amritasukham). These pleasures result in bondage for man and do not elevate him. All the pleasures man enjoys are based on the senses and have no relation to the intellect.

Man should seek the bliss that is real and lasting and this can be got through the Buddhi. The Taittiriya Upanishad has expounded the nature of the Buddhi in detail. Comparing Buddhi to a bird, the Upanishad has described its head as 'Shraddha' (earnestness). The two wings of the bird are Sathya and Ritha. Yoga is its tail. The body is "Mahat-Tatwa". The five constituents Shraddha, Sathya, Ritha, Yoga and Mahat-Tatwa—are parts of Buddhi. Among these "Shraddha" comes first. Man cannot accomplish any undertaking without "Shraddha" (earnest endeavour). All daily actions like eating and walking are prompted by "Shraddha". "Shraddhavan labhathe Jnanam" (says the Gita). The higher wisdom is obtained by the earnest seeker. Nor is that all. The Gita has declared that "Shraddha" as well as Buddhi are forms of the Lord. Buddhi, therefore, should not be regarded as an ordinary appendage of man. It is associated with "Shraddha", Sathyam (Truth), Ritham (the Cosmic Order), Yoga and Mahat (the Supreme Principle). To treat an attribute that is related to these five significant entities as an ordinary quality in man is the result of viewing it from a mundane perspective.

Supremacy of buddhi

Buddhi should not be equated with mental agility or cleverness ("Medha-Shakti"). The superiority of Buddhi over mental cleverness (Medha Shakti) was proclaimed by King Vikramaditya at an assembly of scholars whom he had gathered for discussing this issue. Without Buddhi, with its five important associates, all mental faculties are useless like a fruit without juice, a tree without fruit, a temple without a lamp, or a counterfeit coin. Most intellectuals today not realising the supremacy of the Buddhi and relying only on their intelligence, are ignoring their inherent divinity. Buddhi is the divine element in man, which is shining effulgently always. The Gita declares: The Buddhi transcends the senses ("Atheendriyam"). It is related to the Divine. What passes for the intellect today is divorced from the Divine and is not Buddhi in its real sense. This intellect is limited in its capacity and is motivated by self-interest. Hence the Buddhi's power of discrimination is used by man for selfish purposes. All actions are based on self-interest ("swartha") and not on higher values ("Parartha"). Actions which are free from self-interest lead to "Tarakam" (liberation). Actions based on self-interest lead to "Marakam" (mortality). The difference between these two should be properly understood. All actions based on the Atma-bhava (the Atmic feeling) lead to liberation. All worldly actions are self-destroying ("Maraka").

Swami sang a poem to indicate the meaning of ("Taraka") as the state of Consciousness in which man transcends the waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. It is also known as "Turiya".

The power of mantras

In olden days, many persons who were observing traditional practices, used to recite some mantras before taking food. "Annam Brahma" ("The food is Brahman"). "Rasam Vishnu" ("The sweet drink is Vishnu"). "Bhoktho Devo Maheshwarah" ("The partaker is the Lord

"May the food that we consume be converted to the vital fluid that circulates in every part of the body and endows the body with all powers. Confer on our mind the capacity to make right use of these powers. Purify our speech in conformity with the nature of the mind".

The physical part of the food that we consume serves the needs of the gross body. The subtle element in it goes to the mind. The subtler element enters into speech ("vaak") The Buddhi is thus related to the functioning of the body, the organs and the mind. These three are represented by Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. The Life-principle (Prana) is related to Brahma. The mind is related to Vishnu and "Vaak" (speech) is related to Siva. These three faculties should not be wasted. They should be utilised properly. The power of speech should be used for speaking the truth. The mind should be directed towards sacred paths. The body given to man should be used for achieving righteousness. ("Sareeram-adyam khalu dharmasadhanam". The body is the primary requisite for realising Dharma). Thus, the mind, speech and body are manifestations of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. If people today indulge in meaningless and impure activities, it means that they are wasting their Divine gifts. Before undertaking any action, one should utter the prayer: "May my actions be holy. May my speech be helpful to others and not cause any pain to them. May all my thoughts be sacred, godly and purposeful." The rulers and people in ancient days used to sanctify their lives by such prayerful actions.

Sathya and ritha

Two things are vital in a man's life Sathya (Truth) and Ritha (Unity in thought, word and deed). In most people today, this triple unity is absent. One reason for this is that people have allowed their intellect to be polluted, as in the case of a lamp in which the chimney is covered by soot from the flame inside and dust from outside. The light from the lamp will be effulgent if the soot inside and the dust outside are removed. In the case of the Buddhi (intellect), the soot comes from Ahamkara (ego) and the dust from Mamakara (attachment). These two reduce the effulgence of the intellect. They have to be removed to make the Buddhi shed its light fully.

To explain how Ahamkara and Mamakara affect even those who claim to be renunciant, Bhagavan related an episode from the life of Adi Sankaracharya in which Ubhayabharati, the wife of the great scholar, Mandana Misra, acted as a judge in the debate between Sankaracharya and Misra. In the first debate Ubhayabharati declared Sankaracharya to be the winner and Mandana Misra took sanyasa. Thereupon, Ubhayabharati challenged Sankaracharya to vanquish her in a debate as she was one half of her husband. She also took to sanyasa after losing in the debate. Swami said that one day Ubhayabharati saw a Sadhu using his drinking vessel as a pillow while resting on the ground and meditating. She remarked to her disciples, "Look at this Sadhu! He claims he has renounced everything, but in his attachment for his drinking vessel he is taking care of it by keeping it under his head lest someone should take it. Is this renunciation?" On hearing her words, the Sadhu threw away the vessel. While Ubhayabharati and her disciples were returning from the Ganges, Ubhayabharati noticed what the Sadhu had done and remarked: "I thought the sanyasi had only one defect—attachment. I find he has another—Anger arising out of ego, Ahamkara. He threw away the vessel enraged by my words. Both attachment and anger

was her preceptor.

Every man, who aspires for experiencing the Divine, should strive to remove the blemishes affecting the Buddhi by getting rid of egoism and attachment. When the ego goes, attachment also can be given up easily.

The ego affects men in various ways. It induces people in various professions to resort to pomp and ostentation for impressing their clients. Egoism is a demonic quality. Devi has been described as a destroyer of demons. Worshipping of Devi is for the purpose of destroying the demonic qualities in each person.

During the Mahabharata war, Arjuna got dispirited on the ninth day when he saw Krishna bleeding all over, as he shielded Arjuna from the rain of arrows showered by Bhishma. Krishna jumped down from the chariot and advanced towards Bhishma, declaring that He would himself slay Bhishma. Bhishma was so much charmed by the beauty of the Lord that he declared: "If Sri Krishna is coming to kill me, let the same Krishna be my saviour." Devotees nowadays would act differently. If they lost their faith in one deity, they would seek favours from another. But, in fact, there is only one God. Irrespective of names and forms, God is One only.

Durga represents Mother Nature (Prakriti-mata). To overcome the demonic qualities arising out of the influence of Nature, the power of Nature has to be invoked. This is the meaning of the worship of Durga. Nature is the protector as well as the chastiser.

Lakshmi represents the protecting aspect of Nature. When Durga has destroyed the demonic qualities, Lakshmi purifies the mind. Then there is purity in speech represented by Saraswati. The worship of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati is thus undertaken to get rid of the impurities in the mind and purify one's thoughts, words and deeds.

Nature (Prakriti) is the embodiment of the Divine. Man perceives Nature and experiences Nature, but is unable to recognise the Divinity in Nature. To see the external manifestations of the Divine and yet fail to recognise the Divine is a sign of stupidity. Man sees Nature in the form of the Universe, which is the Cosmic form (Viraat-Swaroopa) of Vishnu. Has the Lord any particular form or abode? No. He is everywhere. He is you and you are He. The day you recognise this, you will comprehend God. If you want to see the Divine in you, you have to use your Buddhi, just as you need a mirror to see your own eyes, which are able to see everything else in the world. It is folly to seek the Divine elsewhere. God is nearer to you than your own mother. With purity of heart, you can experience the Divine within through your intellect. Love is the means to have this experience, for Love is God.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Muditha manase kaho!*")

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Prasanthi Mandir, on 5-10-92

Every act done with the consciousness of the body is bound to be egoistic. Selfless seva can never be accomplished, while being immersed in the body consciousness. However, consciousness of Deva instead of Deha, of God instead of the body, will bring forth the splendour of Prema. With that as inspiration and guide, man can achieve much good, without ever knowing or proclaiming that he is selfless in outlook. For him, it is all God's Will, His Leela, His work.

—Baba

AVATAR VANI :

JANMADINA SANDESH

Revere the Mother: Serve the Motherland

*By being borne by Kaushalya, Rama fulfilled His divine role;
Brought up by the noble exemplar of womanhood, Site,
The twins, Lava and Kusa, achieved glory;
The loving care of Jijibai made Sivaji a heroic warrior,*

*Fostered with love by Putlibai Gandhi became a Mahatma
The first letter of the Spiritual alphabet is "Amma" (Mother)
Is there anything greater in the world than the
Spirit that protects all living beings all the time?*

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

There is nothing sweeter than maternal love.

Forbearance lends beauty to man. Truth and integrity constitute the hard penance for man. The Divinity inherent in man is not recognised by him. Failing to realise that morality (Neeti) is greater than one's community (Jati) and that virtue (Guns) is greater than one's caste (Kulam) man is laying waste his life.

The ancient sages regarded human life as something sweet. Man's primary duty is to preserve the sacred sweetness of this life. This can be accomplished only through sacrifice and not selfishness. To lose the sweet nature of life is to forfeit man's humanness.

Maternal love is Divine

The Divine sweetness in human life is derived from maternal love (Matrubhavamu). For the protection and rearing of her children, the mother is prepared to make every sacrifice. It is this spirit of sacrifice that makes motherhood infinitely precious. The Upanishads have declared that there is no other means than sacrifice (Tyaga) to achieve immortality.

cherish this feeling. Sri Rama declared: "The mother and the Motherland are greater than heaven itself."

God is formless and attributeless. The unmanifested Divine is worshipped in various forms. God is not easily accessible to everyone. Nevertheless God is worshipped with faith in various ways and joy is derived there from.

Among the sacred aphorisms cherished by Bharatiyas, the foremost are "Matru Devo Bhava" "Pitru Devo Bhava" ("Adore the mother as God. Adore the father as God"). The mother is the foremost deity for man as the visible embodiment of the Divine who can be directly experienced. Every son is aware of the mother's affection, care and concern. He knows how to please the mother and keep her happy

No one knows how the unmanifested Divine showers His grace or displays His displeasure, what He desires or disapproves. One can lead a sacred life by adoring the mother, instead of worshipping the unmanifested Divine. The Atmic Consciousness (Chaitanyam) that is present in the Divine is also present in living beings.

Macrocosm in microcosm

If this is the case, a doubt may arise. What is the need for giving a unique place to God? When you look at an array of electric bulbs, they may all look alike. But there are differences in wattage amongst them according to the filament in them. The wattage may vary from 40 to 5000 watts. Likewise, in all human beings the five elements, the five organs of action and the five organs of perception, and other organs are common. But in their thoughts and fancies there are differences. The sacred and remarkable Divine potency in each of them is also different. It is because this Divine potency is present in God in infinite measure that the uniqueness of God is recognised. It has been said: What is in the microcosm is in the macrocosm—"Yath pinde, thath Brahmaande"). Brahmanda, the macrocosm is regarded as the Cosmic form (Viraat Swaroopa) and the microcosm is regarded as the atomic nucleus. This is a wrong view. What is present in the atom, is present in the Cosmos. There is no difference between the two. A small seed carries within it the potential of becoming a big tree. The Cosmic Form is not a mere aggregation of various objects. It does not signify the one in the many. The Cosmic Form means that which contains within itself everything.

You cannot see the vast tree contained in the tiny seed. Likewise, the atomic principle contains the macrocosm in microcosm. Equally, the divinity present in God (the macrocosm) is present in man in a subtle form like the fire in a matchstick. You cannot get fire out of a damp matchstick. Man is filled with the fire of Divine wisdom and sacredness. But it is not perceptible in spite of spiritual exercises, severe penance and many good deeds. The reason is the fact that the mind is dampened by egoistic and acquisitive tendencies (Ahamkara and Mamakara). It is only when this dampness is removed by the sunshine of "Vairagya" (detachment) that an illumined life becomes possible.

Man today is well informed about a myriad things. But he is ignorant of his own true nature. Of what avail is all knowledge if one cannot get rid of his bad qualities and realise his true nature? All accomplishments and possessions are of no use to man. Only a godly life can redeem him.

A nation's prosperity does not come down from the sky or sprout from the earth. It is based on man's actions. Man's conduct has to be purified.

Men today have forgotten the greatness of the mother and the duties of the son. How can man expect to get the bliss he aspires for if he fails to discharge his duties, forgets his humanness, turns his face away from God, and goes after worldly pleasures?

At his father's behest, Rama accompanied the sage Vishwamitra, protected his yaga and reached Mithila with the Sage. After Rama had handled the bow of Siva, Emperor Janaka wanted to offer in marriage his daughter Sita to Rama according to his earlier declaration. But Rama was not willing to go through the marriage without the approval of his parents. Vishwamitra tried to persuade Rama in many ways, but Rama deemed the sanction of his parents more essential than obeying the words of the preceptor. Rama did not venture even to look at Sita till his parents arrived and agreed to the alliance.

Bharat today has forgotten this divine message of Rama, revealing his deep devotion to his mother and father. To carry out the injunctions of his father, Rama went into exile and spent 14 years in the forest. He deemed adherence to Truth as the highest penance. When Rama was in the forest, Bharata, accompanied by Vasishta and others, went to him to persuade him to return to the Kingdom. Rama told Vasishta; "Guruji, life is not more precious than respect for truth. I have entered the forest to comply with my father's command. If I go back to the Kingdom, I will be betraying my father's pledge. I will sooner give up my life rather than give up my adherence to Truth.

The story of Rama has been teaching to the world the supreme greatness of a life based on truth, sacrifice, integrity and morality.

Krishna's Lesson to Gandhari

That man is to be pitied who has not earned the grace of his mother, who has not enjoyed the loving looks of his mother and who has not tried to please her. This is illustrated by an episode from the Mahabharata. After all the Kauravas had been slain in battle, Krishna went to their blind old father, Dhritarashtra, and his wife Gandhari to console them. Unable to restrain her bitterness and grief, Gandhari blamed Krishna in harsh terms. Krishna told her: "Gandhari! You are making a grievous mistake. From the time of their birth, did you look at any of your children? If the Kauravas did not benefit from your own sight, how can they be seen by me?" This means one who has not received the loving look of his mother does not deserve the gracious look of the Divine. In Bharat today, this Dharmic principle has been erased. Immersed in selfish concerns, people are forgetting the Divine and giving up all principles of morality and justice. Looking at

great deal.

Live in unity

Embodiments of Love! Recognise the truth that morality is the primary requisite of human society. You have to perform your duties and discharge your obligations. You must be united and take part in social service. Union is strength. It promotes the welfare of all. If one does not strive for unity and progress, how can he serve society, Even small ants acting in union can destroy a serpent. Today unity is being undermined in the country. There are differences in every home. Institutions without unity ultimately collapse. A divided nation faces destruction. Hence, for the welfare of the nation, all must live in unity. Distinctions of high and low should be given up. The nation's welfare alone must be kept in mind.

You are well aware of the divisions in every political party. These divisions are breaking the parties into fragments. If this fragmentation goes on, how can the nation progress? The individual who is concerned about the welfare of the nation should eschew self-interest, cultivate the spirit of unity and work for the progress of the nation. This should be the first motto of the country

Those who claim to be citizens of Bharat are oblivious to the honour and prestige of the nation. The man who is not proud of his motherland and his mother-tongue is worse than a corpse. If you proclaim yourself a citizen of Bharat, you should uphold the culture of Bharat. You should conduct yourself according to Bharatiya culture

If unity is lost, what can anyone accomplish? If there are three persons in a house, there can be peace in the house only if the three live in harmony. In every individual, there are three entities in the body that is his dwelling: the mind (Manas), the tongue (Vaak) and the organs of action (Kayam). It is only when these three entities function harmoniously that the individual can have peace. When there is discord between them, how can peace be got?

Serve with love

Manifest the divinity that is in you. Only then you can be a true individual (vyakti), practise sadhana for this purpose. Jettison your worldly attachments. Develop love so that you may get rid of divisive feelings in you.

It is extremely unfortunate that men should waste their human lives, which are so precious and sacred. Life is short and men should make good use of their divine potentialities without wasting time. Two hands have been given to man for feeding himself and rendering service. There is no room for lazy persons in Bharat. One who does not work has no right to eat. Work, work and work! That is your duty. Consider what is appropriate in a particular situation and act accordingly.

Few try to understand the ways of the Divine. They are beyond the comprehension of the intellectuals. God is omnipotent. This is beyond doubt. The lamp shines because of the Divine.

expose a lamp to a strong wind and pray to God not to allow the light to go out. The powers of the Divine are to be rightly understood and used in the appropriate way.

God's ways are inscrutable

Once a devotee asked Swami why He should not convert all seawater into petrol because of the steep rise in the price of petrol. The devotee had read a report of Bhagavan's conversion of water into petrol on one occasion. Swami told him. "You are no doubt intelligent, but your intelligence is not functioning properly. If the seas around India are converted to petrol, what will happen if a witless person like you walking on the beach throws a burning cigarette in the sea. There will be a holocaust. Have you thought about this possibility? Have you any concern for the welfare of the country? It is stupid to make suggestions of this kind."

There are many such scatter-brained persons in the world. They are posing as highly intelligent persons. They come forward to criticise God. No one has the right or the competence to criticise God. God can do anything by an act of will. All actions performed selflessly are godly.

God is present in all beings. Everything in the Cosmos is a form of the Divine. The Divine power sustains everybody at all times. Hence every man is an embodiment of God. Once you have that faith, you will not be inclined to follow the wrong path.

Everyone should strive to recognise the divinity that is present in all. This effort has to be made by everyone. Human birth has been given for this purpose. It cannot be left to God.

Who is Sai?

There are many who do not understand the Sai principle. Who is this Sai? Why are certain things happening in this manner? These questions are asked. I am not a sanyasi (renunciant). I am not a yogi. I am not a Bhogi (Pleasure-seeker). I am not a tyagi (one who sacrifices). *I am I*. This "I" is the first name given to the Atma. A renunciant is bound by certain restrictions. The pleasure-seeker is bound in other ways. I have no limitations. Mine is boundless bliss. My name is "I". It is not a name given after one's birth. To understand Me, everyone has to realise that the "I" is present in everyone. The "I" is used by everyone in every context, whether he is a millionaire or a pauper. This "I" is Brahman. ("Aham Brahmasmi"). Everyone uses the "I" from dawn to dusk without understanding its meaning.

Advice to students

Students! As future citizens of the nation you have to conduct yourselves in an exemplary manner. Remember that there is no special merit in so-called spiritual exercises. Every action in daily life calls for concentration (Dhyana) and has to be sanctified by performing it as an offering to God. A farmer tilling his field should feel at the same time that he is tilling the field of his heart. While sowing seeds, he should sow the seeds of good qualities in his heart. While watering the field, he should think he is watering the field of his heart with love. In this way, everyone can pursue the spiritual path without the aid of rosary or betaking himself to the forest-

Today, the foremost need is the promotion of unity. Irrespective of physical and ideological differences, the Atma principle is common to all.

Man and society

It has to be recognised that individuals are integrally related to Society like the different organs in a body. Humanity itself is a limb of Nature and Nature (Prakriti) is a limb of God (the Omni-Self). If this integral relationship is understood, where is the ground for hatred? No one should consider himself as insignificant or unimportant. Everyone, small or big, is a vital part of the whole and is essential for its proper functioning like all the parts in a rocket. Any small defective part may cause the rocket to explode. Likewise, in this vast Cosmos every being has a significant role to play to ensure its smooth functioning.

We celebrate many festivals in connection with birthdays or other occasions. It is not the festivities that are important, nor the dresses, nor the speeches. Feelings are what are important. Without purity of thought, purity of wisdom cannot be got. Seek to purify your minds.

Cultivate selfless love towards all and engage yourselves in social service. I have often declared: "Grama seva is Rama seva" (Service to the villagers is service to Rama).

Enshrine Rama in your heart

It is a mistake to think only of constructing a temple for Rama. In this vast land of Bharat of what use is it to raise a temple for Rama in any particular place? Everyone's heart should be converted into a temple for Rama. The land of Bharat should be cherished as the Kingdom of Rama (Ramarajya). What does Ramarajya mean? It does not refer to any particular state. Unity in thought, word and deed constitutes Ramarajya. Today, there is no unity, no purity, no awareness of Divinity. People are wallowing in the mire of "community". This is not the primary duty of man. When there is discord between thought, word and deed, humanness is undermined. Unity has to be promoted to foster humanness.

Bharatiya culture belongs to all mankind. Time, place and conditions of life may vary. But the basic principles governing human conduct are the same. If people want to proceed to a higher state, the first requisite is improvement in one's conduct. When the foundation under your feet is shaky, how can you expect to build up the mansion of life? Your conduct is the foundation. Your actions are the means. Develop faith. Without faith life is a waste. Man today believes in everything except God. This is his misfortune.

God is omnipresent. The man who has no faith in God can have no faith in himself. Develop self-confidence, which is the basis for any nation's progress. On that foundation of faith erect the walls of Ananda (Bliss). Then place the ceiling of detachment (Vairagya) on them. Live under the roof of Tyaga (Sacrifice). This is the way to Self-realisation. Chant the name of the Lord to secure mental peace and purify the heart. You can then lead a Godly life.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi Nahi!*")

